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Article abstract

Le *monologue*, comme genre de la littérature orale, est sexiste. Non seulement il est dit en général par des hommes mais il célèbre en plus la masculinité, la plupart du temps au détriment de la féminité elle-même. En contrepartie à cette tendance, l'auteur examine ici le contenu d'un monologue écrit par Dulsie Spracklin et récité par sa soeur Greta Hussey, toutes deux de Terre-Neuve.

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“The Family Album”: A Newfoundland Women’s Recitation

Pauline GREENHILL

The monologue, as reported in folkloristics, appears to be one of the most misogynistic of folklore genres. It is performed almost exclusively by males, and has a content and ethos which celebrates masculinity, often in a way which directly opposes feminine values. Particularly fruitful, then, is an examination of the performance and form of a monologue which was both composed by a woman and presented by one. The example to be discussed here is Newfoundlander Mrs. Greta Hussey’s performance of her sister Mrs. Dulsie Spracklin’s piece, “The Family Album.” The text, its symbolic content, and its performance will be compared to those of monologues recited by men from the same culture. My method will be to first delineate the cultural field of meaning for the unmarked quantity — the mainly traditional monologues performed by men — both in terms of the manipulation of a particular symbolic vocabulary and in the use of performance style, and then to discover the extent to which the marked quantity — women’s monologues — partakes of or departs from the tacit cultural expectation.

The monologue has been recognised only quite recently as a genre of folklore. The first systematic attention to this form was given by Roger Abrahams, who dealt with “toasts” performed by black Americans. He defined the toast as a “narrative poem that is recited, often in a theatrical manner.”² Toasts are performed in what are

1. I should like to thank Dr. Brian Stross, to whom this paper was originally submitted, Dr. Richard Bauman, who read an early draft, and Dr. Roger de V. Renwick, who provided an extensive critique and commentary on it and from whose work such as *English Folk Poetry: Structure and Meaning*, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1980, my analytical perspective is derived. I also thank Dr. Wilfred Wareham for first introducing me to the Newfoundland recitation and Mrs. Greta Hussey for first introducing me to “The Family Album”.

2. Roger D. Abrahams, *Deep Down in the Jungle: Negro narrative Folklore from the Streets of Philadelphia*. rev. ed. Chicago, Aldine, 1970, p. 97.

usually all-male contexts — street corners, bars, jails and so on — are often obscene, glorify male values and underline male-female differences. They are perhaps the most extreme documented examples from Western society of a monologue form which extols traditional masculinity both in content and in performance.

However, material in many ways similar to the toast exists in other cultures. In 1976, a special issue of *Southern Folklore Quarterly* was devoted to these forms. Four of the articles dealt with monologues and recitations in Great Britain, and two were concerned with material in America, the others concentrating upon studies of various recited texts³. Kenneth S. Goldstein's article, in an attempt to delineate and define the genre, made a distinction between the more general oral recitation, "a solo spoken performance of any passage or selected piece of prose or poetry"⁴ and the monologue, "a solo stylised theatrically mannered oral performance from memory of a self-contained dramatic narrative in poetic or prose form."⁵ To systematise and extend these concepts somewhat, "recitation" can be seen as a term for the generic continuum, with the monologue occupying one end, and representing one extreme form:

MONOLOGUES	RECITATIONS	NON-MONOLOGUES
public		private
memorised		read
narrative		lyrical
dramatic performance		non-dramatic performance
aggressive performance		self-effacing performance

It is fairly safe to generalise, as Goldstein does, that the monologue as discussed in the British studies and in Robert Bethke's work is restricted in the vast majority of cases to performance by males. Goldstein suggests that this is because of that sub-genre's public presentation and the aggressive stance taken in performance, which is antithetical to the traditional role which is socioculturally assigned to women. The examples of female performances considered in the *SFQ* articles are clearly recitations, but they lean toward the end of the generic spectrum opposite to the monologue. Karen Baldwin's article, on her own family tradition of poetry making, the only one in

3. See Kenneth S. Goldstein and Robert D. Bethke, ed. "Monologues and Folk Recitation," *Southern Folklore Quarterly* 40 (1976), 1-284.
4. Kenneth S. Goldstein, "Monologue Performance in Great Britain", *Southern Folklore Quarterly* 40 (1976), 8.
5. *Ibid.*

the issue to deal in general terms with both male and female recitations — though Roger Renwick does compare the repertoires of two performer-composers, one male and one female — presents a series of oppositions between the two, which closely correspond to the ends of the generic continuum discussed above.⁶

The genre in Newfoundland, as discussed by Wilfred Wareham⁷, also fits into the continuum. The local term is “recitation”, though it most closely corresponds to what are referred to here as monologues. I will use the emic term throughout, as it has valences which do not allow it to be identified without caveat as a pure monologue form; that is, it can include materials tending toward the other end of the generic spectrum.

Wareham discussed performances of the Newfoundland recitation in some detail. Recitations are presented in the context of “times” — social gatherings which range from private parties to wedding celebrations to concerts — and display a characteristic incongruity or reversal between textual content and performative interpretation. That is, if the recitation’s text is apparently serious in content, this seriousness is undercut with humourous voice characterisation, grimaces and gestures; if humourous, it is performed in apparent deadpan solemnity. The texts of recitations can be learned from oral tradition and from books or newspapers, or they can be local compositions. Wareham suggests that their themes are limited; local history, disaster, politics and bawdy scenes are usual subjects for Newfoundland recitations.

However, an examination of the texts presented by Wareham, which are the only published ones of Newfoundland recitations of which I am aware, shows that their apparent diversity of superficial content overlies a series of common symbolic oppositions. This is not surprising, especially considering the reversal — to which oppositions are logically prior — which characterises the genre’s performance style. The reversal, which is on a fairly superficial level of cultural knowledge and would be readily understood and identified by members of the culture, especially as a source of humour in the performance, may in part serve to mark or highlight oppositional qualities in the texts themselves. A brief consideration of the five example recitations will indicate the symbolic vocabulary involved.

The first recitation, “The Yankee Privateer”, deals with an incident between a Newfoundland “hooker”, “an old, badly rigged or

6. Karen Baldwin, “Rhyming Pieces and Piecin’ Rhymes: Recitation Verse and Family Poem-Making”, *Southern Folklore Quarterly* 40 (1976), 209-238.

7. Wilfred Wareham, “The Monologue in Newfoundland”, in Clyde Rose, ed. *The Blasty Bough*. Portugal Cove, Breakwater Books, 1976.

clumsy vessel"⁸, and an American privateer during the time of the American Revolutionary War. Through a combination of Yankee bungling and Newfoundland cleverness, the privateer is captured and the Newfoundlanders return home with the supplies they had obtained from St. John's.

semantic domain:	content:	
	moderation (+)	excess (-)
place	sea	land
territory	own	others'
speech	gentle	aggressive
economy	producers	overconsumers (thieves)
mind	honesty	trickery
	peaceful	warlike
body	small, old, weak	large, new, strong

The only opposition which retains its original force and validity throughout the recitation is in the semantic domain of speech, between that which is quiet, polite and gentle, and that which is rude, anti-social and aggressive. The Yankee's speeches exemplify the latter quality: "Now, will you surrender?" and the Newfoundlander's response, though initially aggressive: "I'll be damned if I do" quickly becomes polite: "To your honour I will, sir," when the Yankees' superior physical force is manifested. The Newfoundlanders urge one another to be quiet: "Hush, hush," and not to alert the Yankees to the fact that one of the former has not been tied up, while their adversaries are up on deck, making "one hell of a racket."

The other oppositions are overtly reversed within the text itself. The ostensible hooker, combining the domains of territory, mind, body and economy, becomes a *de facto* privateer when its crew overcomes the Yankees. The peaceful Newfoundlanders defeat their warlike adversaries. The Newfoundlanders, who are called "landlubbers" by the Yankee captain, clearly prove their own seamanship and the lubberliness of the Americans, who are evidently too drunk to sail their own ship and are later "bound hand and foot" by the Newfoundlanders, cementing this incapacity, and reversing the symbols within the domains of place and territory. The honest Newfoundlanders, initially overcome by the Yankee trickery — the privateer flies the custom house flag as it approaches the hooker — eventually are victorious through their own use of tricks. Thus, those who are trying to take over the Newfoundlanders' territory are themselves captured, the thieves robbed, and the large and strong shown to be small and

8. *Ibid.*, p. 199. Quotations from recitations which follow are from this article.

weak. There is a double reversal in the domain of place between the landlubbers and the seaworthy. However, there is an overall concern with moderation and excess, especially within the domains of speech and economy.

“The Lobster Salad”, deploys its oppositions very differently.

semantic domain:	content:	
	moderation (+)	excess (-)
economy and resources	eating	gluttony
	producers	sellers
	quality goods	damaged goods
	reproductive	non-reproductive
	life	suicide
speech	gentle	aggressive
place	heaven	earth
mind	honesty	trickery
territory	own	others'

Basically, it concerns a dream, caused by an excess of rich food, in which a Newfoundlander goes to heaven and sees representatives of various ethnic groups and social statuses being turned away by St. Peter — they represent the negative polarity of a series of oppositions in the economic and resources domains — until an Irishman, by trickery, gains entry. This first series of oppositions is unreversed. It is only with the entry of the Irishman that the semantic domains of speech, mind, territory and place come into the recitation’s symbolic content. The Irishman speaks confidently but flatteringly:

“Ah, ‘tis yerself, St. Peter, you’re lookin’ so nice and sweet.
Open the door, boy, and let me in and show me to my seat.”

When St. Peter turns him away, the Irishman throws his hat through the gate of heaven, and when ordered by St. Peter to pick it up, enters and bars him out. However, this is not a selfish act, but one which is calculated to return a territory — Ireland — to its rightful owners. Thus, the oppositions in the Irishman’s section of the recitation, with the exception again of speech, are reversed. Moderation is positively valued not only in the first section where the various individuals are rejected because of their excesses, but because even the Irishman deals in fair exchange; “I’ll give up me crown and the keys to heaven if you’ll set old Ireland free.”

“The New School Marm” adds an opposition of gender to the repertoire.

semantic domain:	content:	
	moderation (+)	excess (-)
territory	own	others'
speech	gentle	aggressive
body	gentle	aggressive
	weak	strong
gender	male	female
mind	experienced	schooled

A young local man, Hiram, seeks out the new teacher in the community, an outsider, to go to a dance. The woman continuously makes aggressive verbal and physical sexual overtures to Hiram which he tries to ignore or misinterprets because "she was the new school marm and I had to mind me manners." The only examples of Hiram's reported situational speech are his polite answers of "Yes, Ma'am" to the woman's aggressive rhetorical questions and comments. Eventually, the seduction is successful, and Hiram concludes that he will never have to be to school again, since the new school marm has sent two students home for three days and a week because they have seen, respectively, her ankle and her knee. Thus, the unschooled, by the recitation's logic, becomes educated, and perhaps the outsider teacher becomes in a sense an insider through her involvement with Hiram. Note that the woman in this recitation is associated with qualities not traditionally ascribed to the female gender — aggression, strength, and so on.

"St. Peter at the Gate," a recitation which presents an old couple confronting that saint and attempting to gain admittance to heaven, introduces another series of oppositions.

semantic domain:	content:	
	moderation (+)	excess (-)
speech	gentle	aggressive
territory	heaven	earth
mind	modesty	pride
	self-effacing	pushy
body	male	female
religion	first	last

As was seen in the previous example, "the man stood still while the woman spoke." She begins by describing her own religious activities:

"I've been to the meetings three times a week and almost always I'd rise and speak.
I've told the sinners about the day when they'd repent of their evil way.
I've told me neighbours, I've told them all about Adam and Eve and the primal fall. . .

I've talked to them loud and I've talked to them long, for my lungs are good and my voice is strong."

Not only is this aggressive speech in the recitation's context, its subject is aggressive speech. The wife then asks St. Peter, for her sake, to admit her husband although she is sure his activities, like cursing and smoking, are not the proper criteria for entry. The woman continues by suggesting that "it seems to me the gate isn't kept as it ought to be," criticising the cut to St. Peter's whiskers, and finally demanding to be let in. Eventually, St. Peter sends the woman to hell, and much to the man's surprise, admits him to heaven.

Thus, the woman, who thinks herself the sure insider to heaven and undoubtedly good is sent below, while the man, who has been told by his wife that he is bad and thinks he is certain to be an outsider, is allowed in. Again, male and female identities are retained, as is their respective association with gentle speech and aggressive speech. The amount of reported speech in this recitation is remarkable in extent, yet the man, who — we are told by this wife — cursed while he was alive, speaks only three times. That his response to his wife is a non-verbal one is underlined by St. Peter's comment:

"Thirty years with that woman there, no wonder the man hasn't got any hair."

The qualities of mind which are opposed are not reversed, but the recitation closes by quoting the Biblical reversal that "the last shall be first and the first shall be last." Again, moderation triumphs over excess as the woman, the very personification of excess, is punished for it.

"The Soul of Jean Despré" is clearly not an indigenous product like "The New School Marm" or "The Yankee Privateer" nor is it traditional like "The Lobster Salad" or "St. Peter at the Gate." However, not surprisingly, it shares many features with them, especially the opposition we have seen throughout between excess and moderation.

semantic domain:	content:	
	moderation (+)	excess (-)
speech	gentle	aggressive
territory	own	others'
economy	producers	overconsumers
body	small, young, weak	large, old, strong
mind	peaceful	warlike
	life-soul	death-body

The story takes place in France during the World War II German occupation. A German soldier has been killed, and in retaliation ten French peasants are shot. One of them survives and manages to shoot the captain who has ordered this action. The peasant is then crucified on the door of the village church. He asks for water and is given some by a "little barefoot boy" called Jean Despré. The German major then orders the boy to shoot the crucified man and puts a rifle in his hand. Jean Despré shoots the German major. Finis.

The symbolic oppositions and their semantic domains are almost identical to those of "The Yankee Privateer." The story has such greater narrative complexity than that of the indigenous recitations, and is rendered much more effective than the foregoing outline would indicate by the use of language both to build suspense and to emphasise the oppositions between the insider French and the outsider Germans. Again, speech is a significant semantic domain. Jean Despré himself never speaks; his role involves only actions, the cited ones being giving water to his dying countryman, and shooting the German major.

The speakers are the Germans, major and captain, and the wounded French peasant, who are again set up in oppositions of gentle and aggressive use of speech. The latter's verbal reaction to the shooting of his fellows is to laugh "with glee, 'Ah here is where I settle ere I die.'" The captain's response to his comrade's death includes

"Now shall they German vengeance know, now shall they rue the day,
For this sacred German slain ten of the dogs will pay."

His major's reaction to Jean Despré's rather more benign action of giving the wounded man water is "'Go shoot the brat' he snarled, 'who dares defy our Germain might!'" In this recitation, the roles of powerful and powerless are mediated more than reversed — they are traded back and forth — and death and life, soul and body themselves are mediated.

As stated above, each recitation in this sample of five draws on a common repertoire of semantic domains, oppositions and methods for dealing with them, primarily through reversal. They also share a positive valuation of moderation over excess and concern with problems associated with this. However, it will be noted that the only oppositions which are never reversed in the texts are those between male and female and between gentle and aggressive speech, which are always associated, respectively, with moderation and excess. In addition, and in contrast to what we would expect from cultural convention, the association is male:female: :gentle speech:aggressive speech. This is particularly interesting as the recitation in New-

foundland is a genre usually associated with male speech, and is itself given in an aggressive and self-presentational manner. As Wareham states, "Even when a monologue . . . is performed in a literal style, the speech used is usually more assertive than that used in ordinary conversation or in regular storytelling."⁹ Furthermore, Wareham tells us that "St. Peter at the Gate," one recitation which most clearly represents the ethos suggested, is frequently recited at weddings, where it is surely a rhetorical suggestion to bridges to temper any aggressive speech or behaviour.

Thus, we have in the Newfoundland recitation, an aggressive form of speech performed by males, a suggestion that it is in fact females whose speech is aggressive. Furthermore, this entertaining, positively values form of narration glorifies, paradoxically, the value of non-aggressive speech. Crane's work on modern legends¹⁰ suggests that the locus of symbolic import can be discovered when its emotional or textual polarity in a narrative is the reverse of that which is expected as a sociocultural norm. Thus, it appears that it is in this reversal of expectation, males associated with gentle speech and females with aggressive speech, and the two respectively with moderation and excess in general, that the centre of the meaning of male recitations lies, especially for women recitationists. The symbolic oppositions, reversals and inversions involved can both define the limits of socio-cultural reality and question its ordering. Where they are deployed, then, reversals and inversions are central to an understanding of that reality.¹¹

The implication from Goldstein and Baldwin's work is that in the British and North American contexts, women can recite and still remain within the norm of traditional role expectations because the content of their texts tends toward the non-monologue end of the generic continuum. Lyrical pieces, demanding less overdetermined performance presentation — taking on voices, use of gestures and so on — allow the maintenance of the woman's sociocultural role and do not argue with the culture's valuation of women's speech. The situation is much more complex in the case of Mrs. Greta Hussey's "The Family Album," a kind of catalogue or enumeration of related vignettes dealing one by one with a series of photographs in the

9. *Ibid.*, p. 198.

10. Beverly Crane, "The Structure of Values in 'The Roommate's Death'", *Journal of the Folklore Institute* 14 (1977), 133-150.

11. Barbara A. Babcock, "Introduction", in Barbara A. Babcock, ed. *The Reversible World: Symbolic Inversion in Art and Society*. Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1978.

album. The text, as collected in Mrs. Hussey's kitchen one wintry March day in 1978, follows.¹²

(Think you need a bit of practice on this you know. Grandma seated as the curtain rises).

Lar yes Mrs. Sturge I must show you my photograph album seein' as 'ow you're new 'ere and ain't never seen it.

(Do I have to turn towards that microphone?).

It's gettin' along in years just like meself but it looks fair to middlin' yit. And it oughtta, seein' what care of I took of it.

Now this first picture, that's a cousin, that's ah cousin Lemuel Jenkins. Ain't 'e sad lookin' though? I've often said to 'Ezekiah, says I, "A graveyard is a real cheerful companion to what cousin Lemuel is. 'E's always just as gloomy." What made 'im that way? Well I was just goin' to tell ya. 'Twas cause 'e was crossed in love. My 'tis queer 'ow different people — 'ow different is affects different folks, being crossed in love. Sometimes it affects them crossways, and sometimes it affects them otherwise. Now there was, ah, Cy Armin — Aren. 'E was crossed in love about the same time that 'Ezekiah was — that Lemuel was. But 'e just cheered up and danced out of [then ever,] 'e got 'isself another girl and was married inside of three months. But Lemuel, 'e just give up and 'e ain't never grinned more than two or three times since it 'appened. Yes, just like the poet says "Of all the sad things that ever were said, the saddest of all, 'e couldn't get wed, unto the woman 'e wanted." Did Lemuel ever get married to nobody else? Mercy sake, what woman do you suppose 'u'd have such a piece of melancholy sittin' by 'er fireside?

Now this 'ere, this is Uncle John Benson, on me mother's side. Awful good man 'e was. Always singin' th'old gospel songs and always ready to help. But my land, was 'e slow. You never knew anyone as slow as Uncle John was. 'Is wife used to push and pull and try to hurry 'im but it was all no good. 'E was an awful trick to 'er, she being as smart as a cricket. Once there was to be a funeral and she said, "Now John, I'm goin' to do my work and get ready and go, and you can come when you gets around to it." So she done the dishes and fixed up the house, she put on 'er funeral clothes and started on foot, they bein' about a mile from the church. Well, the 'ad the funeral and the folks got in their rigs and they started for the cemetery and still no John. And Sabriney 'is wife got a ride with someone, and when they was more than 'alf ways to the graveyard, they seed Uncle John, joggin' along the road, trying to keep up with the procession. My she was dreadful mortified and Uncle John said he was glad 'e got a chance to look at the coffin before they laid it away.

Now this one 'ere, that's Cousin Emmeline Bates on me father's side, she always bein' the lucky one. Her father said she should never get married until she feathered 'er nest good, so she married a man over to Bay Roberts

12. I thank the Memorial University of Newfoundland Folklore and Language Archive for permission to quote this and other materials from my collection 79-17. Dennis Preston's "Ritin' Fowklower Daun 'Rong: Folklorists' Failures in Phonology", *Journal of American Folklore* 95 (1982), 304-326, notwithstanding, I have used dialect spelling since Mrs. Hussey consciously alters her speech.

and they're dreadful well off. One of their girls is an op'ry singer. She's been to Boston and Germany and all around learnin' to sing, and my she trills and quivers and she goes away up and you can't hardly understand a word she says, she sings so lovely.

Now this one 'ere, this me sister Mary. You think she's nice lookin'? Yeah. She was the pick of the family for looks all right. She was dreadfully 'igh strung too. Things always 'ad to go 'er way. She was the beatenest case I ever see for wantin' to be ahead of everyone else. If any of the rest of the folk done anything extra, Mary 'ad to find a way to beat 'em. 'Twas the same after she married. And when Cousin Ellen Dean 'ad twins, she was so proud and folks made such a fuss over 'em, and she said to Mary, "Well, I've got you beat now Mary, you ain't got twins no 'ow." And Mary she felt real beat, both 'er children bein' only single ones. Well, what do you suppose she did — done? Yes, you're right. Next year she 'ad triplets. And all of 'em lived. I never seed anyone so proud in my life as she was to beat Ellen that way.

Now this one 'ere, this is me younger sister Susie. Every time I looks at that picture I've got to 'ave a good laugh. You see, Susie was the last one of the family and she was so determined to keep up with the times. Oh 'twas about that time that the folk began to cut off their dresses and wear 'em terrible short. And she went and cut off 'er best dress. Ma was so mad she said she'd give her a good tannin' if ever she put it on. But she sneaked into it once and 'ad this picture took. And what a time she 'ad with it, showin' it to everyone. Well, my land, Ma was so ashamed. Just look at 'er. You can even see 'er knees. But Ma never did 'ave the heart to give 'er a tannin' after all.

Now this one, this is a likeness of 'Ezekiah's second cousin on 'is mother's side. Poor man, 'e had an awful sad lot. 'E, 'e went to heaven by fire, as it were. No, 'e wasn't burned to death, exactly, 'e was a missionary, to the cannibar islands. And them terrible man-eatin' can — savages cooked 'n and et 'n up. I've 'eard that people get to be what — like what they eat, and I should think some of them cannibars would get to be a missionary before long if that be true.

Now this 'ere, this one, this is me brother William. 'E's real well off. [] And what do you suppose 'Enry got, one of them automobiles. When I was visitin' last summer, nothin' would do but I must 'ave a ride in it. And I never thought ever I'd get out of it alive. Well, me bonnet stood straight up on one corner and 'Enry said to me "Take it off, Aunt Hane, or you may lose it." So I took it off, but I said "Nephew 'Enry, I wouldn't care much if I did lose this bonnet cause it cost — it's ten years old now, but if I was to lose me four dollar 'airpiece, I'd never forgive ya. My," I says, "I don't want to go scootin's along so fast you can't see anything. Now 'Ezekiah when we goes 'long we wants to see 'o got their fish spread, 'o's got washin' out, 'o's crops is growin' — growing — growin' and the flower beds 'n 'o's got lawns mowed. And such t'ings. 'O's there into Clarence Morse's. What 'appened to George Wilson that was out of politics. But in one of them automobiles, goin' like lightnin' and 'angin' onto your belongin's and prayin' you won't get killed, you've got no idea of the scenery."

Now this next one is, what, you've got to go Mrs. Sturge? Well I'm real sorry you can't stay to see all me likenesses, but you'll come again and we can finish lookin' at the rest. Yes, I'm awful glad you came. Goodbye.

(And then) "Should old acquaintance be forgot and never brought to mind."

(Can't sing, you finish that, and ah picks up the tail and does the sobbin' shows the drawers and the curtain comes down).

The concert or "time" during which Mrs. Hussey first performed this recitation was held in Port-de-Grave in 1974 to celebrate Newfoundland's first twenty-five years in Canadian confederation. It was organised by Mrs. Hussey and others in the outport to show the young people of the community what life had been like in the pre-Confederation era. There were demonstrations of everyday and subsistence activities such as bread baking and spinning and carding of wool, as well as performances of traditional songs and recitations. Though the past was idealised in this presentation, the concert implicitly celebrated the present, since it showed that life had ceased to be technically so difficult through the use of technology.

The concert was videotaped by Gerald Pocius for the Memorial University of Newfoundland Folklore and Language Archive. From this videotape, despite its poor quality, it is obvious that the concert was quite a success. The hall was crowded with adults as well as children, and audience response was enthusiastic, if a little rambunctious.

A "time", like the one at which the recitation was presented, is one of the various kinds of sociability in Newfoundland society. House visits, in contrast to "times" need no particular occasion and tend to be quite informal. A person from within the community usually does not knock on the door, but can walk directly into the kitchen to sit and talk, make a cup of tea, or even fall asleep on the daybed there. "Times", on the other hand, are more formal occasions, usually held in the season after fishing (fall and winter) when the men are home, or when a wedding is celebrated. "Times" may be community public events or private parties. During a "time", "behaviour is markedly different from that allowed and expected in daily interaction"¹³, and includes drinking, dancing and sexual joking. The excuse of being drunk at "times" allows men to say damaging things without incurring blame which would otherwise be laid for such behaviour.

The other king of "time", the community concert, is usually put on by church women to raise money for various charitable and community works. To do so, they must attract visitors from outside the community itself. These concerts are formal occasions stressing the finer things in life, such as music and poetry. They are an occasion

13. James FARIS, *Cat Harbour: A Newfoundland Fishing Settlement*. St. John's, Institute of Social and Economic Research, 1966.

when women assert values and powers which they downplay, exercise only infrequently or state in different ways in everyday life. To a certain extent, the community concert is an extension of the domestic realm. Through the social context of the concert, women create a speech situation in which they can, by performing, be at the centre of attention.¹⁴ Different though they are, in other ways, then, the various kinds of "times" have in common a celebration of special activities, some of which may oppose, reverse, or invert everyday practice.

It should be noted that Mrs. Hussey's performance style is somewhat at variance with that of the traditional Newfoundland recitation. It is most usual for these pieces to be recited from memory and Mrs. Hussey did not do so. Rather, she presented the recitation in a play-like form, as a kind of one-woman show; she was costumed as a pioneer, and she read the words from a paper concealed in her own family's photograph album, which she held in her lap.

However, it has been shown that it is often possible and even desirable for members of a society to work with, bend, and reinterpret the rules for cultural performance to both personal benefit and that of the wider society.¹⁵ Greta Hussey is not the only Newfoundland woman who does recitations, though she shares a somewhat anomalous role and ethos with those who do, as well as differing in performance style from male recitacionists. Nevertheless, it must be emphasised that her performance and those of the other women discussed below are emically termed recitations.

Mary MacIsaac was the first Newfoundland woman I heard giving a recitation. She read "Swilin' '77", a poem she composed presenting a countering viewpoint to the Greenpeace protest of the Newfoundland seal hunt at the "Good Entertainment" festival held in St. John's in November 1977. Mrs. MacIsaac wrote the poem as "a rallying cry to others."¹⁶ She is active as a poet and is so recognised in her community, having published poems in the local newspaper, but she says, "I'm

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14. See Melvin M. FIRESTONE, *Brothers and Rivals: Patrilocality in Savage Cove*. St. John's, Institute of Social and Economic Research, 1967; Debora KODISH, " 'Never Had a Word Between Us: ' Pattern in the Verbal Art of a Newfoundland Woman," University of Texas at Austin doctoral dissertation, 1981; John F. SZWED, *Private Culture and Public Imagery: Interpersonal Relations in a Newfoundland Peasant Society*. St. John's, Institute of Social and Economic Research, 1966; and Wilfred WAREHAM, "Towards an Ethnography of 'Times: ' Newfoundland Party Traditions Past and Present," University of Pennsylvania doctoral dissertation, 1982.
 15. See for instance Joel SHERZER, "Strategies in Text and Context: *Kuna Kaa Kwento*," *Journal of American Folklore* 92 (1979), 145-163.
 16. Cynthia LAMSON, "*Bloody Decks and a Bumper Crop: ' The Rhetoric of Sealing Counter-Protest*. St. John's, Institute of Social and Economic Research, 1979, p. 85.

a bit shy about trekking my work — perhaps a bit cowardly — in my home they sort of think it is a joke.”¹⁷ It is perceived as an unusual or even to some extent an antisocial thing in Newfoundland for a woman to write and perform as Mrs. MacIsaac does, but it is a way in which she can contest both her own society’s view of women and any external issue she feels is relevant ; “No one encouraged me to write “Swilin ‘77,” that’s the one thing you don’t get here — you’ve got to take the bull by the horns yourself — even if you are a woman.”¹⁸ Thus, Mrs. MacIsaac fits, at least to some extent, the recitation’s characterisation of women as aggressive speakers or users of language.

Dulsie Spracklin, the composer of “The Family Album,” is Mrs. Hussey’s sister, and lives near the latter’s community of Port-de-Grave, in the outport community of Brigus.¹⁹ She has done historical research by talking with other people in her community and is a writer for the “Compass,” a small local weekly newspaper, to which she contributes stories and poems. Mrs. Spracklin has written several other recitations, on Captain Bob Bartlett, a famous local sealing captain, and on her own outport childhood. Family photographs seem to be a natural and appropriate topic for Mrs. Spracklin to consider, with her interest in local history and in the past, and her love for old photographs, a collection of which she keeps carefully ordered and arranged.

Mrs. Greta Hussey, like her sister, is somewhat unusual in that she has considerable interest in local history.²⁰ She is also a widow, which makes her status in the community more ambiguous and therefore more open to interpretation and manipulation than that of married or spinster women, whose positions are more clearly defined, a situation which she has to some extent exploited. She has been an employee of the Newfoundland government, and is the local custodian/curator of the Fisherman’s Museum in Hibb’s Cove, a few miles from her home in Port-de-Grave.

Before dealing with the oppositions in the text of “The Family Album,” I will deal with the specific performance situation. There are aspects of this recitation which made it appropriate for this particular concert. First, it is about one kind of sociability, the house visit, which

17. *Ibid.*, p. 62.

18. *Ibid.*

19. My information on Mrs. Spracklin comes from Catherine Schwoeffermann, who encountered her while doing fieldwork in Brigus.

20 See Martin LOVELACE, “John Guy Meets the Dawes : The Investigation of an Oral Historical Tradition,” *Canadian Folklore canadien* 2 (1980), 44-53.

is socially and physically private, presented in the context of another kind of sociability, the concert, which is socially and physically public. It purports to show the concert audience, which includes both males and females, what happens when two women get together, one of whom is a stranger to the community. It is quite possible that what would really occur in such a situation might not be so innocuous, non-threatening to community solidarity, and based upon the past or the events in the recitations. It has been commented in the ethnographies of Newfoundland outports that, unlike men, women do not need to get drunk to say what they mean, because their patterns of information flow are not impeded.²¹ Faris, when he says that "learning in Cat Harbour is largely by way of observation, not conversation"²², is surely talking not only about men rather than women, but about practical work-related knowledge rather than sociocultural and social structural knowledge. Though this is, of course, essentially and ideal typical distinction, women are said to be free to gossip and men to be restrained in their talk. Thus, this recitation maintains the fiction that socially dangerous gossip does not occur, and presents at the same time a situation to which the entire community can relate. Rather than being a divisive contestative statement, it is an inclusive communalistic one.

The recitation's contents do not apparently refer to any specific photographs in the author's collection, to particular members of her family, nor to her community, Brigus. The community involved is generalised and fictional, one which is in some ways, such as religion — Brigus is split fairly evenly between Protestants and Catholics, whereas the names in the recitation are Protestant — significantly different from the one in which it was composed, or the one in which it was presented. Some words, such as "likenesses" for photographs, are not commonly used in the area, but are apparently used to invoke an old-fashioned quality, as does much of the piece's content and the performance style used. Mrs. Hussey occasionally corrected herself when she said a word according to standard pronunciation, and it can be seen that the dropping of initial h's, for instance, decreased as the performance progressed. The speech style maintains the social class reference of the supposed speaker; she is an old time outport woman, not a modern one. Thus, the recitation is appropriate because it recalls a fictitious idealised community in the past; it is an appeal to a common nostalgia rather than to potentially divisive discussion or satire on actual events.

21. See SZWED, *Private Culture*, p. 107.

22. FARIS, *Cat Harbour*, p. 144.

It is common for photographs to be used, as they are in this recitation, to introduce outsiders to the family. As one Newfoundland woman put it :

As we make new friends, I always want to introduce them to members of the family that are not here with us, so I have to trot out the albums. I feel, well, we've made new friends ; well now they must know our sons. Well, our family are not with us, you see ; they've moved away. And the only way I can bring them into the picture is to trot out the albums.

They can also be used, again as in the recitation, to introduce people to a new community, as the above woman's husband states :

Now a couple of years ago... neighbours moved in on both sides of us who had come from Montreal, and they knew absolutely nothing about Newfoundland, and so we invited them in one evening with some other friends and put on a showing, if you like, of Newfoundland slides.

The recitation itself is being used in a wider context, symbolically but consciously, to introduce the young people of Port-de-Grave and the surrounding area to pre-Confederation practices and lifestyle.

Though its differences from the norm, as discussed above, are considerable, Mrs. Hussey's performance style for this recitation is in other ways similar to that of male Newfoundland recitationists. The overtly serious content is presented in a humourous style, the entire recitation contains a voice quality imitation of its ostensible speaker, and it is dramatic. Furthermore, it appears to deal, on the surface level, with the kinds of subjects Wareham suggests ; it is a fictitious presentation of local historical concerns. It varies, as suggested above, in that Mrs. Hussey overtly takes on the role of the old woman in costume as well as expressing this through her changes in speech tone and accent. This may be seen, apart from its appropriateness to the entire concert — a sort of day-in-the-life of a pre-Confederation outpost — as a mechanism which distances Mrs. Hussey as a person from her performance role. In keeping with Goldstein's suggestion that such behaviour in traditional cultures is inappropriate for women, she presents the piece not as herself, but as an invented character.

In terms of its form and structure, the recitation's text differs from those examples discussed previously. In contrast with the others, which essentially concentrate on one narrative incident, "The Family Album" can be divided into nine sections ; an introduction, seven anecdotes each of which deals with a different photograph, and a coda.

The text, despite its multi-episodic nature, contains relatively few oppositions ; it carries a similar symbolic burden to the male texts. In fact, though there are some oppositions which pertain

throughout, each episode appears to concern itself with presenting a new one, with the exception of the last, in which the speaker traverses again the oppositional territory of the previous sections. Significantly, it is at this point that her guest, Mrs. Sturge, chooses to leave. However, many of the oppositions in this recitation are reversed in moral polarity; what would be viewed positively by the culture is viewed negatively in the recitation, and vice versa. This kind of reversal does not appear in the male recitations.

semantic domain :	content :	
throughout :		
body	male	female
speech	gentle	aggressive
state	moderation	excess
by episode :		
1 : mind/body	insider	outsider
2 : mind/body/production	married	single
3 : mind/body	fast	slow
4 : mind/body/territory	rich	poor
5 : mind/body/economy/production	proud	humble
6 : body/territory	up-to-date	old-fashioned
7 : body/territory/economy	normal food	abnormal food
8 : mind/body/economy/production/ territory	up-to-date	old-fashioned
	rich	poor
	insider	outsider
	fast	slow
	proud	humble

The first part of the recitation establishes the characters involved, Mrs. Sturge and the speaker — Grandma or Aunt Jane — and states that the former is new to the community. Since it is rare for married couples to move to a different community, and almost unknown for a woman to do so unless she is a schoolteacher, her presence would be understood by the Newfoundland audience to be the result of patrilocality and exogamy. In other words, Mrs. Sturge has moved from another community as a new bride to live with her husband. She seems to be making a duty visit to an older female member of the community, since in any outpost it is necessary to be known by, and to a certain extent to get along with everyone else; that is, one must seek to establish one's position vis-à-vis other individuals there to the greatest possible advantage. This section, then, establishes the insider/outsider opposition, but again, reverses it as Mrs. Sturge, the former outsider, is being introduced to a new role as a community insider.

The second section presents the opposition of married and unmarried states, seen primarily in the semantic domain of mind; it is

not the physical but the psychosocial questions of bachelorhood which are seen as problematic. Since Mrs. Sturge is newly married, her hostess considerably brings up a topic of immediate interest to her ; men, bachelorhood, and love. This section affirms that married love is the ideal state, so much so that 'Ezekiah, as soon as he is brought into the discussion, without any other identification, is known by implication to be the speaker's husband. The suggestion in the text is that being "crossed in love" is no reason to give up the accepted normal state of marriage, as Cy Aren shows. Cousin Lemuel, on the other hand, who never marries, is severely castigated ; bachelorhood is not positively viewed in Newfoundland society :

On the one hand, [the bachelor] is socially incomplete, unable to fully participate in the usual pattern of reciprocity that involves food and farm labour [such as a wife and children can provide], and on the other, he is a source of potential disorder, lacking sons that bring continuity of land and solidarity of community territoriality. In the same manner, the bachelor's lack of legitimate sexual outlets is a source of community concern.²³

It is significant that an unusually large number of overtly tropic statements are found in this section ; it is said that "a graveyard is a real cheerful companion to what Cousin Lemuel is," and he is also described as a "piece of melancholy." Apart from the fact that this occurs early in the recitation, when the audience will be expecting clever and aesthetically pleasing speech, the topic of bachelorhood is a sufficiently tense one to be treated metaphorically and symbolically. Lemuel is a "piece" because he is incomplete without a wife — companionless — and he is also a graveyard because he will have no issue to continue his name. Nor is he a respectable companion for a married woman like Mrs. Sturge, any more than a graveyard is, being equally associated with a lack of fertility and with sexual danger.

On the other hand, the view of Cousin Lemuel is not cruel — at least he tried to get married — but the intelligence of women for not considering such a gloomy sort of man is celebrated. Aunt Jane is inviting Mrs. Sturge into the community of women.

Presenting the opposition of fast and slow, this time combining the domains of the mind and body, the third section is also a cautionary tale directed to Mrs. Sturge. Basically, it says that men's characters cannot be changed by their wives, and that acceptance, even in the face of public humiliation, of men's idiosyncracies, is the best tack.

23. John SZWED, "Paul E. HALL: A Newfoundland Song-Maker and Community of Song," in *Folksongs and Their Makers*. Bowling Green, Ohio, Bowling Green University Popular Press, n.d., p. 163.

Men have redeeming features — for instance, they may be religious, like Uncle John — in spite of less ideal characteristics — such as being slow — and they always get the last word, as Uncle John does. The textual opposition of fast and slow is reversed as the slow Uncle John is forced to catch up with the funeral procession.

This narrative is also sent, through the text, into the community ; it discusses a funeral, a multi-participant activity which takes place outside the house. From the end of this section on, the recitation ceases to be symbolically directed in an obvious way at Mrs. Sturge. It no longer emphasises the frame of a conversation between two women ; the anecdotes are more directed to the community — the actual audience — that to Mrs. Sturge — the textual audience.

In the fourth section, common values are celebrated in a satire on an outgroup ; the wealthy in Bay Roberts. The oppositions again combine mind and body with territory. To both Port-de-Grave, where Mrs. Hussey lives and the concert took place, and Brigus, where the author lives, Bay Roberts is the nearest large town, and represents at least some wealth and position in those communities' views. However, people there spend their money on foolish and meaningless things — “you can't hardly understand a word she says” — like opera singing. Thus, wealth is ridiculed and reversed in moral polarity from the admirable to the ridiculous, though it may otherwise be socioculturally valued.

The next anecdote is based upon the polarity of pride and humility, continuing the mind/body semantic domain and including production. Mary is set up as the proud one of the family, but Ellen also exhibits pride — a textual reversal — in having twins. Of course, by producing triplets, Mary not only reasserts her pride, but shows to some extent a valid base for it. Pride, which would otherwise be negatively viewed, is shown to be productive in the sense that it is the implied source of the triplets. Even overproduction, this time of children, is positively viewed.

The sixth section opposes the up-to-date with the old-fashioned, primarily in the realm of the physical body and territory. Susie transforms — reverses — her old-fashioned dress into a modern one by cutting it shorter. Yet the stated valuation by the mother of the old-fashioned way is morally reversed since she does not choose to punish Mary for this action.

The next anecdote alternates the concepts of normal and abnormal food in an extremely physical and body-oriented semantic domain. Obviously, cannibalism is scarcely something to be valued for its own sake, but it is ironically and humourously suggested to have a positive valence since the cannibals may become missionaries through their ingestion of 'Ezekiah.

The last anecdote both brings in overtly the theme of the past, and ends by bringing the material up to date and into the community itself. The car is shown in the text to be a less than ideal way of getting around the community. Even now when people travel through their outports they are concerned, as the speaker is, with events and people. It is seen as natural and ideal that this should be so, and thus the body of the recitation ends with a note which again emphasises and lauds community ideals. In fact, as elsewhere, the automobile may have been a source of community breakdown, allowing young people to see and want things outside their home communities, and encouraging travel between outports, thus implicitly making intra-community sociability less necessary. The recitation, and the concert, reaffirms to community members that the traditional ideals and ways have, to some extent at least, withstood the onslaught of modernity. Ironically, of course, many members of the audience would not have come from the host community, and many probably arrived by car, even from within it. In this section, the speaker ceases to concentrate on the relatives in the pictures and their activity, and extends her view to her own experiences, as well as her opinions of appropriate behaviour. Thus, the actual event — the concert — and the purported event — the discussion with Mrs. Sturge — are merged.

The concluding section brings a note of pathos and nostalgia. The old woman is finally left alone with her memories of the past. Mrs. Hussey herself added the ending note of community-oriented laughter; she picks up the hem of her old-fashioned skirt to wipe her eyes, revealing lacy pantalettes beneath, covering her legs. Thus the recitation is completed on a light note, rather than with the old woman's sorrow.

This recitation is unique, at least with respect to the other examples discussed here, because it includes a large number of signifiers which operate simultaneously in several semantic domains. Though there is a syntagmatic progression from a concern with the mental and physical to a concern with the physical in general, each section, using a single signifying opposition, also deals with other semantic domains. All deal ultimately with moderation and excess, but women are shown to be more tolerant of excess than are men.

Excess is indicated in both male and female behaviour. Uncle John is very slow, Cousin Lemuel is overemotional about his heart-break, and we can even see the missionary relative as being overly self-sacrificing. These excesses are viewed humourously and negatively in the text. However, the women's excesses — dresses too short, production of triplets, and so on — are viewed with greater

toleration, perhaps because they take place within the limits of the family, unlike the male excesses which are more public.

"The Family Album"'s anecdotes deal exclusively with family members, a situation which is in direct contrast to actual family albums in Newfoundland which also include individuals from the community. This operates on one level to retain the innocuous nature of the criticisms of people which are made by Grandma, but also to emphasise that this is the woman's primary sphere of influence. The women in the recitation can operate, however, in other spheres; Sabriney is a participant in the funeral, the Bates girl is an opera singer in Boston and Germany.

Thus, Mrs. Hussey's recitation deals with the same semantic domains as do the male recitations, and it also tends to polarise characteristics along similar lines, opposing the same qualities to one another. However, the effect of stereotyped opposition is mitigated within this recitation, and the values of women's characteristics, and some of the other qualities which are negatively viewed in the other recitations, are seen as having positive valences. In fact, the recitation takes the general valuation of moderation over excess one step further in suggesting that even excess is tolerable in moderation.

"The Family Album" reverses textually or morally all the oppositions it deals with, in contrast to the male recitations, which never reverse the valuation of an opposition. Textually, though for the most part it retains the association of male : female : : gentle speech : aggressive speech, as in the male recitations, it expressly reverses the moral and emotional polarity of these two central oppositions.

This recitation, if anything, exaggerates the symbolic concentration of the genre, especially in its interest in speech. Its entire text, in fact, is an enacted speech by a female; drama rather than narrative. Ultimately, it is also aggressive in its willingness to make judgements, but it loses this quality at the end when Mrs. Sturge leaves. Mrs. Hussey changes her entire tone of voice at that point from the aggressive dominance of the conversation of surprise and sorrow at the need to relinquish it. Mrs. Sturge is silent throughout, though the speaker indicates at various times that the former has spoken. Even in the instance when a male speaker has the last word, it is not treated as direct reported speech but as indirect discourse: "Uncle John said he was glad 'e got a chance to look at the coffin before they laid it away" contrasts with the direct discourse of "She said, 'Now John, I'm goin' to do my work and get ready and go and you can come when you gets around to it.'" The male whose speech is directly reported — 'Enry's very literal and humourless suggestion that Aunt Jane take her hat off — is immediately one-upped by his aunt when she sug-

gests that it would be worse if she lost her four dollar hairpiece. Throughout, female speech is celebrated in that it provides the medium for all the positively viewed reversals in the text, foremost of which, on a superficial textual level, may be the incorporation of the erstwhile outsider Mrs. Sturge into the community. This echoes the overt purpose of the concert, to inculcate the young people with their elders' knowledge and thus to incorporate them symbolically into the community.

Furthermore, the positive association of females over males can be suggested by an inventory of characters. 'Ezekiah is not explicitly discussed, but his position must be inferred from his relationship to Grandma. Cy Aren is crossed in love, though he recovers, but Cousin Lemuel is probably the least positively viewed character in the entire recitation. Uncle John, though a good man, is slow. The ridiculous Cousin Emmeline is related to Grandma on her father's side, and the latter is suggested to be excessively materialistic. The missionary, 'Ezekiah's cousin, is cooked and eaten. And 'Enry not only endangers his aunt's hairpiece, and drives too fast, but obviously values the wrong kinds of things, such as newfangled cars.

Women, on the other hand, are humourous characters who are possessors of senses of humour. Even in the denigrated Bates family it is Cousin Emmeline who is the crowning glory. Women's competitions are good-natured, such as the one between Mary and Cousin Ellen Dean, or even between Ma and Susie. Women have power over man; when the latter get crossed in love, for instance, they become at least temporarily culturally problematic. Women, in contrast, are smart and well-organised.

Finally, this example shows that the Newfoundland recitation as an emic genre tolerates a certain amount of variation within the generic continuum. "The Family Album" itself, though it clearly departs from some of the qualities of the male recitations, can also be indicated to partake of many of their important characteristics. It is a long work than most of the male examples, and is in many ways a much more complex text symbolically. However, the complexities are evidently not attempts to subvert the cultural status quo but are, like the concert in which the recitation was performed, mitigating, integrative, and affirmative.

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Résumé

Le monologue, comme genre de la littérature orale, est sexiste. Non seulement il est dit en général par des hommes mais il célèbre en plus la masculinité, la plupart du temps au détriment de la féminité elle-même. En contrepartie à cette tendance, l'auteur examine ici le contenu d'un monologue écrit par Dulsie Spracklin et récité par sa soeur Greta Hussey, toutes deux de Terre-Neuve.