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Article abstract

The Irish in Newfoundland have developed their culture and identity over the past 300 years in the context of the island's changing political status from independent territory, to British colony, and to Canadian province (since 1949). Newfoundland song, dance and dialect all display evident Irish features and have played an important role in the marketing of the province as a tourist destination. Recent provincial government initiatives to forge contacts with Celtic Tiger Ireland and thus revive this powerfully "imagined" Atlantic network have also contributed to the notion of the "Irishness" of Newfoundland culture. The narrative of Newfoundland as an Irish place, however, has always been (and continues to be) contested; this is most evident in a local discourse of space and place that is grounded in two predominant narratives of the Newfoundland nation: Republican and Confederate. The author illustrates how this contested spatial discourse has recently played out over the disputed terrain of the *The Rooms*, the new home of Newfoundland's provincial museum, art gallery and archives.

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The Forgotten Irish?

Contested sites and narratives of nation in Newfoundland

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> Newfoundland was entering a limbo… We had admitted, neither for the first nor the last time, that nationhood was a luxury we could not afford (Wayne Johnston, *The Colony of Unrequited Dreams*).

The Irish in Newfoundland have developed their culture and identity over the past 300 years in the context of the island's changing political status from independent territory to British colony, and to Canadian province (since 1949). Newfoundland song, dance, and dialect all display evident Irish features and have played an important role in the marketing of the province as a tourist destination. Recent provincial government initiatives to forge contacts with Celtic Tiger Ireland and thus revive this powerfully "imagined" Atlantic network have also contributed to the notion of the "Irishness" of Newfoundland culture.[2]

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1. Thanks to Dr. John FitzGerald for so generously lending me his comprehensive file on The Rooms controversy and thanks also for interviews to himself, Aidan O'Hara, Ken Clark, Seamus Doherty, and Dr. Vincent McMahon. Thanks to Dr. Philip Hiscock for sending his article on Sheila na Geira and to Shelly Hobbs for sending population charts. For their suggestions on the manuscript, thanks to my colleagues Drs. Brian Lambkin and Patrick Fitzgerald of the Centre for Migration Studies, Dr. Caitríona Ní Laoire, Department of Geography, University College Cork and most particularly to Dr. Lillis Ó Laoire. Thanks also to the Irish Newfoundland Association and special thanks to Anita Best, whose passion for Newfoundland inspired my own. Any opinions, errors, or misunderstandings expressed in this article are mine alone.

2. The Ireland Newfoundland Partnership, Office of the Taoiseach, is an initiative stemming from the Memorandum of Understanding between the Irish Government and the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, first signed in 1996 and reaffirmed since in 1999 and 2004. The Ireland Newfoundland Business Partnerships operates from the Office of the Premier, Government of Newfoundland and Labrador. Both bodies aim to promote economic and cultural links between the two jurisdictions.

The narrative of Newfoundland as an Irish place, however, has always been (and continues to be) contested: this most evident in the local discourse of space and place. While the performance culture has an undeniably Irish flavour — Newfoundland traditional music is often referred to as Newfoundland Irish music, for example — the hierarchy of the naming of streets, institutions and public spaces, and the new construction of important buildings tell another story of a British colonial past and American military presence. In the juxtaposition of cultures competing for space and contesting place, three predominant groups, the English, the Irish, and the Americans, have been primarily implicated in the struggle for representation via place names, architecture, and control of public spaces. Since the governing institutions in Newfoundland were established on English/British models and hence ideology, it is the English/British elite (merchants, professionals and government officials), for the most part, who have historically comprised the ruling group and created the dominant culture. This is not to say that the average Newfoundlander of English heritage has been in any way complicit in oppressing others. Like the Irish, they too were subject to the "ruling" ideology and may have been oppressed by it. Some were, no doubt, also complicit in contesting it.

The goal of this article, then, is to examine the landscape of Irish identity in Newfoundland, uncovering sites of contestation and their intersection with two competing narratives or trajectories of nation[3] in Newfoundland. In the final analysis, the discussion will focus on the much contested terrain of The Rooms, the new home of Newfoundland's provincial museum, art gallery, and archives.[4]

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3. I use the term "nation" intentionally in this article because of Newfoundland's distinct history as a nation and that in essence its struggle for self-determination is, I sense, not yet completed. At the present time and in view of recent debates, using the term "province" to denote Newfoundland's current status is problematic, just as it is with Québec.
4. For an excellent overview of the The Rooms controversy and public consultation process, see Latta (this volume) and for additional background material, see Paterson (2002). This article results from the experiences gained during the two years (2002-2004) that I spent in Newfoundland, resident in St. John's, as a Research Fellow in the Department of Folklore at Memorial University. During that time, I particularly focused my research on Irish culture in Newfoundland and became very involved in the Irish community, through teaching topical Irish courses including the development of a course about Irish culture in Newfoundland, by interacting with and learning from my

The Irish in Newfoundland

On the twenty-fourth of June, the feast of saint John, in 1497, John Cabot or Caboto allegedly first set foot on the island of Newfoundland and raised two banners: one for Henry VII, King of England, the other for Pope Alexander VI.[5] Thus began the European struggle for the rich fishing grounds just offshore and the eventual settlement of the island. While the major fishing nations, the English, Portuguese, French, Bretons, and Basque, each claimed sections of shoreline for their seasonal fishing stations during the first half of the sixteenth century, permanent settlement of the island did not begin until a century later. Irish settlement in Newfoundland dates to around 1675, when English ships began a practice of stopping at Irish ports to collect provisions and servants en route to the Newfoundland fishing grounds.[6] Thus, emigration from Ireland to Newfoundland, along with that to New France (from around 1650), established the earliest Irish presence in the territory that eventually became Canada.[7] In terms of the

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students who were mostly of Irish descent and from small communities, and by involvement with the Irish Newfoundland Association (board member 2003-2004). I was also active in the wider Newfoundland cultural community and most particularly involved in Francophone community affairs. Much of the information in this article was gleaned from casual conversations with a great variety of individuals, from formal interviews, and from reading Newfoundland history and paying attention to Newfoundland current affairs. My personal history — family from the North of Ireland, one parent Catholic, the other Protestant — has no doubt influenced my reading of the subject matter and I suspect that some of the ideas put forth here may be controversial. It is my sincere hope that they may stimulate debate. The title of this paper is inspired by the film of the same name (O'Hara and McCarthy 1981).

5. While tradition has it that Cabot landed at Cape Bonavista, there is no actual proof of this. These early voyages to North America by Cabot and others are much discussed and disputed by historians. See O'Flaherty (1999) for an outline of the argument and its literature and Prowse (2002) for additional detail.
6. John Mannion has written extensively on the history of Newfoundland maritime connections with England and Ireland. See especially Mannion (1982, 1992, 2001) and also Byrne (1992).
7. While regular Irish settlement in Newfoundland for the most part began around 1675 (Mannion 2001), there were likely some earlier Irish settlers. Certainly Sir George Calvert aka Lord Baltimore (c.1580-1632) and Henry Cary aka Viscount Falkland (c.1575-1633) had direct links with Ireland; and a promotional pamphlet about Newfoundland, *A short discourse of the New-found-land*, was published in Dublin in 1623 with a view to attracting potential settlers (Quinn 1991). See Mannion (n.d.) for a detailed analysis on the development of the Irish population in Newfoundland.

composition of the Newfoundland population overall, the two major groups are those of West Country English and Irish descent, with the remainder comprising smaller numbers of Scots, Welsh, Portuguese, French and aboriginal groups, and some more recent arrivals of Asian and Eastern European origin.[8] The Irish contingent is largely though not exclusively comprised of Catholics from the Southeast, and also includes a small Ulster and Protestant presence, most notable in merchant and shipping families.[9] In addition to Newfoundlanders of Irish descent, there is currently a small group of Irish-born residents (140),[10] many of whom are involved in the medical and religious professions.[11] I do not

8. In a recent article, Proton Rahman of the Department of Genetics, Memorial University of Newfoundland, and his research team have reported that the genetic isolation of Newfoundland's population is comparable with that of extremely isolated religious sects such as the Hutterites and the Amish, thus "Newfoundland represents an exceptional resource for identifying disease related genes for monogenic disorders" (R167). Citing the 2001 Canadian Census, they state that, "The present population of the province of Newfoundland and Labrador is 512930, with 98% of English or Irish descent… Sixty percent of the current population of Newfoundland reside in communities with 2500 inhabitants or less" (R167). "Along with the geographic isolation, the Newfoundland population demonstrates a high degree of cultural and environmental homogeneity…" (R170) (Proton Rahman *et al.* 2003). Of the 512930 total population, 485066 reside on the island of Newfoundland and 27864 in Labrador. This represents a 7 % loss in population since the 1996 census.
9. Two of Newfoundland's Prime Ministers were from Ulster Protestant families: Walter Stanley Monroe (1871-1952), born in Dublin of the Armagh/Down Monroe family, was Prime Minister of Newfoundland from 1924-1928. Frederick Charles Alderdice (1872-1936), born in Belfast, was Prime Minister of Newfoundland in 1928 and again from 1932-1934. W.S. Monroe's uncle, Moses Monroe (1842-95), born in Moira, Co. Down was a leading businessman in St. John's, of the dry goods firm M. Munroe. His uncle Moses Harvey (1820-1901), born in Armagh, was a leading Presbyterian clergyman (Free St. Andrews) and historian who published many books about Newfoundland. Sir Walter Edward Davidson (1859-1923), born in Killyleagh, Co. Down, was Governor of Newfoundland from 1913-17. There were also a number of Protestant merchant families who came from Southeast Ireland.
10. Note that the Canadian Census lists the Irish-born from the Republic of Ireland only. Persons born in Northern Ireland are not included in these census figures: 1971 (300); 1981 (110); 1991 (215); 2001 (140) (Canada 2001b; Hobbs 2004).
11. Until recent years, for example, many Newfoundland seminarians trained at All Hallows College in Dublin, and prior to the opening of the medical school at Memorial University, many Newfoundlanders trained at Irish medical schools, especially Trinity College and University College Dublin.

mean to imply here that there is one homogeneous Irish community in Newfoundland. Indeed, the Newfoundland Irish are a diverse group, representing a variety of class backgrounds, both rural and urban, multigenerational, mixed heritage, and Irish-born. Nevertheless, there is an emerging recognition of this collective Irishness, a culture easily and immediately identifiable to people of Irish heritage as lived on a daily basis throughout Newfoundland. For Irish-born people arriving in Newfoundland for the first time, their initial encounter with Newfoundland Irishness makes an unforgettable impression, as in this example, described by Dr. Vincent McMahon of his arrival in 1970.

> VM: And even at the airport when I got off the plane — I was being taken to my friend's home — I asked the taxi driver because of his very pronounced southern Irish accent, what part of Ireland he came from. And he proudly informed me that he wasn't from Ireland, that he was from Trepassey or somewhere but his grandfather came from a place called Tipperary and he wondered if I'd ever been there.
> JDT: And you genuinely did think that he was an Irish person?
> VM: Oh I did, yes. Yeah, yeah (McMahon 2004).

Seamus Doherty, from Strabane, Co. Tyrone worked as a professional touring musician in Canada for five years during the late 1970s and early 1980s. His band spent a few weeks every year playing in St. John's and he was so struck by the Irish character of the place, he considered relocating there.

> And Newfoundland — I really liked Newfoundland! It was so different. First of all, I found the people quite like Irish people. Their reaction to the music was much the same. I was quite surprised at the music. I mean I heard a lot of music I recognised but it wasn't called what I would have called it… But it had obviously travelled. Local names for it. And then even songs — some local songs — with completely different words and a different theme, but much the same song… But I found the people in Newfoundland very warm and friendly people and very, very like Irish people. A bit relaxed and — I'm not sure how I can put it — not as taken up with possessions… In a way, Newfoundland reminded me a bit of Donegal when the crack is only starting when the band's finished. You know, "Work? We'll worry about that later." There was something very Irish about that… You know, "We'll get it done eventually." That stiffness is not there, I think. More relaxed and very like Irish people, I think (Doherty 2004).[12]

12. A pseudonym was used at the request of the interviewee.

Ken Clark, a farmer from County Derry, worked in Fort McMurray, Alberta during the 1980s. He recalled meeting Newfoundlanders there.

> I mean [in Fort] McMurray, there was more people from Newfoundland in McMurray than the rest of Canada put together… Great fun! Irish, very Irish, extremely Irish. In fact, the attitudes, this "don't give a damn" you know, bravado. Extremely, I mean, so Irish it's unbelievable (Clark 2004).[13]

Irish broadcaster and writer, Aidan O'Hara, who lived in Newfoundland from 1973-1978, spoke of encountering Newfoundland's Irish culture embodied in its people.

> Like Mr. old Neddy McGrath — he was 97 when I recorded him. And like when you meet them, it's a very moving experience to meet people who have been in Newfoundland for perhaps, he would have been perhaps third or fourth generation, and no less Irish. What do I mean by that? He was fully a Newfoundlander, but it's just that he had that Irishness. He would have seen himself as a Newfoundlander, but he would have been aware of the Irish connection particularly through the religion, through the priests and so on, because most of them were Irish or Irish-trained (O'Hara 2004).

The increasing recognition of the Irish contribution to the culture of Newfoundland is now being supported by a growing body of research literature. It is perhaps not surprising that much of the pioneering work has been done by Irish-born scholars (John Mannion 1974, etc.; Aidan O'Hara 1998; with McCarthy 1981) and Newfoundlanders who have spent formative time in Ireland (Cyril Byrne 1992, etc.; George Casey 1986), as their knowledge of the dual contexts of Ireland and Newfoundland has been critical in identifying, collecting and analysing the evidence. More recently, however, scholars from a variety of fields and backgrounds have begun to seriously engage with the Irish heritage of Newfoundland; many of them focus on aspects of culture: literature and folklore (Schrank and Feder 1977; Byrne and Harry 1986); language (Dillon 1968; Foster 1982); religion (Murphy and Byrne 1987); and material culture (Pocius 1991). One M.A. thesis (Hobbs 2004) and two important doctoral dissertations in history (FitzGerald 1997; Keough 2001) have recently added to the research literature. In addition, a number of popular local histories are also important sources on the Irish (McCarthy 1999; O'Neill 2003; O'Reilly 1889-90).

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13. A pseudonym was used at the request of the interviewee.

Constructing the Landscape of Nation

Reading landscape as a text (Barnes and Duncan 1992), following on from Paul Ricoeur's hermeneutical approach to written texts (1981), is a useful tactic in uncovering a landscape's visual ideology (Cosgrove 1985; Daniels and Cosgrove 1988). Where space is contested, it can highlight the "intersection of disparate trajectories" (Massey 2004: 6), illustrating how a site of contestation may be linked to diverse narratives both of the past and of the future. Thus, one particular site may be "owned" by multiple groups who have produced this space (Lefebvre 1991) and continue to "produce" it according to their own group narratives of past, present and future. A single site, therefore, may be open to multiple interpretations, not only located in the past (Bender 2002; Lowenthal 1985). The Cartier Monument complex in Montreal, for example, "has come to be a site of contestation of memories of the past, issues of the present, and construction of the future" (Osborne 1998: 438) as the uses of the site over time have shifted from commemorations of Canadian federalism, to celebrations of British imperialism during the interwar period, and latterly for protests by Quebec nationalists and others. "People inhabit terrain, and interact with it, always in particular embodied ways which are also — among many other things — ways of structuring memory, forgetting and the political control of knowledge" (Harrison 2004: 149). So it is that identities, "including those of place, are forged through embodied relations which are extended geographically as well as historically" (Massey 2004: 10).

The control of a contested site and therefore its public memory by the dominant group may privilege their narratives of past and future to the exclusion of others (Harvey 2000). This is a useful tool of the nation state in creating a cohesive national narrative. The negative potential and impact of site interpretations, however, should not be underestimated. Crampton (2001) has shown, for example, how one contested site, the Voortrekker Monument in South Africa, not only bolstered an Afrikaner nationalist narrative of nation, but also served to legitimise and authenticate a system of apartheid. In Australia, the layout of central Adelaide and its Prince Henry Gardens "reifies European frameworks and thus marginalizes native people in the so-called act of respect, of commemoration" (Hay, Hughes and Tutton 2004: 207). In his discussion of the border region of South Armagh in Northern Ireland, Donnan has shown how the minority Protestant

community of the area engages in the practice of "ethnicizing space" (2005: 78) by constructing "narratives of dispossession" (87) that enact and validate Protestant identity as they narrate a "depressing genealogy of death" (93). Cooke has described the process where contestation over Holocaust memories and a desire on the part of the Jewish community "not to be rude to the hosts" (2000: 451), resulted in the relegation of the Holocaust Memorial to a site in London's Hyde Park where there was no chance of it "disrupting the imperial landscape of state and nation" nor intruding "upon sacred national space" (453) beside the Cenotaph.

Historically, the presence of the Irish in the Newfoundland landscape has been most evident through their institutions, mostly of a religious nature: the churches and the religious schools founded by the Irish Presentation Sisters (from 1833), the Sisters of Mercy (from 1842) and the Irish Christian Brothers (from 1889). Non-denominational groups operating in St. John's, such as the Benevolent Irish Society (est. 1806) and more recently, the Irish Newfoundland Association (est. 1976), have worked to fulfil the social and charitable needs of the community, and various buildings and parochial halls serve as reminders of this aspect of Irish Newfoundland society. Many of the most important Irish sites are not of an "official" nature and even though connected with religion, hearken back to pre-Christian associations with the spiritual and mythical realm and thus incorporate natural landscape features, located in peripheral or liminal space where they may serve as sites of pilgrimage. In Newfoundland as in Ireland in the eighteenth century, the practice of Catholicism was restricted by law, thus tradition has it that mass in many areas was celebrated in secret usually at the site of a large rock. The Irish song/tune *An raibh tú ar an gcarraig?* [Were you at the rock?] refers to this secret practice.[14] The Mass Rock at Renews is a manifestation of this tradition in Newfoundland; thus it serves dually as a site of religious ritual for Irish Catholics and, perhaps even more significantly, as a symbol of their resistance to the ruling group. Holy wells are sites of pilgrimage and prayer where people go to seek relief for mental and physical troubles (Brenneman 1995; Carroll 1999; Logan 1980; Ó Giolláin 1998, 2005; Rackard and O'Callaghan 2001; Taylor 1995), and while not exclusive to the Irish, they are quite common wherever Irish populations are found, including numerous examples in Newfoundland, most notably Father Duffy's Well on the Salmonier Line.

14. There is also a reading of it as a secular song, see Shields (1993).

The origin of the well is attributed to a miracle performed by Father James Duffy in 1836 as he and eight parishioners from St. Mary's were making their way on foot to St. John's where they had, after a period of resistance, been commanded by Bishop Fleming to turn themselves in to the authorities. They had been charged with the destruction of a large fish flake belonging to an English merchant that obstructed the entrance to their church, newly built on a contested site.[15] But this holy well differs from the "norm" and is an interesting example of how a religious site can be purposely appropriated by one faction (e.g. Knights of Columbus) and even visually enhanced to serve primarily as an icon of resistance. These ritual sites of the subaltern group may also, however, be contested by members of the dominant culture through the use of ridicule when they feel somewhat "threatened by the appearance of a more distinctive 'other'" (Cooke 2000: 451). Father Duffy's Well is thus ridiculed in a letter from Lady Hope Simpson, wife of Commissioner, Sir John Hope Simpson,[16] to her daughter Maisie, 12 and 14 October 1935.

> This afternoon, we are going about 42 miles to Father Duffy's well. It used to be just an untidy roadside well — not "made" in any way. No one knows anything about it except that it is about half-way between the old French capital, "Placentia," & St. John's, and that it has always been called Father Duffy's well. Daddy suggested that it should be tidied up by our forest officer's people & this has been done, & now the R.Cs have taken up the idea & the Knights of Columbus have put a stone surround with the name on it, & the foresters have cleared the forest round it, & today the Knights of Columbus are having a formal opening & dedication, & I expect it will become a place of pilgrimage & cures will be announced presently (Neary 1996: 233).

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15. See Murphy (1999) and O'Flaherty (1999) for versions of the story. Due to the lack of prosecution witnesses, the case against Father Duffy and the eight parishioners was dismissed when it eventually went to trial in May 1837. Father James Duffy, a native of County Monaghan, Ireland, came to Newfoundland in 1829 where he was priest at Renews and later St. Mary's. He was later sent to minister in Nova Scotia and then to Prince Edward Island, where he died in 1860.
16. Sir John Hope Simpson (1868-1961) was one of the first British Commissioners (1934-36) appointed to the Commission Government of Newfoundland (1934-49). He is better known for his work in Palestine, especially the publication in October 1930 of the *Hope Simpson Report*, an investigation into the issue of further immigration to, and settlement of, Palestine.

The narrative of Newfoundland as an Irish place is probably more generally acknowledged outside the province than it is within Newfoundland itself and there are certainly other bona fide narratives of Newfoundland identity which serve to identify groups such as the West Country English and the Franco-Terreneuviens, among others. Aidan O'Hara was surprised that the Irish aspects of Newfoundland's rich culture were apparently so little known when he arrived there in 1973.

> I felt that the predominance in Newfoundland was on the English connection and I have no problem with that because I enjoy the English connection as much as any other… But I said to myself, I think the Irish needs a bit of a push here because the people didn't seem to know much about the Irish connection which was a major aspect of Newfoundland culture but not spoken about or celebrated in any way. The flag of Newfoundland was the Union Jack and the Union Jack is a fine flag if you're English or British… And the institutions, with the Lieutenant Governor, everything emphasised the English connection… So I became immersed and I owe everything really to John Mannion who exposed me to the richness of the traditions of Newfoundland, particularly the Irish contribution. And I make no apologies for emphasising the Irish because that's what I was interested in, that's what I was closest to, St. John's being, very largely as it was historically, an Irish town (O'Hara 2004).

With the goal of promoting Newfoundland's link with Ireland and supporting Newfoundland culture generally, O'Hara subsequently formed the Irish Newfoundland Association in 1976, and the same year was a leading organiser of the first Newfoundland Folk Festival. O'Hara's perception of the need to defend Irish identity — a need also voiced by many others — appropriates the discourse of Newfoundland identity into a macronarrative of Irishness; that of being in a subaltern position vis-à-vis the ruling group.[17] Historically, the stereotyping of

17. Recent work on the formation of subaltern political identities in the Atlantic world in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, has demonstrated the agency of lower and disenfranchised classes in fomenting rebellion on both sides of the Atlantic (Linebaugh and Rediker 2000; Featherstone 2005). The Irish, significantly, were involved in many of the insurgencies which continued into the nineteenth century. There is a growing literature relating to the formation of Irish subaltern politics around the world: Barbados (O'Callaghan 2000), Montserrat (Akenson 1997), Manchester (Busteed 2005; Herbert 2001), Cumbria (MacRaild 1998), Montana (Emmons 1989), and in the Canadian context to Toronto (Cottrell 1998) and Newfoundland (O'Hara 2000), to

the Irish by others, principally their British rulers, has also played into this Irish macronarrative. The characterisation of the fun-loving, creative and whimsical Celt — Irish "emotion" being set unfavourably against a backdrop of English "reason" and "pragmatism" — has been so successful that the Irish have generally adopted it of themselves.[18]

That there are mutterings in some quarters regarding the Irish image as having been "foisted on the place" is something which one detects in private conversation in Irish circles in St. John's but is rarely discussed openly. O'Hara here relates an incident similar to others that were recounted to me.

> I remember meeting one man who was in politics… of the West Country tradition, and I made some reference at a party one time, and he said, "We're not all Catholic Irish here you know." Some chance remark about something Irish or Catholic, I can't remember — joking — and I said, "Ah, there's a little raw nerve there." You see, whether it is a residual anti-Catholic thing or that he at the moment felt overwhelmed by maybe too many Irish around him and some primeval fears, but he was a nice poor devil. But he was very sharp. I remember being taken aback by that because I said, "Ah now, that's very familiar. I know Irish people who are like that too." You know, prickly, prickly. So while I was taken aback momentarily, afterwards I thought about it. What dismayed me was that he was a man who should know better. He was

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name but a few. In the twentieth century, the Irish perception of themselves as subaltern has been central to their contestation over place and identity in Canada. The Grosse Ile site is a case in point which bears many parallels to the present discussion (see Quigley 1997, 1999). Note also that the subaltern position is by definition defensive, thus the concerns of a subaltern group may be easily dismissed by the dominant group as a tendency to "oversensitivity." An interesting example of this occurred when at a planning meeting at St. John's City Hall in September 2003 to organise the visit of the Jeanie Johnston Irish famine ship, Irish community members were aghast at the proposal to greet the ship's arrival with a military tattoo. Their concerns were summarily dismissed, those championing the tatoo seemingly unaware, not only of the symbolism of this ship, but of the inappropriateness of greeting Irish Government representatives in this manner. In the event, however, bad weather prevented the display of the tatoo.

18. The stereotype of "the happy Celt" is in large part attributed to Ernest Renan's *La Poésie des Races Celtiques* (1854) which largely inspired Matthew Arnold's interest in things "Celtic." See Chapman's discussion of Arnold and Renan (1978) and Curtis' classic work *Anglo-Saxons and Celts: A Study of Anti-Irish Prejudice in Victorian England* (1968).

> in politics. And then I said, well maybe that's why he's like that (O'Hara 2004).[19]

Planting a flag is the symbolic act of making a territorial claim on place. The controversy over the Newfoundland flag is a notable example of the tension of competing spatial identities. The old Newfoundland tricolour[20] — attributed in popular legend to Bishop Michael Anthony Fleming (c.1792-1850),[21] himself a character of Daniel O'Connell-esque stature in Newfoundland history — although not the official flag of Newfoundland, is recognised by Irish Newfoundlanders and the residents of the Avalon Peninsula generally as being their "native" flag. It is the only provincial flag which is flown at the St. John's Regatta — the oldest Regatta in North America — and also at the Folk Festival of Newfoundland and Labrador and at many other cultural events where the new official flag is nowhere to be seen.[22] The Newfoundland tricolour is also popular on T-shirts, often printed with accompanying nationalist messages such as "Newfoundland Liberation Army", "Republic of Newfoundland", and is even available in swimwear![23] Thus, the link is made between the tricolour, Newfoundland Republicanism, the Irish, and indeed the population of the Avalon generally, and their role in three Confederation campaigns on joining Canada (one in 1869 and two in 1948).[24] But in addition, the colours of the flag, green, white and pink, representing the green Irish (read Catholic), forging peace with the pink or Tudor Rose English (read Protestant), together present a Republican vision of the future.

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19. Indeed, I experienced a similar incident and was likewise taken aback when a Memorial University colleague, commenting on my research programme, pointedly informed me, "There's more than the Irish here, you know."
20. The Newfoundland tricolour may have inspired the design of the Irish tricolour (FitzGerald 2003b; Lake 2002).
21. Fleming was Roman Catholic Bishop of Newfoundland from 1829-50. He was born in Carrick-on-Suir, Co. Tipperary, Ireland.
22. The new Newfoundland flag, adopted in 1980, was designed by artist Christopher Pratt, brother of Philip Pratt, architect with the PHB Group, whose team designed The Rooms. For the history of Newfoundland's flags, see FitzGerald (2003b) and Lake (2002).
23. Republic of Newfoundland flag swimwear [On line]. http://www.lanephotography.com/newfoundland_swimwear/newfoundland%20swimwear_01.htm
24. Election results for the 1869 campaign are available on line. http://www.heritage.nf.ca/law/election.html. The results for the two 1948 referenda are available at http://www.heritage.nf.ca/law/referendums.html

This important *narrative of nation* is still at play in Newfoundland: of two founding peoples[25] retaining their distinct identities but uniting in the common cause of independence. On the May twenty-fourth weekend 2005, a Canadian public holiday which officially commemorates Queen Victoria's birth, residents of St. John's awoke to see a gigantic tricolour flying over the southside hills of the harbour, positioned directly across from the Maple Leaf flying from Signal Hill. The tricolour had been hand sewn and raised by four young local men making their own statement about Newfoundland and its position within Canada (Pugh 2005). The young men were perhaps inspired by the example of Premier Danny Williams who in a dispute with the Canadian Federal Government in December 2004 and January 2005 over Newfoundland's offshore oil revenues, ordered the lowering of the Maple Leaf on all provincial government buildings (CBC 2004). While this move was widely supported by Newfoundlanders, many of whom flew tricolours from their homes and businesses, it caused a furore in central Canada, leading Toronto *Globe and Mail* columnist Margaret Wente to label Newfoundland a "scenic welfare ghetto" (Wente 2005). This in turn caused a vehement rebuttal from journalist and Newfoundlander Rex Murphy on the CBC television news programme, *The National*, himself stating, "the future and sustainability of the culture, the economy, and the very idea of Newfoundland are in the most fundamental crisis since Cabot made his rendezvous with Bonavista in 1497" (Murphy 2005).

In Newfoundland, and most particularly in St. John's, the ruling group culture is most evident in an imperial landscape of institutional buildings, monuments, street names and parks.[26] Imposing buildings such as Government House, the Confederation Building, the Courthouse, the Colonial Building, Cabot Tower, remnants of old forts and batteries scattered around the harbour and coastline, the War Monument, and principal thoroughfares and parks named for monarchs and governors, are all reminders of a British colonial past. The evidence of American military bases of World War Two vintage lends another

25. Note the similarity to the old Canadian narrative of nation, of two founding peoples, or as more often interpreted in Québec, of "two solitudes" (MacLennan 1945).
26. See Whelan's (2002, 2002/2003, 2003) analyses of how Dublin's imperial landscape was contested and changed before and after Irish independence. Alderman (2003) and Hay, Hughes and Tutton (2004) examine scale and centrality/marginality in the naming of streets and neighbourhoods.

distinctive, if minor, flavour to the Newfoundland landscape, but nevertheless serves as a reminder of the strategic importance of Newfoundland to the allied struggle.

By purchasing and preserving the site of the battle of Beaumont Hamel[27] — regardless of later battles which also took place there — and subsequently naming the university and the local stadium in memory of it, the Newfoundland Government of the day ensured the perpetuation of its preferred coming-of-age *narrative of nation*: that of Newfoundlanders of all backgrounds fighting together in defence of the "mother" country (under the Union Jack) only to be tragically lost in that single catastrophic event (Gough 2003). This *narrative of nation* differs in important respects to the Republican vision represented by the tricolour: by not recognising (or indeed by silencing) distinct group identities and coming together in the unifying discourse of a Newfoundland identity which is nonetheless British-based, it reinforces links with empire or, in its present guise, with Canada. In its obvious resemblance to the British ensign, the new Newfoundland flag simply carries on this vision,[28] and in essence continues to represent the Confederate legacy of Joey Smallwood.[29]

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27. The first day of the Battle of the Somme, July 1, 1916, when the 1st Newfoundland Regiment suffered over ninety per cent casualties, the record for losses during World War One in a single event. The purchase of the battle site was completed in July 1921 (Gough 2003).
28. This association is clear from the description of the new flag on the official Newfoundland and Labrador Tourism site: "In this flag, the primary colours of red, gold and blue are placed against a background of white to allow the design to stand clearly. White is representative of snow and ice; blue represents the sea; red represents human efforts; and gold our confidence in ourselves. *The blue section, most reminiscent of the Union Jack, represents our Commonwealth heritage which has so decisively shaped our present.* The red and gold section, larger than the other, represents our future. The two triangles outlined in red portray the mainland and island parts of our province reaching forward together. A golden arrow points the way to what we believe will be a bright future. Surrounded by red to indicate human effort, the arrow suggests that our future is for making and not the taking. But the design of the flag encompasses much more symbolism than this. For example, the Christian Cross, the Beothuk and Naskapi ornamentation, the outline of the maple leaf in the centre of the flag, a triumphant figure and our place in the space age. The image of a trident stands out. This is to emphasize our continued dependence on the fishery and the resources of the sea. *Hung as a banner, the arrow assumes the aspect of a sword which is to remind us of the sacrifice of our War Veterans.* Since the whole flag

Monuments of Nation

Contested sites, meanings, and identities can also play out in the architecture of public buildings.

> A building is more than it seems. It is an artefact — an object of material culture produced by a society to fulfil particular functions determined by, and thus embodying or reflecting, the social relations and level of development of the productive forces of that society… A building is invested with ideology, and the space within, around, and between buildings is both produced and producing (Goss 1988: 393).

Llewellyn argues that we need to give voice to those who actually use architectural spaces, and in so doing, develop "a methodology for critically engaging with historical built environments" (2003: 265) that is no longer centred on the viewpoint of the architect. By employing ethnographical techniques and thus developing a "polyvocal narrative" (265) of architectural spaces, oral testimonies "narrate a different history of architectural spaces than those put forward by the architects or planners of such places, yielding a more complex and 'thicker' narrative… redolent with many different voices, telling often contradictory stories of space" (267).

Museums as sites of contestation are repeatedly saddled with dilemmas of bowing to pressures of social cohesion and authenticating narratives of nation (McLean 2005); what has been called "the burden of national unity" (Dean and Rider 2005: 39). But even the site and

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resembles a Beothuk pendant, as well as all the above, the design takes us from our earliest beginnings and points us confidently forward. It, therefore, mirrors our past, present and future. The flag was officially adopted on June 6, 1980. The flag was designed by artist Christopher Pratt" (my emphases). http://www.newfoundlandandlabradortourism.com/general_info.zap

29. In folklore, the legend of Sheila na Geira and Gilbert Pike, in which noble (even royal) Irish and English bloodlines are joined in Newfoundland, is a sort of Newfoundland Adam and Eve type origin myth that was widely disseminated by Joey Smallwood through his radio programme, *The Barrelman*, and published in his book (with Leo English), *Stories of Newfoundland: a sourcebook for teachers*, issued by the Department of Education (1940) to schools all over the island (Hiscock 2002). The gendering of the narrative is obvious: since the female Irish line is subsumed into the male English line, it is the English name/identity which remains visible. Joey Smallwood (1900-1991) led the successful campaign for Confederation with Canada and became Newfoundland's first provincial premier (1949-1972) under Confederation.

the building itself are implicit in the ruling group discourse as "even through its physical structure, the museum supports 'hegemonic rule'" (Ashley 2005: 6).

Currently, the present site of the new provincial (or national) museum in St. John's, known as "The Rooms", adjacent to (and notably taller than) the Roman Catholic Basilica of St. John the Baptist is an example of hotly contested terrain in the city. The new building, which also houses the provincial archives and art gallery, is now the principal institution devoted to the culture and heritage of Newfoundland.

The skyline of St. John's has been dominated since the 1850s by the silhouette of the Basilica of St. John the Baptist, the construction of which began in 1841 after much lobbying on the part of Bishop Michael Anthony Fleming to secure the land for ecclesiastical purposes. The basilica, two convents, a number of schools, and a cemetery were located on this land. The Basilica has been an important symbol for the majority Irish Catholic population of the city and the Avalon peninsula; the fact that it survived the great fire of 1892 which all but destroyed the city, has only added to its significance.[30] Another important facet of the Basilica is that it is a symbol not only of the Catholic community in Newfoundland[31] but of the whole world; a reminder that Catholicism was conceivably the first global empire. At the centennial of the Basilica in 1955, Father P.J. Kennedy wrote:

> Our cathedral has a unique and important position in the manner in which it is a link in the chain of Masses beginning with the sunrise all around the world. Because of its situation on a hill dominating the city of St. John's, the most Eastern city of North America, when at the dawn of day the Holy Sacrifice is offered at "the rising of the sun", it inaugurates the daily pilgrimage of the Eucharistic Christ which continues across the whole continent "to the going down of the sun"

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30. In the Irish community in Newfoundland, the story of the miraculously undamaged Basilica is legendary and was related to me in many versions. But it was not until I came across an amazing photograph of this phenomenon found in the 1906 Centenary publication of the Benevolent Irish Society (BIS), that I saw the truth of the story. Taken shortly after the 1892 fire, from the vantage point slightly to the southwest of the BIS building on Queen's Road, the photograph shows the untouched Basilica and the burned-out shell of the BIS building on the slope below (Benevolent Irish Society 1906 [not paginated]).
31. See Kennedy (1952) and Rollmann (1990) for brief histories of the Catholic Church in Newfoundland.

> in the West… all through the century, [it] has signalled the rising of the sun on the Western world of North America (Kennedy 1955: 174).

The importance of the placement of the church vis-à-vis the rising sun is also, significantly, reminiscent of pre-Christian Irish customs relating to sun worship. The principal churches of the Protestant denominations (Anglican, Presbyterian, and Methodist) are all within very close proximity to the Basilica but are located on the slope below and there is a perception in the Irish community that there has long been jealousy from Protestant quarters about the location and dominance of the Basilica in St. John's. The importance of the Basilica site is outlined by historian John FitzGerald.

> Now that space was the Barrens out there that the Basilica is built on… that was contested territory and terrain. That's where the Irish faction fights used to take place. That's where they had the hurling, that's where they had all the riots and all the shenanigans and everything that went on in 1780 until about 1820 or 1830. It was for that reason, I think, partly too, that [Bishop] Fleming wanted to lay his hands on the land for the Basilica. When he got that land it was after a protracted struggle and he made a number of trips across to England and he finally secured it. In fact, he got title to it. Word got back to St. John's. Many thousands of people showed up, and there are apocryphal legends about how the land was fenced in 15 minutes. But I think the whole Irishness of it is, the having and the holding of the land and the property. Land was everything… Essentially, it's land that gets taken over that becomes the symbol of the Irish, the symbol of this community that has arrived in Newfoundland and the… government now has to deal with them. "You can no longer deprive us of representative and responsible government. You can't ignore our demands. You can't make us take obnoxious oaths in order to become members of the government. You can't withhold the patronage only to your people, to your own political party." In other words, they were demanding reforms of the time (FitzGerald 2003a).

Immediately adjacent to the ecclesiastical properties awarded to Bishop Fleming is the site of Fort Townshend, an eighteenth century British star fort, constructed during the 1770s. With a view of the harbour and on out The Narrows to the open sea, Fort Townshend was strategically placed as one of three forts around the St. John's harbour. It is this site, literally on top of the ruins of Fort Townshend, which has been chosen as the location of the new museum building, named "The Rooms," a designation referring to the typical Newfoundland outport

fishing premises. A "fishing room" usually comprises several buildings: a fishing stage or stages built over the water, wharves, flakes, storage buildings built on land, smaller sheds, and possibly a house.[32] In outport fishing communities, each fishing family would have its own fishing room located along points of the shoreline.[33]

The controversy surrounding the location of The Rooms was raised over a variety of issues among a variety of interest groups. The opposing faction, however, managed to gel into a lobby group that called itself The Friends of Fort Townshend,[34] which was comprised of some notable citizens including two well-known historians, archaeologists from Memorial University, the city mayor Andy Wells, and was publicly supported by then Conservative Party leadership candidate Danny Williams, now Premier of Newfoundland.[35]

It is probably fair to say that all of the groups opposing the project actually supported the concept of building a new museum, as it was

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32. A newspaper article quoting architect Philip Pratt explaining the design of The Rooms was published in the *Evening Telegram* (Vaughan-Jackson 2000).
33. *Dictionary of Newfoundland English*: "room n OED ~ sb 1 6c 'fishing station in BNA Provinces' (1858), 2 'sufficient space,' DC 1,2 Nfld (1620-; 1948) for sense 1; [...]1 A tract or parcel of land on the waterfront of a cove or harbour from which a fishery is conducted; the stores, sheds, 'flakes,' wharves and other facilities where the catch is landed and processed, and the crew housed; often with specifying word: ADMIRAL, BOAT, COOK, FISH(ING), FLAKE, SHIP(S), STAGE, etc., or the name or nationality of the original user; common in phr on the room; sometimes in place-names indicating the whole of a cove, harbour or settlement. Cp PLANTATION, PREMISES, STATION" (Story *et al.* 1990). The design for the recently opened Scottish Parliament buildings at Holyrood in Edinburgh, by the architectural team led by Spanish architect Enric Miralles, was inspired by a traditional Scottish fishing hut made from an upturned fishing boat, thus fulfilling its stated mandate as a "national building of international importance" "to reflect Scottishness" (Scottish Parliament 2004). "In light of Miralles's assertion that 'to remember is not an archaic attitude', his design can be read as an attempt to side-step the romantic Braveheartisms of tartan Scottish culture and assimilate refreshing indigenous influences into a contemporary cultural identity" (Lorimer 2002: 103).
34. The Friends of Fort Townshend were formed in mid-November 2000 and held their first press conference on November 23, 2000 at the City Hall in St. John's.
35. Williams became strongly identified with the campaign to preserve Fort Townshend when he issued a public press release on January 8, 2001 with the heading "Danny Williams calls on Premier Tulk to stop destruction of Fort Townshend and accept compromise position of moving The Rooms to nearby location" (Williams 2001).

generally felt that the former housing was endangering the artefacts and archival records. Reports of leaking buildings, insufficient storage, inadequate environmental control for artefacts, and that little or no space was allocated for public use of these facilities appeared frequently in the media.[36] The principal objection to The Rooms facility had to do with it being built on top of the ruins of the eighteenth century Fort Townshend. As one citizen complained in the newspaper, destroying one heritage site to construct another didn't appear to make much sense. Other objections had to do with the design and name of the facility. Some voiced concern, for example, over the improper use of fishing room terminology which together with locating the building on a height far above the water, amounted to a misappropriation of outport culture. As one person commented, "It's obviously a Townie's concept of a fishing room."[37] This objection highlights the urban/rural divide and its subtext of class issues; of city people demonstrating blatant disregard and lack of understanding for rural Newfoundland life (Sider 2003).[38] Then there was the objection that the location had been chosen to challenge the Basilica's domination of the St. John's skyline and that the new museum would conveniently block the view of the Basilica from certain parts of the city to the west where the traditional Protestant neighbourhoods were located. Comments critical of the building's architecture made by members of the public appeared on the "Support the Rooms" petition web site organised in April 2004 to pressure Danny Williams against delaying the opening of the museum.

> It's an ugly building in the wrong location, but it's there, so use it (#3448, Noel Roy).

> The Rooms may be an artistic and architectural affront on this city and province, but there it is. It would be worth its weight... if it were only to open its doors (#2828, Scott Strong).

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36. For example, one of many such articles that appeared in *The Telegram* was "Military artifacts left to rot" (Shields 2001).
37. A "Townie" denotes a person from the city of St. John's (i.e. from the town) and is a commonly used expression in Newfoundland. A "Bayman" or someone "from round the bay" refers to the rural people who live in small fishing communities and outports.
38. Sider (2003) argues that outport culture has survived due to the capitalist exploitation of the fishing population over centuries. As fortunes were made in the cod fishery, this capital was banked and spent elsewhere (e.g. in England), while outport people in Newfoundland remained poor, with few improvements to infrastructure and public services, including education.

> To have this monstrosity that is built, sit idle for a year with no excuse for the destruction of our historic skyline and ruins of the old fort is outrageous. In the name of logic, open it! (#3131, Terri Thompson).
>
> Why was such a oversized ugly building allowed in historic St. John's to begin with? No one likes it and we were not asked our opinions before it was constructed! Since the blot on landscape is built, it should open for the sake of the arts community (#2662, Diane McLendon).
>
> Granted, the Rooms buildings are something of an eyesore, but if they are there, we should at least use them (#2759, Richard F. Hayes).
>
> Even though the building/architecture is a disgrace to such a heritage area (sorry but it's true), the Rooms should be open to the public as early as possible (#3224, D.L. Mercer).
> (Support the Rooms petition 2004)

It was also noted that this was simply the latest in what was seen by some as an attempt to erase the symbols of Irish presence in the city. Two other Irish sites had, in recent years, after much debate and protest, been given over for the construction of supermarkets.[39] Shamrock Field, located directly behind Fort Townshend and the traditional site for Irish sporting activities, had recently become a new Sobey's supermarket premises. And even more contentious was the sale of the Mount Cashel Orphanage site for another Sobey's supermarket. Mount Cashel, run by the Irish Christian Brothers since 1889, was the focus of many court cases in the late 1980s and 1990s relating to charges of child abuse; this prompted investigations of the Christian Brothers the world over.[40] Many of the Mount Cashel abuse victims wanted the orphanage torn down and the site made into a memorial park. The Catholic Church had an obvious interest in paving over the site, and thus encouraging communal forgetfulness.[41] All that remains on the landscape to identify

39. In recent years, St. Patrick's Hall was converted into condominiums, a similar conversion of the Mount St. Francis property, former residence of the Christian Brothers, has just been completed, and St. Patrick's Hall School (closed in 1999) was mysteriously set on fire in 2003. All of these sites are located on the original ecclesiastical territory obtained by Bishop Fleming.
40. The story of these events is documented in the book *Unholy orders: tragedy at Mount Cashel* (Harris 1990), and was portrayed in the film (two-part docu-drama for television) *The Boys of St. Vincent* (John N. Smith, director, Sam Grana and Claudio Luca, producers), National Film Board of Canada, 1994.
41. Interestingly, in general histories of St. John's and its historic buildings published since the scandal, I could find no photos of Mount Cashel, or indeed little mention of it. If mentioned at all, only a few words about its date of establishment were included, certainly nothing about its ignominious history.

Mount Cashel and its troubled history is the tiny memorial on the corner across the street from the supermarket; a site that for five months of the year is usually buried under an enormous snow bank.[42]

Of all the objections voiced about The Rooms project, however, concerns over the destruction of Fort Townshend, already declared a national historic site by the Government of Canada,[43] far outweighed any others in terms of media coverage and organised opposition. But even this British star fort has historical associations with the Irish community. Robert Pringle, the chief military engineer in St. John's during the 1770s, recruited more than four hundred Irish stonemasons, carpenters and labourers via three merchant family firms in the Southeast of Ireland to build the fort. As construction only took place during the good weather, Pringle also enlisted these Irish in a company of military "volunteers" to keep them in employment over the winter until construction was completed around 1779 (Mannion 2000). The Fort was significantly also the setting for the unsuccessful Newfoundland United Irish rising in 1800, the goal of which was to declare a Republic of Newfoundland (O'Hara 2000).[44] But John FitzGerald explained yet another Irish link to the Fort.

> This British fort was built by Irish labour… Pringle [the architect] recruited the stonemasons from Ireland in Waterford and brought them out and they built the fort [by] 1779. And… [at] the fort, the guns were not aimed out through The Narrows — [they] couldn't reach The Narrows — the guns were aimed down over the town which was an Irishtown[45] at the time. The Irish had had a tradition of

42. Among locals, however, the supermarkets are still often referred to with reference to their site as the "Mount Cashel Sobeys" and "Shamrock Field Sobeys," thus these identities persist despite their erasure from the landscape (Philip Hiscock, personal communication, November 2003).
43. Mayor of St. John's Andy Wells wrote to the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada, the body which had designated Fort Townshend a historic site in 1951, requesting that they come to inspect the site (Wells 2000a). The Board sent representatives to inspect the site and to meet with provincial officials and apparently "encouraged" the Government of Newfoundland to "consider the importance of the archeological remains." As reported in Hansard (Canada 2001a, 1990).
44. Another example of Irish subaltern resistance in the Atlantic world. An interesting description of the event and the site are found in an article which appeared in the *Evening Telegram* in June 1935 (see "Interesting" 1935).
45. Most Anglo-Norman towns in Medieval Ireland were bordered by a native settlement or suburb, called an Irishtown, just outside the town walls. In this way, Irish inhabitants were excluded from the town and thus their subaltern status was mapped onto the urban landscape (see Lilley 2000, 2002).

> running off with the French every time there was any kind of a sortie with the British… But it was an Irish fort (FitzGerald 2003a).[46]

So ironically, though the Irish themselves built the Fort, its prime function was to serve as the means for exerting control over the town and specifically over an area they largely inhabited.

It would seem logical that with all the opposition mounted and in view of the Fort's existing status as national historic site, the Newfoundland government would have backed down and looked at the many other alternate sites which were suggested. Even a poll conducted by the local daily newspaper, the St. John's *Telegram* (26 Nov. 2000), showed 78% against the use of the Fort Townshend site with only 18% in favour. St. John's is not short of land and many alternate sites suggested were already owned by the province.[47] Due to the past significance of Fort Townshend, it appeared quite shocking that the government announced only a two week preliminary archaeological dig to be followed by a two month dig over the summer of 2000. The Memorial University Archaeology Unit protested vigorously at the lack of attention given to the archaeology, and one of its members, Peter Pope, pointed out in an article in a local newspaper that for a Montreal site with even lesser importance, the Pointe-à-Callière, over top of which a building was also constructed, archaeologists had had four years to complete their investigations (Pope 2000). The archaeologists at Fort Townshend subsequently found much more than the planners had

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46. FitzGerald's information comes from a dispatch from Major J. Oldfield (an engineer) at St. John's (22 Dec. 1831) to Chief Justice R.A. Tucker on the present state of fortifications on the island. "[Fort Townshend] does not afford effectual protection either to Town or Harbour, and is commanded within a short distance, as it was however, a defensible Post against a coup-de-main; and a protection for the Troops, and stores in the event of a popular commotion…" (CO 194/82 1831 November-December dispatches, Offices, Individuals, fol, 149, Engineer's Office).
47. Mayor Andy Wells in a letter to Premier Beaton Tulk (Dec. 13, 2000) even offered to propose to St. John's City Council the use of the city-owned Memorial Stadium site free of charge for a relocation of The Rooms. In the letter Wells writes, "Would the Province consider relocating the Rooms to the Memorial Stadium site if Council were willing to make the land available free of charge? I have not brought this matter to Council yet. However, if you are seriously interested, I believe that a majority of Council would support this proposal" (Wells 2000b).

expected and the dig was extended by a mere four months: some 200,000 artefacts were found and the Grand Battery wall was unearthed almost completely intact.[48]

The Friends of Fort Townshend went so far as to draw up a report with site plans, which they sent to Tourism Minister Sandra Kelly and the Newfoundland Cabinet, showing that if The Rooms were moved even three hundred feet back on the Fort Townshend site, that damage to the Fort would be minimized and that, in particular, it would save the Grand Battery wall. As they pointed out, The Rooms would be on even slightly higher ground and so would continue to dominate the St. John's skyline (Friends of Fort Townshend 2000), although it must be said that the building would no longer block the view of the Basilica from the western neighbourhoods. The effort of the Friends was to no avail as the report and plans were ignored.

In order to counter the opposition, the museum planning committee hired public relations personnel to create a number of pamphlets, a newsletter, and a website justifying the construction on the Fort Townshend site in an endeavour to manufacture consent.[49] During the debate some notable heritage and arts groups remained mute, particularly after the government threatened to withdraw the $40 million planned for the project: "The Rooms would be located at Fort Townshend or it would not ever be built."

Secular Cathedral to Represent Non-sectarian Newfoundland

It is strange what with all the public outcry, the suggestion and even provision of alternate sites, and the reasonable possibility of moving the building back three hundred feet to save the Fort, that no apparent attempt was made on the part of the government, the architect Philip Pratt, and other planners, to seriously examine any of the alternatives.

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48. Many stories about the finds appeared in the media, see for example Hebbard (2000).
49. A glossy pamphlet entitled, "Straight talk about The Rooms development…" [2000] was issued by the Department of Tourism, Culture and Recreation, Government of Newfoundland and Labrador and the Department placed another version of it, entitled, "Some straight talk on The Rooms development" in the St. John's *Telegram*, 28 October 2000 (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador 2000).

The fact is that construction permits were issued prior to the completion of the archaeology (Pope 2000; Paterson 2002) and prior to the submission of a report that project planners had contracted from consultant archaeologist Dr. Martin Weaver of Columbia University (Weaver 2000). It was apparently a done deal from early on. Why? According to John FitzGerald,

> it had to be a secular cathedral… and it had to be the symbol of this new confident de-sectarianized Newfoundland… See, part of the problem was too, that a lot of the people… who want to see that building on that site not only didn't care about the Basilica as a historic site or even the [Presbyterian] Kirk, to be quite frank, which is being completely dwarfed by it, but they had an axe to grind against the church and wanted to see it dwarfed by something. Which is unfortunate because it meant that the thing didn't get considered as historic site. It got considered as sectarian display (2003a).

For those who identify with St. John's as an Irish Catholic city, there is the perception that ground is literally being lost, that their history and identity are being buried under a landscape of empire, new or old, and that it fundamentally comes down to competing visions of nation: republican or confederate.[50]

The debate over the building of The Rooms is only the latest in a series of controversies over heritage sites in Newfoundland.[51] But as one member of the Friends group suggested in 2003, The Rooms debate will continue for years to come. And so it does. A highly controversial development in the saga occurred on March 31, 2004 when Premier Danny Williams announced that the opening of the museum scheduled for the feast of St. John that year would be delayed by another year. Collections already moved to their new location had to be moved back to old leaky buildings and the staff hired for the new museum was immediately laid off. The Rooms has since opened as promised in June

50. Duncan Bell's (2003) concept of "mythscape" in relation to the creation of national identity is useful here, particularly the relationship between myth and memory.
51. There is currently, for example, a dispute about the St. John's City Council's intention of selling Memorial Stadium and its grounds on the western shore of Quidi Vidi Lake (prime and extremely scenic real estate in St. John's) for a Loblaws Supermarket. Rezoning for the supermarket was recently approved (CBC 2005c). Coincidentally, this site was proposed as an alternative to Fort Townshend for The Rooms, an important facet being that the fishing room design would be more appropriate beside the water of the lake.

2005 but is still dogged with scandal. Only two weeks after opening, the Board of Directors fired the Director of the art gallery whom they had lured from his previous post only a year before (CBC 2005a, b).

Within Canada, Newfoundland is known for its strong sense of identity, nationalist tendency[52] and distinctive culture, its closest parallel in the Canadian context being the province of Québec, a "distinct society" notable for its linguistic and cultural differences.[53] And while in Québec the independence debate continues, in Newfoundland a Royal Commission debating its own future within the Canadian federation was completed in June 2003 and its ramifications have yet to be seen.[54] Since 1992, when the cod fishing moratorium was declared, Newfoundland has by necessity had to look to developing new industries and resources to replace its once world-renowned fishery. After years of economic downturn and worries about the future viability of the province, new economic initiatives such as the development of the Hibernia oil fields have engendered a new sense of confidence which is palpable in the community. This sense of pride has spurred a cultural revival of sorts. It is not strange, then, that the building of this "national" monument to Newfoundland society and culture coincides with the present surge of nationalism (Cooke and McLean 2002), this fuelled

52. While in the most recent Québec referendum (1995), Francophones voted in the majority for the "yes" side to mandate the Québec Government to negotiate a "sovereignty-association" style independence from Canada, it is interesting to note that in the second 1948 referendum on whether Newfoundland should join the Canadian Confederation, the residents of the Avalon peninsula voted approximately 2-1 against joining Canada.
53. In the proposed Meech Lake Accord (1987) package of Constitutional Amendments, for example, the perceived special status of Québec as exemplified by the "distinct society clause" and its restored veto over most constitutional amendments were central to the dispute leading to the death of the Accord when it failed to be ratified by the deadline of June 23, 1990. The Newfoundland Government under Conservative Premier Clyde Wells in tandem with aboriginal MP Elijah Harper from Manitoba led the objections against the Accord which ultimately prevented its ratification.
54. The Royal Commission on Renewing and Strengthening our Place in Canada established by the Newfoundland and Labrador government of Roger Grimes began public hearings in Sept. 2002, and published a report in June 2003 entitled, *Our Place in Canada: Royal Commission on Renewing and Strengthening our Place in Canada* (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador 2003). The commission examined the province's relationship with Canada, from fisheries management and equalization payments to the terms of Confederation.

by "unifying myths, symbols and memories of pre-modern ethnic" (Smith 1988: 1), in this case embodied in the design of a fishing room. The Rooms is the National Museum for the new Newfoundland. As such, it is the manifestation of Newfoundland, "a space where [this] nation will be made visible" (Cooke and McLean 2002: 112) and where its narratives will be told and retold. But whose narratives, whose nation, whose future? In this article, I have attempted to look at two competing narratives of the Newfoundland nation; the first which is based on the notion of two founding peoples and envisions a Republican future; the second, with a future firmly invested in Confederation, purports to produce a new type of non-ethnically defined Newfoundlander by silencing ethnic differences, but in effect pressures conformity to the culture and ideology of the dominant group. There are doubtless other versions of the Newfoundland nation emerging that are more inclusive of those of non-Irish or non-British ethnicities and it is to be hoped that they will find a voice in the coming years and move the debate further along, beyond Republicanism, beyond Confederation. Vincent McMahon hints at this:

> The most wonderful thing that I can say about Newfoundland, from the date of my arrival to the present day, is that I have never felt strange in Newfoundland. I have never felt that I have been in an alien country… I'm not trying to say that this is a dislocated Ireland or a dislocated southwest England. It is not. It's something unique. It's not Ireland or England and it doesn't seem to me to be Canada… It's a country with a unique perception of itself (McMahon 2004).

In his study of the Sepik people of the Amazon, Simon Harrison (2004) notes that unlike Western Societies where remembering is active and positive — great effort is expended to preserve — and where forgetting is viewed as passive or negative, conversely, the Sepik work actively to forget and prefer to let their past history be buried by the ever changing fluid landscape of the Amazon river delta. Ironically, The Rooms — itself an institution devoted to memory and memorialising — by covering over Fort Townshend also speaks a narrative of erasure, of forgetting.

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