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**ANCHORING TIME: AN ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY OF PUBLIC
RESPONSES TO ELIZABETH MARGOT WALL'S PAINTINGS**

By

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**A thesis submitted to the
School of Graduate Studies
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Abstract

This thesis is an examination of the life and work of a Newfoundland visual artist and the response of her audience. A native of Dresden, Germany, Elizabeth Margot Wall lived in Newfoundland for twenty-three years--from 1970 to 1993. She relocated to Fredericton, New Brunswick, in August 1993. Elizabeth Margot Wall has chosen for her subject matter the coastal communities of Newfoundland and Labrador. For the purpose of this study, she will be referred to as a Newfoundland visual artist. The thesis is an interpretation of the cultural grounding of a body of nonacademic artwork based in cultural theory.

My experience as a native Newfoundlander informs the discussion as do the articles, books and newspapers I have read and the interviews I have conducted. In the process of its writing, I have learned that the natural beauty of this province not only dazzles me, but also enchants the visitor. This rich and sensuous environment, as depicted by Elizabeth Margot Wall's idealized landscapes, conveys a metaphysical concept which reaches out metaphorically to Newfoundlanders and non-Newfoundlanders alike in a constructive and emotional warmth. Its unique integrity enacts a transformative process that unleashes the creativity of its inhabitants and

visitors, its artists and consumers, in an act of artistic communication.

Ultimately, Elizabeth Margot Wall's paintings are objects of meaning, not only for the artist but also for viewers, buyers and interpreters. This thesis, therefore, is an exploration of the paintings' various levels of signification.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	page
Abstract	ii
List of Figures	iv
Acknowledgements	vi
Chapter 1 Introduction	1
Chapter 2 Is it Fine Art? Folk Art? Vernacular Art?	16
Chapter 3 The Life and Art of Elizabeth Margot Wall	63
Chapter 4 The Effects of Elizabeth Margot Wall's Paintings	97
Chapter 5 The Cultural Uses of Elizabeth Margot Wall's Paintings . . .	152
Conclusion	193

LIST OF FIGURES

	page
Figure 1 Norris Point, Bonne Bay 1989	7
Figure 2 Pool's Cove, Fortune Bay 1994	65
Figure 3 Whales in Bay, Irishtown, Bay of Islands 1984	78
Figure 4 English Point, Labrador 1994	81
Figure 5 Harbour Le Cou 1984	89
Figure 6 Sunnyside, Trinity Bay 1995	90
Figure 7 Capstan Island, Labrador 1987	98
Figure 8 Belleoram, Fortune Bay 1992	121
Figure 9 Flower's Cove, Northern Peninsula 1987	123
Figure 10 Quidi Vidi, St. John's 1989	124
Figure 11 Benoit's Cove, Bay of Islands 1991	126
Figure 12 Trinity, Trinity Bay 1988	129
Figure 13 Southside Hills, St. John's	130
Figure 14 Grand Beach Point, Burin Peninsula 1994	136
Figure 15 Dark Tickle, Notre Dame Bay 1996	140
Figure 16 Little Bay Islands, Notre Dame Bay 1993	174
Figure 17 Heart's Content, Trinity Bay 1991	17

Figure 18	Poster depicting "ELIZABETH MARGOT WALL: Newfoundland Outports".	184
Figure 19	Mercer's Cove, Conception Bay 1991.	185

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Before entering the world of academia, I had one thing in my mind: to obtain a French degree and to fulfill a childhood dream. As I approached completion of my undergraduate studies, I felt an urgency to continue a scholarly course. An introduction to Folklore in first-year studies had kindled an interest in graduate work which, upon closer investigation, required the completion of eight courses and the writing of a thesis. To confess my reservations about the latter is to understate the anguish of a frustrated and disillusioned writer. In spite of a developed and studious rationality, I felt ill-equipped to produce a Master's thesis on any topic. After a thorough self-analysis and with the expectation and determination of acquiring the necessary skills from the course work, I applied for and was accepted into the Master's Program in the Folklore Department in September 1993.

The subject of a thesis topic raised its ugly head continuously that fall, both inside and outside the classroom. This thesis is the culmination of a number of intense discussions with friends and colleagues, but the actual birth of this study occurred at the Ewing Gallery, a privately-owned art gallery, situated in the lobby of the Glynmill Inn in Corner Brook on 23 August 1992. My husband and I had purchased this gallery from Lance and

Tess Ewing on 6 August and were in the process of meeting the artists and learning the business of owning and operating an art gallery. While I was continuously overwhelmed with the number of exceptional paintings by predominantly Newfoundland artists, it was the paintings of Elizabeth Margot Wall that engaged my attention. Not only did I appreciate her colourful and carefully-crafted depiction of outport communities, but I immediately discovered their enormous public appeal. In fact, no other artist at the Ewing Gallery enjoyed such a vast following. Her paintings were so much in demand that they sold immediately and a waiting list existed for potential buyers.

It was on 23 August that I met, for the first time, this inimitable artist known as "Elizabeth Wall" and I was fascinated by her warmth, modesty and exuberance. Like a lot of people unfamiliar with the structure of an art world, I had preconceived ideas about "prima donnas" and "temperamental artists." Elizabeth Margot Wall dispelled completely any stereotypical superficialities I had entertained about talented artists. From August 1992 to September 1993, I had a number of opportunities to converse with Elizabeth Margot Wall about her work and her patrons. She was always surprised at the enthusiastic response to her art. On several occasions, my husband and I were offered large amounts of money for Wall's paintings that remained on display after they were sold. These requests were from out-of-town and

out-of-province buyers as well as from local admirers. The same story would be repeated: "The best we can do is to place your name on a waiting list." Oftentimes, this explanation would result in even larger amounts of money being offered, but to no avail. Elizabeth Margot Wall did not falter in instructing her dealers to maintain the price of her paintings at a level affordable for general public consumption.

I became increasingly interested in learning more about the consumers and lovers of Elizabeth Margot Wall's artwork. What appeal did her paintings hold for her audience? What factors influenced the selection of these paintings? In December 1993, I approached Elizabeth Margot Wall about the possibility of doing an ethnographic study of the public response to her paintings. At first she had difficulty understanding my interest in her "little old paintings." When I explained their role as "artistic communicators," however, she agreed to cooperate with this project. I therefore chose as the focus of my research an examination of the public response and significance of Elizabeth Margot Wall's paintings which depict a particular milieu: the outport communities of Newfoundland and Labrador. I wanted to explore the role that Elizabeth Margot Wall's paintings play in the lives of their owners and admirers and to understand the interactions between these particular forms of cultural expression and the people who view and consume them.

The remarkable appeal of the paintings of an unpretentious woman like Elizabeth Margot Wall was the logical choice for this study, and I decided to consider it from a feminist perspective in terms of the style, content and meaning of Wall's visual representations and her contribution to the folk art tradition in Newfoundland. I obtained ethnographic detail by observing participants during tape-recorded interviews, taking notes after interviews and conversations and using artifacts for the purpose of contextualization. In the course of my investigation, I have encountered a polarity of aesthetic sensibilities within the arts bureaucracy of this province. The majority of the visual art lovers I have interviewed, however, have no formal arts training. These participants have shared their aesthetic responses to Elizabeth Margot Wall's creativity and their expressions of the traditional and vernacular which are central to this aesthetic.

While I have not sought to dismiss the dogma of a universal aesthetic in assessing Wall's art, my concern has been culturally-specific. My findings reveal an appreciation which transcends aesthetic politics and pays homage to a distinctive style which celebrates the everyday activity in Newfoundland's and Labrador's coastal communities. Essentially, Elizabeth Margot Wall's paintings are material expressions of a distinct cultural identity.

Chapter one outlines the genesis of the study and discusses my initial

interest as an art dealer in the public appeal of Elizabeth Margot Wall's nonacademic paintings. Then, as a folklorist, I became interested in exploring the meanings of these paintings by talking to a number of people who had experienced these visual objects first-hand. In the process I discovered that Wall's art has one set of meanings for her, while the viewers, consumers and interpreters of her work construct their own meaningful musings. This study focuses on the cultural and symbolic interpretations ascribed to the cultural expression of Wall's art.

Elizabeth Margot Wall herself is interested simply in portraying a regional fishing industry and a way of life associated with it. Viewers respond not only to a traditional occupation that has deep roots in regional history, but also to the natural, geographical and social environment depicted by Wall. The important theme that emerges is Newfoundlanders' sense of belonging to place. This is made clear in numerous references by viewers to physical and symbolic links such as locations of childhood homes, childhood homes of parents and kinship ties between individuals. In this way, Wall's art functions as one way for Newfoundlanders to preserve a uniqueness through their material culture, and its popularity reveals a sense of place and regional identity for its residents.

Interestingly, people who have never met Elizabeth Margot Wall also respond to that sense of place which emerges from her work. Visual artist

Angela Baker, a native-born Jamaican who has resided in Corner Brook for the past twenty-seven years, has observed how Wall as a non-Newfoundlander has been able to capture on canvas for the people of Newfoundland a sign of their regional identity: "One of the things that Elizabeth Wall, I think, does for Newfoundlanders is reflect back to them their context and their way of life that they as Newfoundlanders are so familiar with but that they take for granted."¹

Jean and Lorne Holland were residents of Corner Brook for seven years. Lorne was manager of the Glynmill Inn from August 1989 to October 1994, and Jean taught private piano lessons and worked at the Ewing Gallery. The Hollands relocated to Victoria, British Columbia, in August 1996. During their residency in Newfoundland, they travelled extensively around the province and were particularly fond of the Gros Morne National Park area. As Lorne Holland expresses it, Wall painted a very convincing picture of Norris Point, Bonne Bay (See figure 1):

I guess I picked the Norris Point one because I think Norris Point is a beautiful location. I just love to drive down in the Gros Morne National Park, and I think her painting captures Norris Point. . . Even on a nice day when you go to Gros Morne, especially in the morning, you'll see that patchy mist. If you come down out of the Tablelands and into Woody Point, the tops of the hills will be clear; but that mist will be drifting along at a lower level around the mountains, and

¹Angela Baker, tape-recorded interview, 24 Nov. 1995. Unless otherwise indicated, all quotations by Baker are from this interview.

Figure 1: Norris Point, Bonne Bay 1989

she captures that extremely well.²

By evoking earlier memories of visits to Gros Morne National Park, Lorne Holland associates Norris Point with a powerful sense of place.

Michael Pearce, a teacher living in Lewisporte, located in Central Newfoundland, expresses a nationalistic pride when he tells me,

I think she most accurately captures rural Newfoundland. I guess it's the combination--the colour of the homes and the detail of the landscape, the detail of the homes--that brings all that together. It captures the colour of the Newfoundland character. That's the bottom line. And it captures a sense of community and it captures a sense of Newfoundland and the individuals that are there, even though you don't see the individuals [in Wall's art]. But everything about it is captivating, and there's more to it than just what's on the surface and what's there in colour. There's deeper meaning for me.³

It is obvious that the artistry of Elizabeth Margot Wall shaped by a geographical context and a distinctive cultural pattern expresses a regional experience. These comments manifest the regional consciousness of a geographical location and exhibit the transforming nature of regional identity (Jones, "Regionalization: A Rhetorical Strategy," 106). Pearce's remarks, for example, demonstrate a potent intimacy with the local environment. Baker's observation of Newfoundlanders' sense of place corresponds to the

²Jean and Lorne Holland, tape-recorded interview, 13 July 1994. All quotes by the Hollands are from this interview.

³Michael Pearce, tape-recorded interview, 27 June 1996. All quotes by Pearce are from this interview.

reality of her own regional conversion, and Lorne Holland articulates an eloquent assimilation with a local landscape. Elizabeth Margot Wall's landscape paintings therefore transmit regional identity to residents of Newfoundland and Labrador and express a strong sense of interconnectedness between people and place.

Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett has linked objects to personal memory as a means of creating meaning for people ("Objects of Memory" 329-338). Similarly, I argue that Wall's painted canvases encode images of a remembered past. The fact that Elizabeth Margot Wall creates an idealized vision of Newfoundland's coastal communities is consistent with the fact that most of her patrons are remembering these communities (often from their childhood but also for other reasons) which they consume and cherish.

In chapter two I survey the various categories of nonacademic art by academics, art dealers, collectors and the general public. Along with the concern to address the fine art/folk art dichotomy that exists in Western art scholarship, I feel I have to discuss the perceived differences between fine art and folk art in the arts community of Newfoundland and Labrador. I investigate the folk art tradition from European, American, Canadian and Newfoundland perspectives and examine Elizabeth Margot Wall's art as that of a fine, folk or vernacular artist.

I discover that formalists value art for its exclusivity, judging it by

standards of stylistic features of the object, class and level of competence or knowledge, which they call "fine art," "pure art," or "academic art."

Furthermore, scholars' definitions of folk art are laced with condescending criteria: crudeness of execution, lack of technical knowledge, garish colour, directness of expression, amateurish symbolism, and accidental abstraction. Their application of terms such as "naive," "childlike," "unsophisticated," "untrained," "unprofessional," and "primitive" establishes folk art's inferiority to more idealized art forms and its nonelite position in the social hierarchy.

Folklorists, on the other hand, are concerned with objects which represent community aesthetics called "folk art" or "vernacular art" and which reflect social systems and persons in context. Folk art for folklorists is traditional, conservative, learned by word of mouth, observation or imitation, tutored by community values, reflecting and appealing to local community or group tastes (dependent upon local patronage), rooted in a community context, and found anywhere in rural, urban and suburban areas.

Some literature on folk art has suggested that for something to be folk art it has to be consumed and appreciated within the same community where it was produced (Glassie, "Folk Art" 1972; Bronner, "Folk Objects" 1986). The data I have collected suggests otherwise, yet there are shared meanings across the board. I challenge this narrow way of looking at folk art and suggest that in this postmodern age folklorists must embrace the

realities of culture change and creativity and be prepared to redefine community in new ways to reflect the socio-economic conditions of late industrial, global capitalism (Jameson).

Art appreciation cannot be reduced to mere classification simply on the basis of education and class. "All fine art and folk art are both products of coherent educational systems," claims well-known folklorist, Henry Glassie (The Spirit of Folk Art 110). On the issue of class, Glassie has this to say:

Our view of the world is confused by our tendency to generalize from the smallness of our own experience and by our trust in bad metaphors. We may conceive of society stratigraphically, putting rich people like ourselves at the top, putting the poor below, and letting gravity do the work of cultural construction as money and ideas trickle down. But that is not how it is. Everyone exists at the same human level, and we would make progress by ceasing to study people from the top down or the bottom up. Everyone should be understood from the inside out, from the centers where they have power to the edges where power dies, from the center where they create to the edges where others create for them: the edges where the poor are thwarted by a lack of cash and the rich are thwarted by a lack of skill. Then, knowing all people as able and limited, we could know them as artists and as elements in the big systems we attempt to describe by metaphors of layering. (The Spirit of Folk Art 202).

Class is irrelevant to an artist who works hard to give extraordinary significance to everyday experience in her paintings. In a spirit of social democracy, Elizabeth Margot Wall continues to instruct her dealers to keep the market value of her canvases at an acceptable level for interested

buyers. Because Elizabeth Margot Wall herself is not given to labels, classifications like "fine art," "folk art" and "vernacular art" hold little meaning for her. Painting for her is sheer pleasure, and she remains uninvolved in debates over the politics of art. Her attachment to outport Newfoundland is that of the romantic new settler, not the native nationalist. There is concern with the joy of the present rather than with the past. At the same time, Wall omits things like telephone wires and light poles in her paintings, which seems to suggest that she is evoking a past.

Elizabeth Margot Wall is connected to the community of Newfoundland and Labrador by its approval and respect and her success in the Ewing Gallery and the Franklyn Gallery in Corner Brook, and she has been designated a "folk artist" by these galleries. As a folklorist and an art dealer, I suggest that Elizabeth Margot Wall is simply an artist who paints elements of the environment that appeal to her and her audience and whose public response to the local landscape has earned her a position as a truly competent "Newfoundland folk artist."

Chapter three includes a life history of Elizabeth Margot Wall and a description of her artistic expression and style. Although Wall started painting as a child in her native Germany, it was not until her forties when she settled in Newfoundland that her artistry came to fruition. She found extraordinary meaning in the distinctive look and feel of outport communities

and the fishing industry attached to them. With the use of the camera as a painting tool, she made art from the physical spaces she observed and captured. Painting them from photographs was a means to interpret the landscape in recognizable images of what she saw.

Elizabeth Margot Wall's defining theme became the fishery and the day-to-day existence associated with it. Her work has bright colour, scrupulous detail, a local flavour and simple charm, but is hardly naive or incorrectly drawn. Not restrained by rules of perspective and formality, she romanticizes and records the coastal communities of Newfoundland and Labrador by deleting what she considers to be irrelevant material and diligently including details such as trim on the houses, fences, clotheslines and woodpiles. Indeed, it is the richness of obliterated detail that is the very essence of her style. By repeating motifs of brightly-painted houses, boats, fishing gear, blossoming plants, tranquil animals, churches, icebergs and the odd human figure, Elizabeth Margot Wall portrays idealized scenes of a traditional society that values highly its heritage and continuity in a tapestry of contentment and peaceful balance. Over the past two decades, Wall has achieved notable success in the marketplace and a large degree of freedom by painting the rugged landscape of Newfoundland's and Labrador's small communities and the way of life of their inhabitants.

In chapter four I explore the popularity of Wall's art and discuss the

dialogue between Elizabeth Margot Wall the artist and a number of her patrons who respond to her art on four levels--historical significance, aesthetic appreciation, personal identity and regional identity. Wall's landscapes are invested with meaning as they inextricably conceptualize memory, experience, geography and beauty for their beholders. In this way, consumers are able to take their chosen images from a gallery and place them in their homes or offices to be experienced on a more personal level. What I realized from the interviews I conducted was that these artifacts often exhibit a compatibility with the personal tastes, values and needs of their patrons, and that many of Elizabeth Margot Wall's paintings give expression to their owners of place, space, identity and geneology.

Chapter five examines the various ways in which people adapt Elizabeth Margot Wall's paintings as cultural and commodified products. As new approaches to Wall's artmaking have been investigated, her paintings have been imbued with a myriad of meanings. In reflecting the multifarious requirements of contemporary life, the cultural promoters of Wall's work demonstrate the success of its educational, entertainment and marketable value. By inspiring new forms of Wall's art, the result is the formation of a regional cultural heritage as an exploitable resource.

I explore other people's interpretations of Wall's work and their connections to regional identity. Particular attention is paid to the

therapeutic value of Wall's folk paintings as symbols of a distinctive cultural identity, or a "pattern that connects" (McCarl 119-43) Newfoundlanders and non-Newfoundlanders in a shared spiritual vision to meet contemporary and economic challenges. Relying on the theories of folklorism, romantic nationalism, regionalism, semiotics, postmodernism, commercialism and tourism, I explain how contemporary experience is directly related to the usually unexplored contexts of folk art, and hence the creative and influential modes of folklore.

In the conclusion I re-examine the issues raised in the previous five chapters and re-emphasize the metaphorical context that unites Elizabeth Margot Wall and her audience. Finally, Elizabeth Margot Wall's paintings personify a sense of place and belonging to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador as well as to those people who visit this province for business or pleasure-seeking purposes. Wall's success in conveying a social endowment to the viewers and lovers of her idealized landscapes is a testament to her artistic imagination and the thrust of this study.

Although the writing of this thesis was interrupted for a period of time to accommodate my recovery from a head injury, I have continued with my original intent--to produce a thesis that contributes a sense of cultural well-being to the reader. If I have accomplished that, then the writing of this thesis will have been worthwhile.

Chapter 2

Is it Fine Art? Folk Art? Vernacular Art?

It reminds me of Grandma Moses's work.

It really captures the way Newfoundland is.

She makes a simple scene come to life.⁴

The preceding comments describing the paintings of Elizabeth Margot Wall link her with Grandma Moses and the American folk art tradition. This chapter builds on the viewer's attempts to categorize Wall's art by asking if it is "folk," "primitive," "naive" or "vernacular". Do these categories accurately reflect the efforts of Elizabeth Margot Wall? In the following pages I review the classifications placed on nonacademic art by academics, art dealers, collectors and the general public, drawing on European, American, Canadian and Newfoundland experiences. In particular, I address the issue of categorization as it relates to the appreciation of art.

In reviewing the literature, I am concerned with the definitions and assumptions that have informed art specialists and folklorists. I am baffled that as we approach the twenty-first century there are social worlds that still consider folk art as the informal and nonacademic counterpart of fine art,

⁴Comments by visitors to the Ewing Gallery, Corner Brook, recorded by student employee Janet Weldon during the summer of 1995.

and that there is no uniform vocabulary among curators, folk artists, folklorists, dealers, collectors and art historians (Willett 362). What often happens is that professionals in the fine art world apply standards of formal academic art criticism to folk art. In other words, they examine the art and neglect the artist (Toelken 182; Metcalf, Jr. 27-50). Furthermore, there are art collectors who view folk art as less sophisticated, less accomplished, perhaps even less enlightened, than "genuine art" (Glassie, "The Idea of Folk Art" 271; Pocius "Art" 417). The folklorist reneges such judgments by re-emphasizing the creator behind the creation (Jones, Craftsman of the Cumberlands 80-112; Glassie, "Folk Art" 266). As a modern student of folk art, therefore, I set out to understand its various concepts and complexities.

European Beginnings

In the Middle Ages there was no distinction between fine art and folk art. According to Gerald Pocius, any activity requiring skill was considered as art ("Art" 415). "The notion of the artist as a special human being had not been developed," writes Jane Kallir. "Artists were simply craftsmen, along with cobblers, furriers, tailors and carpenters" (12). It was during the Renaissance that art became restricted to the domain of privileged individuals possessing exceptional skills. Pocius writes, "Westerners came to believe that their elite culture had produced the only truly inspirational art, an art that gave them insightful visions of humanity (be it the communal

vision of medievalism or the fragmented individualism of modernism)" ("Art" 417).

A so-called enlightened and humanistic population tended to value sensibility over skill, and by the nineteenth century Western art theorists had established a division between the sophisticated art of an evolved society and the creations of cultures at a primitive level. Indigenous products, considered by some post-Renaissance intellectuals to be outside the sphere of mainstream art, were devalued and labelled "verbal," "folk," and "primitive" (Pocius, "Art" 417). Folk art was defined negatively in relation to fine art: rural versus urban; communal versus individualistic; homogeneous, heterogeneous; poor, rich; stable, changing; recursive, progressive; sacred, secular; spiritual, materialist; abstract, realist; conceptual, sensual; informal, formal (Glassie, Spirit of Folk Art 227). These overlapping definitions suggest that the fine art/folk art dichotomy which developed was based purely on perception.

The earliest scholars of European folk art were not historians, but artists themselves (Kallir 36). In the late nineteenth century, Paul Gauguin (1848-1903) was one of the first Expressionist painters to recognize the value of using a folk art style in academic painting. Renouncing the naturalistic conventions that had been part of Western painting since the Renaissance, Gauguin took refuge in the South Seas Islands where he

pursued "primitive" painting and substituted a simplification of form and colour to create a more personal vision of the world (Gombrich 439). The primitivism advocated by Gauguin had a lasting influence on modern art and fostered an aesthetic essence of directness and simplicity.

Indeed, many other painters shared Gauguin's appreciation of the folk art of traditional communities. Van Gogh (1853-90) and Cézanne (1839-1906), for example, favoured the bold simplification of Japanese prints; and Picasso (1881-1973) and Matisse (1869-1954) were heavily influenced by the tribal art of African cultures. The Impressionist Movement, in fact, was borne out of a desire by artists to render their visual experiences according to their own artistic conscience. Rejecting certain conventions of the art academy, the Impressionists were responsible only to their own sensibilities for what they painted and how they painted it. It was this feeling of freedom and power which instilled in the artists of the twentieth century a new appreciation of the arts of nonacademic realists.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, Henri Rousseau was "the first self-taught artist to be accorded the status of a true artist, and he is the painter for whom the term 'naive' was coined" (Kallir 38). Rousseau painted every single leaf of a tree and every blade of grass on a lawn with simple, pure colours and clear outlines. Kallir explained the impact of Rousseau's artistic achievement: "The legend of Rousseau, his lack of training, his

ingenuousness, became inextricably bound up with his art itself. We can never know whether Rousseau would have lost his genius had he received a formal art education. What became significant was that he kept it without one. For the theorists and practitioners of the avant-garde art at this crucial point in its early history, the principle behind Rousseau's achievement was as important as its aesthetic merits" (Kallir 40).

Rousseau's "naive" art gained international fame due in no small measure to the efforts of people like art dealer Wilhelm Ulde (Kallir 41). Rousseau's art flourished in the marketplace after the First World War as the result of a burgeoning interest in nonacademic art. Other artists followed his example of painting their personal expressions of reality in a nonacademic fashion. The result was a heightened public awareness of folk painting which extended to the United States.

American Perspectives

Intellectual appreciation of American folk art dates from the early years of the twentieth century at a time when the American public discovered that in the eighteenth and nineteenth century the United States had produced a native art that was simple, straightforward, unsophisticated and of high aesthetic value. This folk tradition spread from artists to dealers to collectors to scholars. Museum curator Holger Cahill, one of the pioneering scholars of folk art, organized the first significant exhibition of

American folk art in 1930 at the Newark Museum in Newark, New Jersey.

Asked to define "folk art," Cahill replied:

The word primitive (in the exhibition) is used as a term of convenience, and not to designate any particular school of American art, or any particular period. It is used to describe the work of simple people with no academic training and little book learning in art. The earliest of the paintings shown date from the Eighteenth Century, the latest from the end of the Nineteenth Century. The work of living men might have been included, for there are many interesting folk artists painting in this country today. Their work finds its way into the big annual no-jury shows, the New York dealers' galleries, and even into The Carnegie International. . . .

Here, as elsewhere, the European influence is at the heart of the native American development. Certain influences, Dutch or English mainly, are definitely recognizable. Most of these artists had seen paintings of one kind or another, or had seen engravings in books. It is evident that they tried to approximate effects achieved by academic artists whose paintings they had seen in the original or in reproductions. (American Primitives 7,9)

Cahill subsequently contributed essays to the catalogues of two influential shows at the Museum of Modern Art in New York: "The Art of the Common Man" (1932) and "Masters of Popular Painting" (1938). Cahill writes in his 1932 essay:

American folk art is the unconventional side of the American tradition in the fine arts . . . It is a varied art, influenced from diverse sources, often frankly derivative, often fresh and original, and at its best an honest and straightforward expression of the spirit of a people . . . The peculiar charm of their work results sometimes from what would be technical inadequacies from the academic point of view, distortion, curiously personal perspective, and what not. But they were

not simply artists who lacked adequate training. The work of the best of them has a directness, a unity, and a power which one does not always find in the work of standard masters. ("Common Man" 8-9)

By stressing aesthetic qualities rather than technical proficiency, Cahill values "the art of the common man" in terms of how it differs from high art, a concept which still influences folk art scholarship. Cahill attributes the origin of folk art study to the European influence of the pioneers of modern art who, returning to the United States from France about 1910, brought with them an aesthetic refinement that enabled them to appreciate the abstract qualities of folk art. These artists, protesting the naturalistic and impressionistic tendencies of the nineteenth century, sought their own cultural heritage that prompted an interest in both primitive and naive art (Cahill, "Common Man" 26-27). The cult of American folk art, therefore, had its basis in the form of sought-after collectibles of native peoples and the crafts of furniture makers, silversmiths, potters and sculptors comprising what Jean Lipman refers to as "coherent abstraction" (Lipman, Warren, Bishop 9).

Cahill understands folk art to be "the expression of the common people, made by them and intended for their use and enjoyment. It is not the expression of professional artists made for a small cultured class, and it has little to do with the fashionable art of its period . . ." ("Common Man"

6). Further contrasting it to fine art, Cahill describes folk art as "the simple, unaffected and childlike expression of men and women who had no school training in art . . ." (6). Ironically, in Jean Lipman's first book on folk art, American Primitive Painting, which was published in 1942, she insists that it was precisely this lack of training which allowed self-taught artists to achieve instinctively an abstract quality in their work comparable to that which twentieth century sophisticated artists were producing deliberately. Some forty years later Lipman reiterated this position (Lipman, Warren, Bishop 8-9).

The aesthetic approach to folk art scholarship appreciates style, and it considers formal devices for folk artists who lack sophisticated technique to be flat and idiosyncratic colour, two-dimensionality, pure design, and bold abstraction (Kallir 50; Lipman and Winchester 50; Lipman, Warren, Bishop 9). The best known and most popular twentieth century American folk artist was Anna Mary (Grandma) Moses who had her first one-woman show in New York in 1940 at the age of eighty. Kallir writes of her technique:

The 'Grandma Moses style' was an amalgam of two separate influences: details derived from prints and an intuitive feeling for landscape derived from direct observation. In a monumental canvas like Hoosick Valley (Plate 18), one sees clearly how these details were reduced to geometrical abstracts and subordinated to the sweep of the whole. Like Vivin, Moses devised her own method of conveying distance. The diminishing size of the objects, the subtle gradation of hues from yellow-green in the foreground to slate blue,

and the graceful intersecting curves of roads and river all result in a composition that is both three-dimensionally convincing and aesthetically innovative . . . Moses was unusual in not only sustaining her ability to produce masterful formal arrangement, but actually expanding upon and developing it . . . The Moses phenomenon was an example of the success for the self-taught artist. (50-52)

Grandma Moses invented a style which appealed to twentieth century taste. Its response had a profound effect on nonacademic painting. Beatrice Rumford has traced the development of the folk art phenomenon in the United States (13-53). Rumford attributes the growing interest in American folk aesthetics to a proliferation of exhibitions, books and periodicals organized by dealers, museums and historical societies. The first public showing of folk art, according to Rumford, which took place at the Whitney Studio Club in New York City in 1924, paved the way for a number of exhibitions; for example, at the Newark Museum in 1930, and at the Museum of Modern Art in New York in 1932, where Cahill classified the folk art paradigm; the Museum of American Folk art in New York in 1970, and the Whitney Museum of American Art in 1974.

As American folk art became increasingly appreciated through the years, many major private collections were donated to a number of art museums. They included the Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Folk Art collection which was moved to Colonial Williamsburg, Virginia; the Henry F. Du Pont collection to the Henry Francis du Pont Winterthur Museum in Winterthur,

Delaware; the Henry Ford collection to Greenfield Village and the Henry Ford Museum, Dearborn, Michigan; Electra Havemeyer Webb's collection to the Shellburne Museum, Shellburne, Vermont; the Jean and Howard Lipman collection was sold to Stephen Clarke for the New York State Historical Association in Cooperstown, New York; and the Herbert Hemphill collection to the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, DC (Rumford 25-43; Bishop 10; Congdon 49). "The formulation of these public collections," writes Rumford, "firmly established folk art as an accepted and recognized genre and inspired countless private collectors and dealers" (50).

American folk art study has generally emphasized the aesthetic merits of a work of art and has interpreted it purely in terms of its formal qualities. As scholars shifted their attention from the object to its human setting, there developed a controversy in response to obvious prejudices over the cultural integrity of artworks. Two questionable assumptions were identified: a simplistic sense of history and a naive and derogatory interpretation of folk art (Ames 2). Included in the biased definitions were terms such as "simplistic," "provincial," "childlike," "copied," "antique," "nonacademic," "unsophisticated," "naive," "primitive," "untrained," "unprofessional," "outsider," "grass-roots," and "peasant art" (Congdon 51). In the quest for an understanding of folk art as a humanistic endeavor, folklorist Henry Glassie declares: "The meaning of an artwork, its presence as a sign, is not

to be found only in the thing itself, nor only in infinite personal associations. Meaning vibrates between these two realities, between properties in the thing and ideas in the minds of its performers and audience" (All Silver and No Brass 95).

Since the 1960s folklorists have become increasingly interested in studying folk art in an effort to understand human experience, and emphasis has changed from objects to their producers and the contexts of production (Babcock 206). In 1977 a conference at the Henry Francis du Pont Winterthur Museum, Winterthur, Delaware, explored the subject of folk art which invited new approaches and directions to its study. The 1980 anthology, Perspectives on American Folk Art (Quimby and Swank), is the result of that event and represents the diverse viewpoints of museum curators and directors, art historians, antropologists, and folklorists.

Art historian Dr. Kenneth Ames, the curator of the exhibition held in conjunction with the conference at Winterthur and author of the essay in the accompanying catalogue, openly challenges the institutionalized definition of folk art. In an unprecedented move, Ames cautions folk art scholars not "to recommit the familiar sins of conventional art history by producing narrow, unreflective, casual studies of limited value to scholars in other fields" (Quimby and Swank 316). Rather, Ames addresses the social significance of folk art and suggests that the concept of art be expanded to include its

historical/cultural context. The folkloric approach offered an alternative perspective to the study of folk art and permitted an emphasis on the creative process of the art object.

In the 1970s, material culture research in North America reflected a broad range of disciplinary perspectives, not the least of which included the discipline of folklore. Leading folklore scholars such as Henry Glassie, Michael Owen Jones, Simon J. Bronner and John Michael Vlach became engaged in ethnographic fieldwork and directed their attention to objects, their makers and their consumers. Bronner's definition of material culture, for example, emphasizes the importance of context: "Material culture is made up of tangible things crafted, shaped, altered, and used across time and across space. It is inherently personal and social, mental and physical. It is art, architecture, food, clothing, and furnishing. But more so, it is the weave of these objects in the everyday lives of individuals and communities" (Bronner 3).

Glassie draws on the erudition of earlier scholars to describe the material culture movement and to highlight the significance of the "everyday":

'Material culture' is an unlovely term, cursed with conflicting meaning. But if we use it to mean the extension of culture into materials, letting it embrace the whole of the handmade world, then 'art' would designate its noblest province, and we would be ready to reclaim elder wisdom. Ralph Waldo Emerson said

art was a blending of nature and will. Following our old philosopher, we will not be tempted to see art as the fey manifestation of mind, but as the work of a human being at grapple with nature. Reminded that art is work, we can recapture the truth of William Morris's definition of art as that which makes work pleasurable. (The Spirit of Folk Art 41)

Among numerous books and publications on folk art are those produced by Glassie and Jones who were responsible for developing a new folk art metaphor which stressed development of skill, mastery of technique and perfection of form in an effort to improve everyday reality (Jones, Exploring Folk Art 161-75; Glassie, "Folk Art" 253-79). Glassie and Jones, among others, reconceptualized the idea of "skill" and the notion of folk artists as unskilled. In a 1975 study of craftsmen in the Cumberland Mountains of southeastern Kentucky entitled The Hand Made Object and Its Maker (revised in 1989 as Craftsman of the Cumberlands), Jones describes the acquisition and development of skill by one chairmaker:

. . . skill in the making or doing of that which functions as (among other things) a stimulus to appreciation of an individual's mastery of tools and materials apparent in what he has made, the output of that skill; and the activity manifesting the use of that skill. . . .[Art] is something thought to be special (usually because of the skill required), generating an appreciative, contemplative response in the percipient. (qtd. in Brunvand, The Study of American Folklore 551-52)

Jones's research recognizes both the functional and aesthetic qualities of well-made objects--what one man he interviewed referred to as "the

beauty part" and "the lasting part" (Jones 1989: 235). Glassie, on the other hand, at one time distinguished between the aesthetic and functional aspects of material artifacts. He suggested that "folk art" referred to those objects of material culture produced for the purpose of making an expressive or artistic statement and "folk craft" as those objects created for significant practical use in the activities of everyday life ("Folk Art" 253). More recently, however, Glassie's consideration of a basketmaker from Pennsylvania reflects a more subtle appreciation of the merging of "art" and "craft":

John O. Livingston discusses his baskets in terms of utility and strength. 'Them babies are strong,' he says, dropkicking one the length of his shop. But his baskets are unnecessarily beautiful. He chooses their wood carefully and arranges it by color. He finishes them fastidiously, burning off all the fine splinters that disrupt their smooth, clean appearance. More important, he takes delight in the elaborate process of their creation, felling young oak trees, splitting them into long strips, shaving the strips round in a machine of his own invention, then weaving baskets that match perfectly the models in his mind. 'From a Tree to a Basket,' a sign in his shop proclaims, telling you directly where his joy lies; in the wonder of technological manipulation through which he masters both the nature that lies beyond and the nature that rises within himself. (The Spirit of Folk Art 145-46)

By recognizing the skill and functionality of Livingston's baskets, Glassie acknowledges the synthesis of folk art and folk craft. There is, however, no simple solution to identifying a particular object because certain items defy ready labelling. For example, if a "craft" piece, like a duck decoy

or a quilt, were displayed on a shelf or hung on a wall as a decoration, then it would seem to become "art." Perhaps the most relevant explanation would be the creator's or the user's. Their response could illuminate the entire process behind the item in question.

Reflecting on the ethical issues of folk art, Glassie considers the presumptions of tradition to be at the heart of the fine art/folk art dichotomy:

Being the use of the past to create the future, tradition is the force that shapes and perpetuates communities. Among those who live beyond community, tradition is the way they make community-like connections between themselves, the sources of their learning, and others who share their worries and opinions. Folk artists collapse into tradition, merge with it, and bring it alive in works that grip and contain its energy. Fine artists pull away and battle with the past to create works that aggrandize the self and drive tradition onto a new course. ("The Spirit of Folk Art" 198)

Tradition has been variously understood and used by social scientists as items of lore, a mode of transmission, a social process, a symbolic construct, an interpretation, and a system of knowledge (Handler and Linnekin 273). Contemporary folklorists avoid its peasant connotations as the disreputed practices of the common people, but they still use it to signify that portion of culture that is passed on in oral and customary traditions. Recently, there has been another way of regarding tradition that de-emphasizes the idea of continuity over time and space or the idea of tradition as the lore or materials of a culture, and emphasizes instead the

interpretation of practices of the present in terms of its connection with the past (Handler and Linnekin 276). Some practices are "invented traditions"--made to link with the past in order to validate and legitimate them in the present (Hobsbawn and Ranger 1-14).

Adopting the concept of tradition as social process to interpret the cultural expressions of a painting, I argue in this thesis that the viewer maintains a link with the past and even makes some sense of the present. The important issue for this study is the celebration of tradition manifested in the paintings of Elizabeth Margot Wall and experienced as a "personal relationship" between the viewer and the painting itself (McDonald 60). It is first and foremost the artist who creates the initial link between herself and the community she chooses to represent by interpreting a traditional image. Seen in this way, tradition is "a process that involves continual re-creation" (Handler and Linnehan 287).

Elizabeth Margot Wall creates meaning for herself by picturing a piece of visual reality on canvas from a photograph. The painting then expresses something of its maker to which its viewer responds. In the context of use, the viewer and the artist collaborate through the painting. People create meaning for themselves through their inner environment of memory, hope, conception, and the shared sensibility becomes the focus of tradition (McDonald 59). From my own research I agree that tradition is purely an

"emotional/spiritual" experience (McDonald 58).

Glassie applies the word "traditional" to both folk art and fine art and emphasizes that the personal standards and tastes of artists and consumers are often blurred by class and gender biases (The Spirit of Folk Art 202).

Glassie sees the root of the distinction between the two types of art as simply a difference in values:

All art is an individual's expression of a culture. Cultures differ, so art looks different. Whether spiritual or materialist at base [and so geometric or illusionistic at the surface], most art subordinates the individual to the tradition. However, differences in experience breed differences in values, causing like things to be described differently (The Spirit of Folk Art 210).

Furthermore, according to folklorist Barre Toelken, "there is no reliable final authority on which is better [folk art or fine art], for we are comparing two different things: on the one hand, a consciously applied, formal, and selective kind of breeding for one result, and on the other, a kind of breeding with entirely different, informal restructions for a different result" (184).

Perhaps the real taste-makers are the formal institutions whose moral authority has been challenged by art critic Suzi Gablik as "soulless power politics" which, Gablik claims, calls for a democratization of "the cultural trance" of unexamined cultural conditioning (128). Class and gender issues notwithstanding, this study highlights the important role that tradition plays in the symbolic value of Elizabeth Margot Wall's art.

I contend that public exhibitions⁵ of artists like Elizabeth Margot Wall act as influential theatres for staging folk art as a legitimate art form and help to dispel attitudes of condescension on the part of individuals who apply a classical art model to all art. Furthermore, material culture research in the United States has been successful in contributing to a broader understanding of folk art by producing important studies of significant value to other disciplines.

Canadian Perspectives

Canadian treatments of folk art have also distinguished it from fine art, although not as thoroughly as that of their American counterparts. Dr. J. Russell Harper who organized the first public showing of Canadian folk art which opened at the National Gallery of Canada on November 30, 1973, explains the lack of scholarly documentation on the part of Canadians:

Canada, by comparison [to the United States], has a limited number of specimens of folk and primitive art; our populations [sic] is, after all, a fraction of that of our southern neighbour, and geographical and climactic conditions have necessitated a more vigorous struggle for survival by our pioneers, leaving them less time for practice of the arts. A few individual Canadian collectors have long been sympathetic to our earlier primitives. Marius Barbeau, Patrick Morgan, and Jean Palardy have been pioneer promoters of the more contemporary phases, giving encouragement to the folk painters of Charlevoix County

⁵Elizabeth Margot Wall: Coastal Havens: 1982-1995, a retrospective of 82 paintings from private collections, was on display at Sir Wilfred Grenfell College Art Gallery, Corner Brook, 16 July to 27 Aug. 1995; and circulated to the Art Gallery of Newfoundland and Labrador, St. John's, 14 Sept. to 15 Oct. 1995.

in Quebec during the late 1930s. Norah McCullough's exhibition, 'Folk Painters of the Canadian West,' organized for the National Gallery of Canada about 1960, pioneered for the region. Isolated articles have appeared on painters such as Jan Wyers. The large Arthur Villeneuve exhibition organized by the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts in 1972 has been Canada's most ambitious effort in recognition of Canadian primitives. (6)

Harper terms folk paintings as "paintings of the vernacular." "In speech," writes Harper, "regional expressions are termed a vernacular. It seems equally appropriate to speak of the 'vernacular' in connection with an art that reflects local ways of life" (4). Considered by Harper to be outside mainstream art, he remarks, "Paintings of the vernacular . . ." are 'people's art. . . .' Whatever their form, they were expected to be seen by ordinary people, to whom they would give pleasure or amusement; they reflected their viewers' joys, prides, and affections" (5). Clearly expressed here is a biased and class-based approach toward folk art. Like Cahill's "common people," Harper's "ordinary people" description implies an element of arrogance:

Canada until recently was a rural society and it is in rural society that vernacular art has always found its deepest roots. The men and women of the farm and village record their thoughts in spontaneous, uncomplicated fashion following personal fancy and feeling. Within this art there are, however, variations and these are described by art historians as 'primitive,' 'naive,' 'provincial,' and 'folk. . . .'

'Primitives' are done by artists who lack the technical knowledge of the trained painter but overcome their handicap by sheer will power. Such a person draws a line around an idea

and then adds appropriate colouring. He may well know nothing about the rules of perspective laid down for the classical artist . . . Instead of precise draughtsmanship, the artist may use amateurish symbolism; hands as painted by Roy-Audy become merely wooden props. Colours may be garish rather than subtle, and there may be no recession of planes resulting from tonal gradation such as experienced painters would provide. A giant like Picasso can ignore the rules of high art deliberately, but his is conscious primitivism and quite different from that of intuitive artists. Nevertheless, despite the crudeness of execution, there is no mistaking the primitive artist's message; his paintings have firm, clear conviction. When his message is combined with pleasing spatial arrangements, ingenuity, and compelling colour, his work is transformed into art. . . .

This humble vernacular art, whatever the appropriate descriptive term for its variations, is what most Canadians saw and knew through the earlier centuries. It was literally born of the land on which people tried to accomplish whatever they could with the few resources they were able to muster. . . (7-8).

Harper's comments amount to nothing more than a patronizing pat on the head to the early Canadian people for their achievements. This condescending perspective was challenged by Barry Lord who explains that it is based on an art history which embodies colonial subject matter: "In each generation, however, there has also been a small elite who have profited by selling us out to the imperial masters of the day. This elite is the same group of people who have controlled most of our art, and our art history. They are the ones who like to see painting in Canada as merely a reflection of one imperial style after another" (9). The true folk aesthetic

traditions of Canada were first developed by native peoples, claims Lord. In an effort to promote a democratic people's art in Canada and to set the record straight about Canada's "distorted and suppressed" art history, Lord writes:

Our country has been inhabited for tens of thousands of years by people who form the indigenous national minorities. We call them indigenous because they were here when the first Europeans arrived

All of these people have suffered from oppression at the hands of a series of imperialist rulers. But they have fought and survived; and today they are in the forefront of the struggle for control of our land.

We can learn a great deal about the native peoples by coming to understand their painting as a reflection of their ways of life . . . (11).

Lord contends that "there is an art of the people again, an art that reflects our people and places, and is sometimes consciously anti-imperialist in its outlook. A renewed struggle for national liberation is growing all over the country, and many of our artists are joining in it" (9). Instead of glorifying the practitioners of fine art who tend to follow a succession of imported styles, Lord criticizes the elitism evident in art institutions and promotes a Canadian "new-democratic art of the future" (242).

It was Marius Barbeau (1883-1969), world-famous Québécois anthropologist and founder of the discipline of Folklore in Canada, who created the initial interest in the collection and documentation of the material

traditions of native peoples in Canada. In his lifetime, Barbeau produced some forty publications, including books, articles and reports, on Amerindians. When in 1983 the Canadian Centre for Folk Cultural Studies of the National Museum of Man in Ottawa sponsored an exhibition of folk art entitled From the Heart: Folk Art in Canada, the introduction to the catalogue acknowledges Barbeau's contribution:

When Marius Barbeau brought the first pieces of folk art to the National Museum of Canada in the 1920s, his intention was to direct the attention of Canadians toward the art of the people and to rescue what he regarded as the last vestiges of the traditional arts before they died out. Believing that art 'is at home in the shanties of the humble . . . as well as in the palaces of the great' (Barbeau 52), he travelled throughout Canada looking for works that expressed the creative gifts at work in every group of our complex society Following in Barbeau's path, the Centre acquires objects from working artists and takes special care to discern their meaning. (Blanchette et al 10)

It is clear that Barbeau's interest in folk art reflected an anthropologist's perspective, one shared by the authors of the introductory passage: "Folk art may be seen as an aspect of the social process, created by people who work in particular physical, social and cultural conditions, and reflecting a collective understanding (10)." Blanchette et al reveal an enlightened outlook toward tradition: "Today, as folk art in Canada moves gradually away from the tastes and conventions of those original traditions, a single piece may reflect various influences as well as express a personal

impulse. Modern works tend to reflect the blending of cultural traditions and particular regional characteristics as often as they represent their creators' origins" (13).

In the final paragraph of the introductory essay, Barbeau's influence is explicit:

This exhibition offers to Canadians an opportunity to toast their own creative gifts, their own appreciation for beauty, fantasy and humour, and, above all, their own inexhaustible inspiration. Folk artists provide an eloquent interpretation of our deepest aspirations. They express, from the heart, a feeling for life and creativity, for the 'benefit and happiness of the people of a young country' (Barbeau 57) who are increasingly aware of their diverse heritage and trust in their singular future. (15)

Barbeau attempts to eradicate the distinction between art and non-art and to provide a more balanced perspective of the ongoing creative process of artists in general. That Barbeau was equally at home in the world of fine art as well as the realm of folk art is supported by the fact that Barbeau popularized the work of accomplished painters Emily Carr, Jean-Paul Lemieux and Cornelius Krieghoff and wood sculptor Louis Joubin. Barbeau published a biography of genre artist Krieghoff in 1934 (Reid 62) and advanced the career of European-Canadian artist Carr at an exhibition of Carr's native west coast paintings in 1927 (Reid 156).

Richard Henning Field curated an exhibition of Nova Scotia folk art in 1985 and adopted Kenneth Ames's position that folk art afforded an

opportunity to better understand the past and the present by studying not just the extraordinary and unique, but the ordinary and typical as well (3).

Field defines folk art as "the tangible expression of the lives, experiences and work of ordinary people, and part of our heritage as Nova Scotians and Canadians" (4). According to Field, Spirit of Nova Scotia: Traditional Decorative Folk Art, 1780-1930 was a celebration of that heritage:

The study of traditional Nova Scotia folk art is still in its beginning stages. Much needs to be done to understand and preserve the material folk culture of this province. But storing the objects in museums and art galleries is not enough. We must pursue its meaning, describe and interpret its importance to Nova Scotians and Canadians. Through the past, we can appreciate the present and face the future. (4)

Field's perception of "the people who made and owned them [the objects displayed in the exhibition] . . ." (3) is similar to Harper's. That is, Field does not accord the same preeminence to the objects produced by folk artists as those produced by fine artists; and it is therefore necessary to trace their lineage. For example, once the geographical origin of an object is determined, "the decorative treatment of the piece must reflect the ethnic heritage of both the community or country where it was found, and the ethnic background of its maker" (3). Historian Ian McKay condemns Field's reliance on the ethnicity of the folk artists who participated in the exhibition as "a classic example of the ecological fallacy, ethnic reductivism, and the fallacious if truly venerable belief that individual creativity is now reserved

for practitioners of high art" (294). Arguably, this is just one more example of an aesthetic bias which interprets folk art restrictively. Nonetheless, one of Canada's favourite and Nova Scotia's most famous folk artists, Maud Lewis (1903-1970), has elevated the position of folk art in Canada. Lewis earned her living by painting Christmas cards, scallop shells, beach rocks, and pictures and selling them to tourists and passersby through her roadside sign "Paintings for Sale" from her tiny, gaily-painted one-room house beside the highway near Digby, Nova Scotia. The Illuminated Life of Maud Lewis illustrates the enthusiastic response Lewis received from tourists, art collectors, and her community (Woolaver). Lewis's paintings hang in galleries and collections in Europe and across North America, and are a rich legacy to the Canadian folk art tradition.

Newfoundland Perspectives

Because of the relatively recent establishment of formal art institutions in Newfoundland, this section will deal with the visual arts in Newfoundland in general. The Memorial University of Newfoundland Art Gallery, opened in St. John's in 1961, provided the first major focus for visual arts activity in Newfoundland. The first curator was a new graduate from Mount Allison University, Sackville, New Brunswick, in the person of Christopher Pratt, today one of Newfoundland's and Canada's most celebrated artists. Pratt was succeeded in 1963 by Peter Bell, a vigorous and sometimes

controversial defender of Newfoundland artists, who held the post until 1972. Bell's outspokenness is demonstrated by this comment:

Informed interest in the work of Newfoundland artists is limited in the Province. One or two commercial firms have acquired works, and a number of private citizens have quite discriminating collections. But the Government has done virtually nothing even to acknowledge the existence of its artists. We have a so-called Director of Cultural Affairs, but he is completely insensitive to the creative arts. During several years in office, to my knowledge, he hasn't invested one cent in support of the visual arts. At a time when there is so much potential, and so much to be gained province-wide for some imaginative support, the apathy of provincial and municipal governments would, anywhere else in Canada, be unbelievable. ("The Visual Arts in Newfoundland" 13)

Realizing the market potential of Newfoundlanders' paintings, Bell took the initiative to bring provincial art to the public's attention. Bell promoted both trained and untrained artists ("Newfoundland" 50; "The Visual Arts in Newfoundland" 11). He acknowledges the artistic expression of "twenty or more [artists] of varied, but positive, professionalism":

When I think of art in Newfoundland, I focus inevitably on a great diversity of work, all of which derives from the individual artist's response to an environment in extremity, and to communities which have been fashioned by it. It is not a drawing-room art form, although much of it may end up there. For much of it there is virtually no market at all. Outside the artist's compulsion there is little to account for it. If artists anywhere are doing their thing, they are doing it in Newfoundland. (11)

As an art specialist, Bell is more concerned with commodifying the art of Newfoundland artists than he is in labelling it.

Patricia Grattan, present curator of the Art Gallery of Newfoundland and Labrador (formerly MUN Art Gallery), attributes the 1970s revival of art and theatre to a "Newfoundland Renaissance" (Gwyn 38-45). According to Grattan, "There was a particular flowering of work with themes, materials, techniques, and meaning drawn from Newfoundland history and experience" ("Twenty-Five Years of Art in Newfoundland" 7). Journalist Sandra Gwyn refers to this artistic revolution as "the essence of the Newfoundland mystique" (40) or "the Newcult Phenomenon" (41). About Newfoundland art, Gwyn writes: "Newfoundland art is vernacular art; it speaks directly to the condition of ordinary Newfoundlanders; most of it is about their everyday lives. It reflects the artists' own sense of urgency; it also reflects the fact that ordinary Newfoundlanders tend to look on artists not as weirdos but as people plying an honourable if slightly bizarre trade" (41). By calling their art "vernacular," Gwyn appreciates the social commitment of Newfoundland artists.

From the late 1960s through the 1970s Newfoundland experienced a number of visual arts developments. Memorial University's Extension Service provided a variety of non-credit courses for children and adults in St. John's and operated art programs and workshops throughout the province. With assistance from the Canada Council, a Community-Artist-in-Residence Program was established which allowed formally-trained artists to interact

with untrained ones in the outports (Gwyn 41; Grattan, "Twenty-Five Years" 8). It was at Ferryland on the Southern Shore of the Avalon Peninsula where Gerry Squires coached folk painter Arch Williams. At the time, Squires was living in the Ferryland lighthouse having returned from the mainland of Canada where he had received formal art training. Grattan writes of Williams:

He has had one-man shows and participated in the gallery's two group shows of folk art. His work is in private collections across Canada and the U.S. and in many Canadian galleries, including the Museum of Man, Ottawa.

Arch can't remember anyone in his family or community painting or carving. His painting is mainly the result of encouragement from Newfoundland painter-sculptor Gerry Squires, who moved to Ferryland lighthouse in 1970 and started a local painting class. When Mrs. Williams reminds Arch that he'd done some work before, he says, 'Not much of any account before Gerry,' but the pleasure he finds keeps him working. ("A Pastime That's All: Primitive Painting in Newfoundland" 16)

For Grattan the terms "folk" and "primitive" have the same connotation: "Since Newfoundland painting doesn't have generations of tradition behind it, it would more correctly be called 'primitive'--referring to such traits as lack of technical knowledge, incorrect draughtsmanship, garish colour, directness of expression. Here the terms will be used interchangeably" (14). Grattan's fine art preference is glaring. Hers is a formalist interpretation but with no thought for the social significance of

Newfoundland paintings. "Lives of unremitting struggle against a harsh climate and unproductive soil are hardly conducive to the production of art, folk or fine," is Grattan's explanation for the lack of scholarly documentation of the visual arts in Newfoundland (14). Although Grattan's identification of "folk" painting with "primitive" suggests a notion of inferiority, she does acknowledge its production in Newfoundland:

Yet, at the present time, Newfoundland is rich in primitive painters. Memorial University Art Gallery has already shown the work of Arch Williams before it began its documentation. In the past two years, it has put together two shows of folk painting. Folk Memory '76 featured Williams, Leonard Burt, and Percy Pieroway of Stephenville, while Folk Images '77 included the same three, plus Tom Hudson of Pouch Cove and Captain Carl Barbour, St. John's. Of the five only Tom Hudson, 90, is no longer working. And recently a woman folk painter was discovered on the island's West Coast. ("A Pastime" 15)⁶

In the spring of 1995, the Art Gallery of Newfoundland and Labrador held an exhibition of eight artists from Newfoundland curated by John Fairleigh, of the Institute of Irish Studies, The Queen's University of Belfast, Northern Ireland, and Chris Wilson, of The Glebe House and Gallery, Donegal, Ireland. Bonnie Leyton, a Newfoundland artist, co-ordinated the project. This exhibition was a joint venture of the Canada/Newfoundland Cooperation Agreement on Cultural Industries and the British Council in Northern Ireland and Canada. Included in the works selected for the

⁶This "woman folk painter" was Elizabeth Margot Wall whose artwork is the subject of this thesis.

exhibition were paintings by folk artist Percy Pieroway⁷, as described by

Wilson:

For the past 23 years, Percy Pieroway, a self-taught artist, has created paintings of the coastline, estuaries and inlets that form his immediate environment. During our visit to his studio he showed us 60 paintings, remembering exactly the date, location and weather on the day he painted the scene. The paintings were stacked in order of date completed and provided a visual record of his surrounding landscape and the changes that have taken place over the last two decades. His works are uncluttered honest recollections based on observation, paying attention to the details in his field of vision. His compositions pay respect to each individual flower and tree in a simplified "folk art" style that expresses great joy and happiness in the world around him. (37)

In June 1997 Percy Pieroway's folk art was on display at the Fine Arts Gallery of Sir Wilfred Grenfell College in Corner Brook. Entitled Following Cabot, the series of thirty paintings, extending from Cape Bonavista to the town of Burin, represented three years of research, development and painting to celebrate John Cabot's discovery of Newfoundland. It was Pieroway's desire to recognize the historical significance of the 500th anniversary of Cabot's voyage by painting in oil his rendition of Cabot's month-long stay at various stopping places after his landfall at Bonavista. At the same time, the exhibit afforded the general

⁷Percy Pieroway, a native of St. George's Newfoundland, has lived in Stephenville since 1947. In 1972 he commenced attending Memorial University Extension Service art classes to explore painting as a hobby when he retired. Local scenery in and around the Bay St. George area provided most of his initial subject matter, but Pieroway has since branched out to include many Newfoundland communities.

public an opportunity to experience the beauty of the coastlines that Cabot visited as depicted by a well-known Newfoundland folk artist. The actual reception of these paintings, however, is known only to those who attended the exhibit.

In an effort to understand the community aesthetics of a Western Newfoundland region, artist and art educator Angela Baker, in 1991 investigated the "Perceptions of Object Making As Art" as the topic for a doctoral study. Writing from a self-confessed "unreflecting, elitist fine arts perspective," and viewing folk art as "naive, unsophisticated and child-like" (83), Baker developed a new appreciation for Newfoundland's nonacademic art:

Paintings praise the seasons, sea, forests, flora, fauna, woods, and wilderness of this beloved 'Rock' in traditional realist style, making the common uncommon in lovingly detailed depiction. I realize how much they have forced me to question when my gorge rises at the hypocrisy of an art world that lionizes the detailed realism of a Ken Danby, Jack Chambers, or Mary Pratt while denigrating the same aim among humbler folk elsewhere. Above all, these paintings remind me that we shall not live by intellect alone but by every stimulus of the senses and the call of the wild. (498)

The arts community, according to Baker, is responsible for ambivalent attitudes toward the nature of art with a community-based aesthetic. The arts bureauacy in Newfoundland consists of the Art Gallery of Newfoundland and Labrador, St. John's; Memorial University of Newfoundland, St. John's,

Sir Wilfred Grenfell College Art Gallery, Corner Brook; and fine arts organizations in St. John's and Corner Brook. Baker explains the biases evident in the Newfoundland art world:

Artistic power resides in St. John's, MUN and fine arts organizations . . . Some community-trained or self-taught artists feel recognition is denied them by a closed shop brotherhood of fine artists . . . Local nonacademic painting is a recent historical activity making its considerable output and high degree of realism a remarkable phenomenon. By St. John's curatorial criteria these artists are considered amateur or Sunday painters, yet they could be regarded as "folk artists" by a consensus of criteria of folklorists and scholars. Definitional difficulties make designation of "folk artists" problematic. MUN has inadvertently created "folk artists" by designating some thus and promoting naive styles (21).

I experienced firsthand the aesthetic politics prevalent in Newfoundland arts institutions in my capacity as essay writer for the catalogue accompanying Elizabeth Margot Wall's first solo exhibition at Sir Wilfred Grenfell College Art Gallery in Corner Brook in the summer of 1995. During the production of Coastal Havens: 1982 to 1995: The Paintings of Elizabeth Margot Wall, I encountered art specialists who considered Wall's art as either the product of an uneducated and unsophisticated creator of "bad art" or "above folk art." Toelken views such attitudes as narrow-mindedness when he explains the difference between folk art and fine art:

Fine art is usually judged from the vantage point of the professionally trained, from the intellectually-aware person for whom the field is a study geared, not necessarily to the everyday life of home folk, but to the inspired work of

creative individuals often performing outside their own close groups and often using models of inspiration foreign to their own close group. . . . (184)

What makes folk art different from fine art is precisely that it is based on the aesthetic perception, expression and appreciation of the community adventures of everyday life. (185)

As I understand Toelken, it is at least fitting to consider the creative will that interprets the familiar and the traditional in a manner which resonates as the social substance of a culture.

Forced to face her own prejudices, Baker admits: "It seems better to shape inquiry upon the firm soil of what ordinary people do and why, than solely upon intellectual speculation, however fascinating it may be" (3). The relevant issue for Baker is democratic art education. She distinguishes between "aesthetic education" and "aesthetic literacy"--the former, she claims, is elitist and promotes Western art history and art criticism; the latter advocates consumer sensitization and critical appreciation of all art, fine and vernacular (71-76). Baker considers folk art as "the paradigm of all art" and writes: "The fine arts are upper class folk art. Not to be perceived as an elitist frill, democratic art education must study basic aesthetics in ordinary life" (3).

The important issues raised in Baker's study provide grist for my mill. Armed with the knowledge of conflicting cultural values, my task is not to

educate but to interpret the significance of Elizabeth Margot Wall's paintings. Judgments, posits Thomas McEvilley, are a real expression of a culture's sensibility, "an avenue to the appreciation of what might be called its personality or soul" (23). My research has concentrated on a general public preference rather than an arts community partiality and has revealed some illuminating and stimulating results.

Sociologist Howard Becker rejects the bureaucratic control of art and illustrated the collaborative process of all artwork. In Becker's view, the manner in which an object is appreciated and the community accepts it rests on an understanding of the extended social system that creates and defines the work of art. Becker's "art world" consists of the collective activity of suppliers, performers, dealers, critics, consumers, as well as artists, to determine the typical works which that world defines as art. As Becker explains it, "Art worlds . . . help their participants produce work that will earn the material support and serious response of others, help artists connect work to a tradition in which it makes sense, and provide substantial amounts of time and other resources for artistic activity" (270).

Baker reports that value conflicts arise between Western Newfoundland fine artists and community-trained artists who also differ among themselves on a conservative to progressive continuum, "in terms of their educational institutions of origin and their aesthetic values and

outlook" (406-07). Baker includes commercial establishments such as the Ewing Gallery as part of the Western Newfoundland "art world" and writes:

Elizabeth Wall is designated a folk artist by the Ewing Gallery, perhaps because of her outport theme. Her work has bright color, detail, a local flavor, and simple charm but is hardly naive or incorrectly drawn. She is elderly. A CFA (come-from-away), her attachment to outports is that of the romantic new settler, not the native bond. There is no concern with the past, but with the joy of the present. She is self-taught and paints apart from others. (458)

A painter of meticulously-detailed outport Newfoundland scenes, Wall's popularity is acknowledged by Baker:

Elizabeth has made Newfoundland her home. Her attachment to its small coastal communities is evident in the detail she lovingly records in her small paintings and in the delight in her voice as she says, 'I love outports!' It is perhaps this simple sincerity that charms her viewers and makes her work so popular, as well as the fact that they can relate easily to her subject matter. (231)

Helen Byrne, a Corner Brook artist, agrees with Baker's assessment: "Yet Helen [Byrne] pointed to the popularity of Elizabeth Wall's paintings of bays and outports both locally and on the mainland. They move in a different circuit of circulation, commercial galleries as opposed to the St. John's fine arts world of MUN Art Gallery, the NLAC [the Newfoundland and Labrador Arts Council] and the government-sponsored Public Works Program" (Baker 396-97). Byrne, who shares Wall's community-based aesthetic, does not enjoy the same public attention as Elizabeth Margot Wall.

While it is true that there are some scholars who accept the social basis of art, there are others who precariously separate individual and community aesthetics (Pocius, "Art" 425). This brings us back to the question and importance of labels. "Art cannot be understood if it is constrained by disciplinary inferiorities that demand that creativity be delimited by prefixes such as 'folk,'" insists Pocius (425). In a 1993 National Film Board of Canada videotaped production entitled Folk Art Found Me, prominent New York curator Bert Hemphill who has been dubbed "Mr. Folk Art of America" struggles to define his passion:

There are no categories. I can't define it. I have never been able to. I trained as an artist all through school, but I gave it up when I started seriously collecting, because everything I collected was better. I haven't drawn in years; I collect. I use that as a substitute for my aesthetic passion. For many years we've been trying to define this self-taught art. At one point blithely I said, "Art of the people, by the people, for the people"; but that's too much of a cliché.

Elizabeth Margot Wall's work elicits a similar range of responses. For example, Leslie Sasaki adopts a nonclassifactory perspective and emphasizes the self-taught aspect of Wall's work. A third-generation Canadian who was born to Japanese parents and raised in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Sasaki has been teaching painting, drawing and two-dimensional designs at Sir Wilfred Grenfell Fine Arts College since 1991. Sasaki suggests that if folk art is characterized as an untutored or uncontaminated expression of individuals,

then there is no such thing as "pure folk art" or "pure fine art," for that matter, because all arts are influenced by developments in visual culture⁸.

On the other hand, Newfoundland artist Christopher Peet, known for his finely-detailed watercolours of historic buildings, makes a clear distinction between fine art and folk art. Peet refers to Wall's paintings as "naive--not in the negative sense--but naive in technicality"⁹. In Peet's view, "her paintings indicate the sense of the good life." He appreciates the creative aspect of Wall's art: "It's valid. It looks like it's simple, but she has something in herself that comes out in her painting." In comparing their painting styles, however, Peet states:

Perspective is not a problem for her because she doesn't see it. She has no knowledge technically. It's not important to her. She has not gotten involved in the technical crap. There's a freedom to her work. There's a liberation to it--a celebration--in a different manner than I would deal with the same subject matter . . . She has a different vision than I do. All her paintings are technically incorrect, but she doesn't see that. She draws as she sees it, because she doesn't know how it is. We [formally-trained artists] have a different vision. We interpret accurately. Her paintings are a celebration of her own existence.

Although a positive response to Wall's creative expression, Peet's comments clearly distinguish their standards of excellence. Sasaki also

⁸Leslie Sasaki, tape-recorded interview, 6 March 1996. All quotes by Sasaki are from this interview.

⁹Christopher Peet, personal interview, 17 February 1996. All quotes by Peet are from this interview.

mentions Wall's technical limitations, but he praises her natural ability:

She's made decisions. She's made choices for herself. This is why she does it. This is how she goes about it. If she's adopted any new technical information, it's probably out of need. You know, she'll probably learn something if she needs it. So, I guess, she is free in that way, that she can make up her own rules . . . There's this real consistency through the works and within that range she does quite a lot . . . I think there's something quite commendable about that. You're capable of doing only so much, but you make the most out of it.

Sasaki could be an advocate of "aesthetic literacy," while Peet is assuredly a proponent of "aesthetic education." Therein lies the controversy of visual arts activity in Newfoundland: the lack of an established "art world" which determines the typical works defined as Newfoundland art.

Fine Artist or Folk Artist

The question remains: Is Elizabeth Margot Wall a fine artist or a folk artist? I agree with Angela Baker:

What's really important is not the label, but the fact that here is someone caught up in the act of creation or in the love of the process. I think that this is the really important thing. But in terms of whether or not she deserves the label of 'a folk artist,' yes, I think she does; and she does by a number of criteria. Consciously or unconsciously, I think that she has been tutored by community values. Certainly there has been a lot of positive reinforcement all along in the public response to her work, and that is a form of tuition by community values.

The community emphasis of Wall's creative activity is manifested most clearly in her own words: "I was very 'taken' with the small places in

Newfoundland" . . . "While I'm painting it, I sort of feel I am there." True, Elizabeth Margot Wall's interest in Newfoundland's coastal communities did not originate as a birthright. Her initial attraction was serendipitous: "All of a sudden, after I came to Newfoundland and I saw the beautiful outports, I thought, 'Gosh, that would be nice to paint.'"¹⁰ Wall's creative energies led her to produce in painstaking detail hundreds of canvases depicting daily outport existence.¹¹ It was only after encouragement from friends and neighbours that Wall considered painting for the marketplace. In 1980, she somehow gathered the courage to approach the Ewing Gallery to represent her. "The first couple of little 8 by 10s sold in a short time," she told me; and no one was more surprised than she at the overwhelming response of her paintings.

Vernacular Artist

Here I adopt the term "vernacular" as a alternative to the word "folk." John Michael Vlach claims that "vernacular" is a word that signals indigenous character" ("Vernacular" 5) and was first used in architectural research in the late nineteenth century. Contemporary usage by material culture scholars replaces the ambiguous terms "folk," "traditional," "native,"

¹⁰Elizabeth Margot Wall, tape-recorded interview, 6 June 1994. Except where otherwise indicated, all quotes by Wall are from this interview.

¹¹The approximate estimate is 600 to date.

"indigenous," "popular," "ordinary," "local," or "customary"; and students of folk art have benefited from applying this idiom. As stated earlier, art historian J. Russell Harper refers to folk paintings as "paintings of the vernacular" to signify "an art that reflects local ways of life" (A People's Art 5). Following this line of thinking, by painting outport scenes of everyday activity Elizabeth Margot Wall realizes an artistic impulse in a vernacular milieu.

The vernacular analogue has also been applied to popular song in everyday life by replacing the old paradigm of 'folk song' (Pickering and Green). Against the same yardstick may be measured those responses to Elizabeth Margot Wall's depictions of the ordinary social life of a vernacular culture which, according to Pickering and Green, "constitute a hotch-potch of resources for human usages and enjoyment, a mixed body of practices, expressions and artefacts whose significance are a product of the effort to create viable ways of life and coherent identities in relation to particular social conditions and circumstances" (12).

The more useful application of "vernacular" would be Leonard Primiano's inductive approach as a method for analyzing vernacular religion:

The inductive process balances the scholar's own knowledge and perspectives with the scholar's empathetic understanding of the individuals being studied. In this sense, the concerns of an inductive approach are oriented to the attempts of scholars to interpret cultural data in a way that is meaningful

to their informants, as well as theoretically rigorous and responsible (40).

Primiano's definition of vernacular religion--"religion as it is lived:

as human beings encounter, understand, interpret, and practice it"--is really an emic perspective, one which emphasizes the informant's point of view.

"Since religion inherently involves interpretation," writes Primiano, "it is impossible for the religion of an individual not to be vernacular" (44).

Applying Primiano's model to Elizabeth Margot Wall's art, it is my responsibility to consider as sensitively as possible the actual instincts and beliefs of the artist as well as those of her buying public. For the purposes of this study, the term "vernacular" is more useful as an interpretive method, as I am not convinced that it is a fitting description for Elizabeth Margot Wall's art.

Folk Artist

As a student of folklore I am encouraged to study the contextual orientations of art objects. "Context is the source of interpretation, the environment of significance," writes Glassie (Spirit of Folk Art 17). In this study I will examine a number of contexts--personal, conceptual, stylistic, consumer, universal--to interpret the expression and reception of Elizabeth Margot Wall's paintings of rural Newfoundland and Labrador.

Reminded of Emerson's definition of art as a blending of nature and

will (qtd. in "Spirit of Folk Art" 41), my concern is the communicative aspect revealed between the artist and the community of consumers who respond to her vision of Newfoundland and Labrador. Labels notwithstanding, the participants disclose their use of Elizabeth Margot Wall's art and reveal important aspects about their lives. I learn, like Glassie, that their explanations are nothing more than different points of view:

The difference between folk and fine art is more a matter of academic convention, of differences in scholarly tradition of discourse and approach, than it is a difference of phenomena. Thinking positively about our culture, positioning ourselves firmly within it and knowing little about folk artists and their worlds, we demean folk artists as the dull result of inertia or as the happy innocence of unimportant people. Thinking negatively about our culture, positioning ourselves outside of it and knowing little about fine artists and their worlds, we demean fine art as adolescent extravagance or snobbish decadence. If scholars could strip away their prejudices and learn to approach all art in the same mood of disciplined compassion, they would learn that it is all competent, that it all blends the individualistic and the traditional, the sensual and the consensual, that it is all historical, the product of human beings who live in societies beset by problems conquered by fun or serious work. (The Spirit of Folk Art 228)

This thesis considers primarily the interaction of the artifact and the consumer, the contents of Elizabeth Margot Wall's paintings as cultural expressions, and the impact of their appeal. As Glassie suggests, "Come to folk art in the same inquisitive, respectful spirit you adopt before fine art. You will discover in it distinct tendencies that rise deeply from within

cultures unlike our own. Art differs as cultures differ, but as for definitions, you will be left with this and not more. Folk art is the fine art of other people. Fine art is our folk art." (The Spirit of Folk Art 228)

In order to establish the relationship between the artist and the traditional culture of Newfoundland and Labrador, I applied Grobman's theoretical approach (17-37) to identify the folklore in Elizabeth Margot Wall's paintings. Adapted from folkloristics for the study of folklore in literature, Grobman's classification system integrates the identification and interpretation of folklore in literature. His classification system can easily apply to the study of material culture.

(I) Identification of folkloric sources which may be either:

(a) Indigenous (i): As participant-member of a folk community, an author is intimately familiar with its traditions.

(b) Acquired (a): As collector-observer, an author is familiar with the traditions of a folk community outside his/her own cultural roots by collecting and observing among the people of that community.

(c) Borrowed (b): As student-scholar, an author becomes familiar with the traditions of a folk community by gathering materials from a variety of literary sources.

(II) Uses of folkloric sources, consisting of:

(a) Selective Re-Creation (SRC): This is the arbitrary selection of folk materials by an author, presented in its most natural cultural milieu to depict the authenticity and local colour of a folk community.

(b) Redacted, Reworked, Reconstruction (RRR): This is the conscious literary redaction, adaptation, reworking and/or reconstruction of large amounts of authentic folklore, presented with little or none of its cultural milieu, especially in order to establish a point or make the traditions more universally and popularly understood.

(c) Non-Symbolic Imitation-Invention Using Folklore Models (NII). This consists of two similar processes used in isolation or in combination with each other:

- (1) *imitation*--the conscious use of authentic items of folklore as models for producing folklore-like materials in direct imitation of the established folk pattern, and
- (2) *invention*--the conscious use of authentic items of folklore as models for creating new folklore-like materials in an attempt to pass off new material as the real thing.

(d) Symbolic Imitation-Invention Using Folklore Models (SII): This category resembles the previous category except that the applied and obvious intentions of the author are symbolic, so that folk materials either become a source for metaphorical language or for structural symbolism.

Thus, Grobman divides two major divisions--identification and interpretation--further into twelve categories to allow for potential combinations. Elizabeth Margot Wall's oil paintings fall into several different categories and indicate a definite relationship to folk tradition. Wall's visual depiction of the daily activities of small-town life is at once a personal and a vicarious experience [(I)(b)(a) and (I)(c)(b)]. Elizabeth Margot Wall lived and actively participated in the everyday life of the community of Irishtown where she resided for eighteen years. She works mainly from photographs taken herself in her travels around the province but also from photographs

taken by friends and from photographic magazines [(II)(b)(SRC)]. Wall's pictorial representations, therefore, are the work of a knowledgeable emigré.

Elizabeth Margot Wall paints idealized scenes by editing the extraneous material that could interfere with the romantic and idyllic setting she strives to create. This conscious reworking of photographic material simultaneously reinforces her creative ability and establishes the universal content of her canvases [RRR]. Elizabeth Margot Wall's paintings also contain images of personal significance. The recurrent clothesline reflects her love of nature and the outdoors. At the same time, it symbolizes an important custom in the daily life of outport Newfoundland and Labrador [SII]. She relates completely to the significance of this repeated and predictable activity. In this manner, Elizabeth Margot Wall literally and metaphorically illustrates her own values as well as the values of a traditional society. Elizabeth Margot Wall's clotheslines play an important part in her orderly sense of design, as she assiduously fills in patterns on the laundry billowing in the wind. The minute details give the work a narrative quality: "Why put it in the dryer when you can use that big dryer in the sky?"

Another layer of symbolism is revealed in the common theme of Wall's paintings--daily outport life and the fishery connected to it--through illustration of the following repetitive motifs: boats and fishing

paraphernalia, wharves, stages, stores, flakes¹², vertically-staked logs, colourfully-painted houses, houses painted in vertical bands, small coves and inlets, fog, mountains, icebergs, whales, seals, churches, animals--sheep, geese, dogs, cats, horses. "I'm just sort of taken with outports," she revealed [SII].

Elizabeth Margot Wall did not grow up by the sea. She lived in southeastern Germany but, somehow, she finds something magical about the water and she is partial to salt water. The best demonstration of Wall's dedication to traditional culture is the uninterrupted inspiration of Newfoundland's and Labrador's geographical and historical landscape. Even though Elizabeth Margot Wall has physically removed herself from the province, she continues to paint colourful and harmonized outport communities in loving detail [(I)(b) and (RRR)].

Having established Elizabeth Margot Wall's paintings as a legitimate folk art form, I then go on in chapter five to discuss Wall's art as an example of a unique cultural heritage and the embodiment of the best of Newfoundland's and Labrador's culture. In that regard, Elizabeth Margot

¹²In the Newfoundland vernacular, a stage is "an elevated platform on the shore with working tables, sheds, etc. where fish are landed and processed for salting and drying, and [where] fishing gear and supplies are stored" [See fig. 2]--(Dictionary of Newfoundland English 525); a store is "a building forming part of a merchant's, planter's or fisherman's waterfront premises or 'room' where supplies and gear are stored for use or trade, esp place where dried and salted codfish are held for shipment" (536); a flake is "a platform built on poles and spread with boughs for drying codfish on the foreshore" (187).

Wall's "fine art" is Newfoundland's "folk art." My goal then is to interpret the folk art of Elizabeth Margot Wall in a scholarly fashion so as to provide it with a context of recognition and respect.

The next chapter looks more closely at the woman and the artist, Elizabeth Margot Wall. It considers her personality, her view of herself and her conception of Newfoundland and Labrador, all of which have important intersections with her art.

Chapter 3

The Life and Art of Elizabeth Margot Wall

In order to understand Elizabeth Margot Wall as a woman and as an artist, I asked her to share her life story. From this I pieced together the following--what Titon describes as a "self-contained fiction" (276) or "the product of a conversation among friends" (286). In this chapter I also discuss the evolution of Wall's art, her painting process, technique and style.

What I consider "the formal interview"¹³ was actually the result of a number of conversations with Elizabeth Margot Wall during which time she heartily endorsed the subject of this thesis. This interview was actually the commencement of the preliminary research. I spent the afternoon of 6 June 1994 in Wall's apartment in Fredericton, New Brunswick, having called her from Corner Brook before my departure to set up an appointment. She very proudly welcomed me to her new residence.¹⁴ She indicated a yearning for Newfoundland, and her friends in Irishtown in particular, but she appeared contented in her new location. I arrived shortly after noon, and Elizabeth Margot, always the gracious hostess, presented me with a cup of coffee and

¹³A tape-recorded interview at the apartment of Elizabeth Margot Wall, 165 Parkside Drive, Fredericton, New Brunswick, 6 June 1994. Unless otherwise indicated, all quotes from Wall come from this interview.

¹⁴Elizabeth Margot Wall resided in Newfoundland from 1970 to 1993. In Aug. 1993 she moved to Fredericton, New Brunswick, to be close to her son John.

some sandwiches. Before I set up the tape recorder, she gave me a tour of the apartment, pointing out some of the earlier works she still has in her possession. They were of animals and flowers primarily, and the colours were much simpler and flatter than her later work. There was a newly-completed canvas on the easel in her studio, a converted bedroom (See figure 2¹⁵).

The recording equipment was set up unobtrusively on the coffee table in front of us. Elizabeth Margot sat on the chesterfield and I in a chair to her left. A comfortable rapport was easily established, as I had enjoyed a number of stimulating exchanges with her in the past. She prefaced her remarks by requesting that I refer to her in the study as "Elizabeth Margot" Wall, as she is known to her friends as "Elizabeth" and to her family as "Margot." My initial introduction was to "Elizabeth Wall" (similarly, many of my informants use this identification).

I had always found Elizabeth Margot Wall to be a gregarious and vibrant individual, yet as I asked about her life, she was reticent to talk about particular aspects, especially the formative years. From the beginning I sensed a hesitancy in her voice when confronted with questions about her escape to West Germany, for example, and I endeavoured to be empathetic

¹⁵Pool's Cove, Fortune Bay 1994 portrays a romantic vignette of outport Newfoundland's culture and landscape. Fishing boats (dories/and/or trap skiffs), wharves and stages, ever-present in many of Wall's paintings, represent the theme of the fishery.

Figure 2: Pool's Cove, Fortune Bay 1994

in that regard. Nonetheless, by listening to her personal experience narratives, I gleaned some important interpretable information. I also used photographs of Wall's art from private collections to prompt other insightful knowledge about this enigmatic personality.

Elizabeth Margot Wenzel was born in Dresden, Germany, on September 24, 1927. She has one sibling--a sister Ingrid, a retired medical doctor, who is seven years her junior and resides in the resort town of Rathewalde. Her parents, Erwin and Liesbeth Wenzel, were devoted to their two daughters. Erwin Wenzel was an accountant by profession and his wife a homemaker. "In the 20s in Germany," stated Wall, "women didn't go out to work." Liesbeth Wenzel is still enjoying good health at the age of ninety-seven and lives by herself. The only outside assistance she will accept, reported Elizabeth Margot, is shopping. Elizabeth Margot Wall has not seen her mother since 1965 and her sister since 1947, prior to her escape from East Germany. They still correspond on a regular basis, however, and always exchange Christmas and birthday gifts. Neither Elizabeth Margot nor her sister Ingrid enjoy flying. Wall stated amusingly, "My mother tells me not to take chances with my life. She wants me in a safe little box called Canada." Wall herself chose to remain within the domestic sphere after the birth of her children.

Like many self-taught artists, Elizabeth Margot Wall was influenced

primarily by one specific individual. Her love for painting began in Germany when her father allowed her to share his paints. A hobby painter, Erwin Wenzel found oil painting a relaxing and rewarding pastime and his favourite subject was flowers. She directed me to the kitchen and a painting of her father's, a Cézannesque still life depicting a bottle of red wine, a roast goose, a bowl of grapes, a number of pears in various stages of ripeness, a glass half-filled with red wine and some Mediterranean cooked lobster just waiting to be devoured. Although her father had no formal training, she said, "He produced some beautiful things. This is the last painting he produced." As Wall reflected, "He loved painting flowers. He did a large one for my mother called 'Poppies in a Basket.' He also did landscapes. He made it fun. He would do one and take six months to finish it." Wall recalled painting a bowl of pansies for her father when she was four years old. When she was eight, Erwin Wenzel died at the age of thirty-five of lung disease. Despite her father's death, Elizabeth Margot Wall continued painting on her own. Her early art training was acquired traditionally and conforms to Toelken's academic definition of folk art as those traditional art forms which are informally transmitted from one generation to another (186).

Elizabeth Margot Wenzel attended public school in Dresden until grade six, but because of Germany's unstable and deteriorating political climate, was sent to a private school in Schlönlinde, Czechoslovakia, to further her

education. Art classes were part of the regular curriculum . "We had very small classes, and we were given individual attention routinely," recalled Wall, "and you could go in the direction you wanted to go and develop that" (referring to her preference for oil painting). Graduating from high school in 1945, with plans to attend medical school, Elizabeth Margot Wenzel discovered that the universities where she intended to apply for admission in Dresden and Leipzig, Province of Saxony, southeast Germany, had been destroyed during the war. Elizabeth Margot Wall remembered this time, "When you're twenty years old and hungry every day of your life, and you have all the money in the world but you can't buy anything, that was it Because under the occupation at the time, nothing was done to build up the economy. We were strictly a stretch of land that was occupied by the military who didn't lift a finger to help the civilians."

Under the oppressive political and economic conditions in what was then East Germany¹⁶ and with little hope for the future, Elizabeth Margot

¹⁶A discussion of Germany's recent history can be found in The Europa World Organization 1998, Vol. 1: "Following the defeat of the Nazi regime and the ending of the Second World War in 1945, Germany was divided, according to the Berlin Agreement, into US, Soviet, British and French occupation zones. Berlin was similarly divided After the failure of negotiations to establish a unified German administration, the US, French and British zones were integrated economically in 1948 On Sept. 1949 a new German state, the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG), was established in the three Western zones. In Oct. 1949 Soviet-occupied Eastern Germany declared itself the German Democratic Republic (GDR), with the Soviet zone of Berlin as its capital. This left the remainder of Berlin (West Berlin) as an enclave of the FRG within the territory of the GDR The FRG and GDR developed sharply divergent political and economic systems. The leaders of the GDR created a socialist state, based on the Soviet model. As early as 1945 large agricultural estates in eastern Germany were nationalized, (continued...)"

Wenzel and twenty others escaped in 1947 to West Germany.¹⁷ When I inquired if this harrowing and crucial decision to leave home had inspired a creative release, she hastily retorted, "I never felt the need to put that on canvas. I just got over it." I learned early in my relationship with Elizabeth Margot Wall that she has a friendly and hospitable manner, but, as mentioned earlier, I encountered a reserve that oftentimes prevented me from continuing a line of questioning. While Wall had little to say about her flight from East Germany, she was forthright in discussing the circumstances of her employment in what was then West Germany and her subsequent emigration to Canada.

Settling in Hanover, Elizabeth Margot secured an administrative position with the British Consulate because of her fluency in English. She

¹⁶(...continued)

followed in 1946 by major industrial concerns. Exclusive political control was exercised by the Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands (SPD, Social Democratic Party of Germany) in the Soviet zone. Other political parties in eastern Germany were under the strict control of the SED, and no political activity independent of the ruling party was permitted . . . The transfer, as war reparations, of foodstuffs, livestock and industrial equipment to the USSR from eastern Germany had a devastating effect on the area's economy in the immediate post-war period" (The Europa World Organization 1998, Vol. 1, 1455).

¹⁷"In June 1953 increasing political repression and severe food shortages led to uprisings and strikes, which were suppressed by Soviet troops. The continued failure of the GDR to match the remarkable economic recovery of the FRG prompted a growing number of refugees to cross from the GDR to the FRG [between 1949 and 1961 an estimated 2.5m. GDR citizens moved permanently to the FRG]". . .(The Europa World Organization 1998, Vol. 1, 1455).

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was so preoccupied with her job that painting was put on the back burner. It was in Hanover that she met her future husband Elroy "Red" Wall from Truro, Nova Scotia. After three years of courtship, they married on November 2, 1953. As a member of the Black Watch Royal Highland Regiment of Canada, Red Wall was transferred back to Canada in 1953. In response to my question about how Wall felt about coming to Canada with her new husband, she replied, "I would have followed him to hell, probably." The couple made their home in Kentville, Nova Scotia, until the fall of 1956, when Red was transferred to Prince Albert, northern Saskatchewan. It was at this time that Elizabeth Margot Wall became a Canadian citizen.

Wall's comment is consistent with Bob Budgell's¹⁸ memories.

Budgell, a resident of Grand Falls-Windsor and a friend of Red's in the Canadian Army, felt that the Walls knew a flourishing romance. He recalled that they shared common interests, including a love of the out-of-doors. Together they travelled around Newfoundland taking photographs and catching fish in the summertime and hunting moose in the fall. Budgell would accompany them to Millertown in Central Newfoundland for the annual moose hunt. Not one who fits the image of the stereotypical hunter, Elizabeth Margot participated in the hunt from beginning to end, remarked Budgell, including a cigarette and a welcome libation at the end of an

¹⁸Bob Budgell, personal interview, 10 Aug. 1995.

invigorating safari. When Budgell was unable to attend the opening of Elizabeth Margot Wall: Coastal Havens: 1982-1995 on 16 July 1995 due to work commitments, he gave me a framed 8 by 10" black and white photograph of Red Wall (enlarged from a small picture taken during their "army days") to present to Elizabeth Margot. She was overjoyed by this gesture.

Red Wall's concern with his wife's well-being was evident even when he was dying. At the time of our initial meeting, Red Wall had been dead for seven years, but Elizabeth Margot told me that he had suggested she learn to drive a car before his death. I understand that from the time of his diagnosis with cancer until he died, a two year period had elapsed. Theirs was a very pragmatic approach to Red's illness. Elizabeth Margot had no choice but to get a driver's licence--for mobility and self-reliance after Red's passing. Although Red Wall had driven accident-free for forty years, they decided the best route to take was a driving school.

No doubt her husband's death left a tremendous void in Elizabeth Margot's life; nevertheless, she forged ahead with her two passions: painting and gardening. A committed horticulturalist, she has found its physical exertion exhilarating over the years, and I was intrigued by her prized botanical treasures when I visited her property in Irishtown in July 1993. The explosion of colour in Elizabeth Margot's garden is reflected in her

clothing and paintings. The naturalness of a brilliantly-hued attire is also visible in the azure tints and Arcadian browns of her canvases. Before relocating to Fredericton, Elizabeth Margot expressed a real concern about the loss of her flower garden in Irishtown but found a creative outlet "with a small patch in John's garden." When I visited her new apartment, however, there were flower pots on every windowsill and every table was simply overflowing with magnificent blooms. Elizabeth Margot Wall was still using flowers abundantly, her favourite blossoms mirroring the vision of a reflective and resourceful painter.

Elizabeth Margot Wall's love of painting was interrupted for a number of years by domestic responsibilities and raising a family. After her marriage and birth of her children, Elizabeth Margot Wall found fulfillment in the role of wife and mother: "There was no time to paint. I was always busy with Red and the children," she recalled. Elizabeth Margot and Red Wall had four children. John, the eldest, was born in Kentville in January 1955. Their only daughter, Ingrid, was born in August 1956, also in Kentville. She died in November 1957 of meningitis. Patrick and Terry were born in Prince Albert in October 1957 and November 1959 respectively.

In 1961 Red Wall was transferred back to West Germany, this time to Werl. Returning to Europe, the Walls travelled extensively with their three children, but as an expatriate, Elizabeth Margot could not reenter East

Germany. It was while they were living in Werl that Elizabeth Margot's mother was granted a visa to visit the Wall family.¹⁹ In 1965 the Canadian Army transferred Red Wall back to Canada--this time to Oromocto, New Brunswick. With her children in school, Elizabeth Margot was able to concentrate on painting once again. She painted images of animals and flowers to fill up the walls in their home.

In 1970 the Walls were transferred to St. John's, Newfoundland. They lived in a huge military house, and Elizabeth Margot found herself eager to create some artwork to decorate the immense walls. As she was beginning to enjoy more leisure time, Elizabeth Margot pursued her passion for oil painting--"purely for my own pleasure"--merging it with her domestic role: "When we moved to St. John's, we had a very very large house, and I thought in order to have some good paintings, I would have to spend a whole lot of money. Then I thought, why not make some myself? That's when I painted quite a bit for my own house. It was not necessarily as good as theirs [established artists], but it was mine."

Elizabeth Margot Wall started receiving praise from her friends, and one of her neighbours commissioned her: "Major Bridgman wanted one very

¹⁹Although the unification of the FRG (West Germany) and the GDR (East Germany) which formally established the Federal Republic of Germany in Oct. 1990 provided immediate repatriation, Elizabeth Margot Wall has chosen not to return to her homeland.

badly. In the end I did consent, and he pressed me to take the money for it, but I didn't feel comfortable about doing that." Wall to this day does not enjoy public pressure, and that is why she has always avoided public exhibits, preferring to produce on her own terms and for her own pleasure.

Shortly after their move to St. John's, the Walls began a love affair with the coastal communities which were to become Elizabeth Margot's favourite subject matter: "I came to Newfoundland and I saw the beautiful outports, and I thought, gosh, that would be nice to paint. I just got to try this." In 1974 Elizabeth Margot and Red rented a boat and visited many outport settlements in Conception Bay. During the summer months of the early eighties, they travelled many times by coastal boat from Plum Point on the Northern Peninsula of Newfoundland to the south coast of Labrador. These excursions afforded Elizabeth Margot the opportunity to take photographs from which she later created her images on canvas.

Elizabeth Margot and Red Wall spent five years on the east coast of Newfoundland and moved to the west coast of the island in 1975 where Red was employed in Corner Brook as liaison between the reserve and the regular forces. After twenty-five years of service, Red Wall retired in 1978. The Walls settled in Irishtown on the north shore of the Bay of Islands, eight kilometres from Corner Brook. They chose this location because of its

quietness and beauty and lived there until Red's death in 1986 (See figure 3²⁰). Elizabeth Margot did not paint between 1975 and 1979, concentrating instead on landscaping their property. The years were still important to Wall's development as a painter, however, for during this time the family took frequent trips around the province, taking photographs and revelling in its natural beauty. Elizabeth Margot now had her subject and encouraged by Red--"He didn't influence me but I had 100 per cent support"--she started exploring in paint the everyday life of Newfoundland's outport communities.

After five decades of painting sporadically but with the loyal backing of her husband and children, Elizabeth Margot Wall became a full time painter. "Having fallen in love with the rugged beauty," she said, "and the contrasting tranquillity of the outports and coastal villages, I resumed painting, depicting the unique character of Newfoundland and Labrador." Wall is not given to labels, and she does not regard herself as being a great artist. "I just paint as I know how," she said. "There are people around technically well-trained, and I have none, you know, and it probably shows."

By now Elizabeth Margot Wall had developed enough confidence to seek representation in the marketplace, and Red accompanied her to the Ewing Gallery "to see if there was any value to them." It was only after

²⁰Whales in Bay, Irishtown, Bay of Islands 1994 depicts the whales that could be seen in the bay from the home where she lived for 18 years.

Figure 3: Whales in Bay, Irishtown, Bay of Islands 1984

Wall offered her paintings to a dealer that she became aware of their value. When I spoke to Lance and Tess Ewing, the original owners of the Ewing Gallery, I learned that Wall had approached them in the early 80s--albeit reluctantly--with two small paintings, and she had no idea how to price them. Based on market values at the time, they advised her, and Tess Ewing recalled, "We came up with something that we all agreed with, and she went away and left them with us and we framed them."²¹ That they sold immediately came as a complete surprise to her. Wall recalled fondly, "For the first one I got \$50; I thought it was wonderful."

That said, money has never been a major motivator for Wall's creativity, and she has refrained from raising the price of her work substantially over the years because she wants it to be affordable to everyone.²² As Wall explained it, "When you earn a few extra dollars, I like that too, but it's not the prime reason I paint." The Ewings fostered Wall's work as an artist and continued to inspire and guide her until they sold their gallery in August 1992 and moved to Kelowna, British Columbia.

After the initial positive response to the sale of her paintings, Wall was encouraged to continue her artistic expression and within a short period

²¹Tess and Lance Ewing, tape-recorded interview, 28 June 1994. All quotes by the Ewings are from this interview.

²²The Ewing Gallery has sold Wall's framed 8 x 10 paintings for \$350 and 9 x 12 paintings for \$450 since 1990, in accordance with Elizabeth Margot Wall's wishes.

of time her reputation as a talented painter was firmly established. Uninhibited by the direction of a formalist school and relying on her own unique solution to problems of perspective and composition, Elizabeth Margot Wall developed a particular style characterized by meticulous detail, vivid colour and focus on community. "Style," says Kenneth Burke, "is one aspect of identification" (266), and Elizabeth Margot Wall's paintings are easily recognizable and visually intelligible. In her own words, "I reflect what I feel and see. Sometimes it's 70 per cent of what I feel and only 30 per cent of what I see." The pristine nature of a tranquil existence evokes a feeling of well-being for one viewer who responds to the quietness in the work:

The work is powerful because of this quietness. She paints her canvases in a very ordered manner which simplifies and idealizes. Like an accomplished storyteller, Elizabeth eliminates all irrelevant information and gives us only the essence. Although this painting (See figure 4²³) depicts a historically accurate scene, Elizabeth's artistic licence comes through--her psychic idealization of an outport community. This is what I find appealing about her work--it's like a conversation. The viewer inquires; the painting responds, and it's a very pleasing response. It's comfortable to look at, easy to live with.²⁴

²³The house painted in bands of blue and white in English Point, Labrador 1994 sits distinctly amongst its neighbours and logs, left to dry, are vertically stacked resembling a teepee's wooden frame. In the background arise majestic icebergs found in coastal communities.

²⁴George Maslov, tape-recorded interview, 13 July 1994.

Figure 4: English Point, Labrador 1994

These comments are by George Maslov, a professional printmaker at Sir Wilfred Grenfell Fine Arts College, Corner Brook, who has resided in Newfoundland since 1992. Maslov was born in Linz, Austria, of Russian parentage, emigrating to Brooklyn, New York, with his mother and brother when he was four years old. At the age of six, Maslov and his family joined his father in Toronto, Canada, where he resided until he relocated to Newfoundland. "I am intrigued by George's observation," remarked Elizabeth Margot. "I think it's possible he thinks on the same wavelength as I do. There's a similar comprehension, because it takes me quite a while to do a painting. When I'm doing a painting, I feel like I'm living there. I cannot explain it." The importance of this inner vision is highlighted by art historian Barbara Novak:

The psychology of the folk artist demands further art historical investigations--as we learn more about the psychology of perception and art. It has always amazed me that the primitive can work directly in front of the object, aiming hard for realism, checking constantly back to the object as he works, and yet ends up with something that is much truer to his mind's eye than to anything his physical eye has perceived. (100)

By creating an ideal village, George Maslov feels that Elizabeth Margot subconsciously expresses a very important aspect of her personality: "The villages are well-kept. They are all clean, and that's the way she probably imagines them to be or wants them to be . . . And again, by

omitting those things--the mundane, everyday telephone pole, or whatever--that she presents unconsciously a pleasing aspect of looking into this scene (English Point); and it's actually appealing that you don't see it." Elizabeth Margot Wall's fundamental concern is to create a pleasing portrayal of the daily life of Newfoundland's outport settlements.

So impressed was Maslov with "the simplicity and the order and the quality of the houses that she paints so well" that, in the fall of 1993, he gave Elizabeth Margot Wall an opportunity to reach out to a broader audience and to establish a more lucrative market. Maslov approached Wall to do a lithographic print at Sir Wilfred Grenfell Fine Art College. As a lover of her paintings, he was interested in getting her involved with the College by providing access to the equipment and to his expertise. Although Wall knew nothing about the print medium at the time of their meeting, she agreed to give it some consideration. Wall was honoured to be considered by a skillful printmaker who has assisted such eminent Newfoundland artists as David Blackwood and Christopher Pratt. In the end, however, she decided against it, as she explained, "It would have been totally against the grain for me." Had she agreed, it would have been an anomaly, disclosed Maslov: "I've never seen a real folk artist who paints for themselves really do multiples, because there's actually no reason for it. She's painting for herself, in her own place, for her own necessity, I guess, and to have

multiples is self-defeating."

"Mass production is not what I'm aiming for," revealed Wall, ". . . if I started doing that, I wouldn't feel the same about the work anymore." People like Jan Grebneff, a former employee of the Ewing Gallery and devout art collector, feels that with a print "some of the life would go out of her work. There's something about her working in the medium of oils. For some people, prints are wonderful and for their subject matter it works." Grebneff was born in Detroit, Michigan, but has resided in Corner Brook for the past seventeen years. Grebneff, who has a number of Wall paintings in her collection, continued: "She's never been in it to make a name for herself or to make money or to get some kind of glory from it . . . I don't know that she would get that much out of it in terms of personal satisfaction the way she does doing individual works. I just don't think a print could capture what there is in her oils."²⁵

Elizabeth Margot Wall prefers to create from photographs in the comfort of her own studio rather than paint out in the open and endure cold weather, wind and mosquitoes. The use of a camera as a painting tool has worked well for her. She usually takes the photographs herself, but she sometimes uses her son's or a friend's and has even copied from photography magazines. She always makes compositional changes in

²⁵Jan Grebneff, tape-recorded interview, 23 Aug. 1994.

"borrowed" photos as she captures the essence of outport communities.

Wall chooses to paint with oil on small canvases. The smallest of her canvases is 8" by 10" and the largest 16" by 20", but she normally uses 8" by 10" or 9" by 12". Each painting is a metaphor of that space between the rock and the sea which illustrates a tableau of a larger cultural scene (Stewart 44).

Wall is known for her fine detail. Painting patterns on curtains in the windows of her houses and laundry hanging on her signature clotheslines requires "little brushes, like double zero ones." This technique, she claimed, was developed "by trial and error . . . You learn how your paints act and how your brushes act. It comes with experience." The detail in Wall's work is appealing to Angela Baker:

One thing that is consistent from the early outports and right through to the later ones is her loving attention to detail--very very fine detail--and all the details of outport life--woodpiles, roosters, clotheslines--that's her mark. But in a lot of her works when you get into descriptions of them, you have to get into details of the way of life. It's not so much technical details, but details of the way of life.

As an artist herself, Baker recognizes that "it takes a lot of patience--you know, the obvious things--patience, eye-hand coordination--particularly if you're dealing with things that are small as opposed to things that are large and bold and freely splashed on." For Baker the details bring life to Wall's paintings: "If you sit down and analyze Elizabeth Wall's painting, if

you describe her work, you can describe the geography of Newfoundland; you can describe the lifestyle of Newfoundland. It's wonderful. I mean, it kind of reminds me of Wordsworth's poetry and Wordsworth's goals of taking the commonplace and finding what is wonderful in it."

One of the ways in which Elizabeth Margot Wall raises the ordinary to the sublime is by including a clothesline in each of her canvases. The clothesline has become Wall's identification mark. In every community she and her husband visited, Elizabeth Margot Wall paid particular attention to the custom of hanging laundry on a clothesline to dry, as she recalled: "It seems to be sort of an intrinsic part of it [the community] . . . something that belongs there . . . In larger communities, people use dryers more, but I think in the outports people are a bit economy-minded also with electricity, so why put it in the dryer when you can use that big dryer in the sky?"

Elizabeth Margot Wall equated the clothesline with a "clean lifestyle," which to her is the essence of the outport. By editing the irrelevant items that could spoil the romantic and idyllic setting she hopes to create, Wall uses artistic licence and makes order out of chaos. "It's my personality," she said. As George Maslov observed of Wall's work: "It's not crowded with people and [she] lets an individual enter the scene comfortably without feeling overcrowded or as though they're intruding . . . It's very clean . . . You feel very comfortable going into this environment, visually speaking."

Despite recurring bouts of bursitis in her shoulder and headaches due to eye strain, Elizabeth Margot continues to paint colourful and harmonized communities in minute detail. With a pure palette, she meticulously adds blades of grass, flower petals, patterns on the clothes on the clotheslines and curtains in the windows. Here we have another important aspect of her individuality: "If I couldn't do the detail, I would not paint. The detail is what is needed, in my opinion . . . It's been years since I've painted flowers, but even when I did, I was always interested in the small details of the flowers or the leaf or whatever it was."

Wall finds the "different colours in the Newfoundland outport quite charming." She remains faithful to the colours in the photographs and uses her imagination for black and white pictures but does not hesitate to add brightness for emphasis. Elizabeth Margot Wall's earlier paintings are muted and subdued in colour; later works are brilliant and intense. Maslov explained it as "the spontaneity of being wistful," while Elizabeth Margot dismissed the change as experimentation with paints and brushes.

Corner Brook resident and academically-trained artist Aileen Woolridge admires the detail and colour of Elizabeth Margot Wall's artistic expression and discusses the evolution of Wall's technique:

I think she has become much more sophisticated. The early

one there (See figure 5²⁶), the treatment of the sky is quite different from the treatment of the sky in the '95 one (See figure 6²⁷)--the clouds are more formulaic. She's looking at other things too and becoming more sophisticated in the handling of her paint, I think. She uses her paint simply as colour. I wouldn't say there was any painterly quality to it. It's applied thinly and it's used because it's green or because it's blue. It's not the love of the paint. It's the image itself, I think.²⁸

Comparing the same two paintings, Angela Baker comments:

Certainly her use of colour in her later work shows her increased experience . . . As her work has progressed, you begin to get modelling in the mountains, in the hills. Like this one, for example (Sunnyside), she seems to be a little more free in her colour too. You know, she doesn't hesitate to use that sort of cerulean blue on the building there.

While the communities portrayed in the paintings are idyllic, they are set against a sometimes foreboding and dark landscape. The blue, red, yellow and purple houses cling to existence on the rocks just as Newfoundlanders do. Although the inhabitants are rarely depicted, their presence is strongly felt. Boats are moored in the harbour and fishing paraphernalia like rubber boots, barrels and stages are visible in Pool's Cove (Fig. 2). A truck is parked in the driveway and hens are in the backyard of the striped house in English Point (Fig. 4), and a blooming plant is in the

²⁶Harbour Le Cou 1984

²⁷Sunnyside, Trinity Bay 1995

²⁸Aileen Woolridge, tape-recorded interview, 8 May 1996. All quotes by Woolridge are from this interview.

Figure 5: Harbour Le Cou 1984

Figure 6: Sunnyside, Trinity Bay 1995

window of Sunnyside (Fig. 6). Finally, the quintessential clothesline is figured in all of them. These are the signs of human habitation, as Elizabeth Margot Wall explains in her usual self-effacing manner:

Of course, the fact that you see smoke coming out of a chimney or you see a woodpile by the house or you see clothes hanging on the line, this indicates people are there. It could be too that I'm not so great at doing people, to be honest about it. I did a few with men in boats, for instance, on the south coast. I did one last year--a Christmas one--there was a man coming with a tree in his boat, so you had to put the man in, but I'm really not great at people and I could never paint a proper face. I just can't.²⁹

Elizabeth Margot Wall receives much satisfaction in pleasing her audience, but hastens to add: "I am the one who influences my work and always have . . . If my style and my way of painting hadn't pleased anyone, I would still do it for my own satisfaction."

Elizabeth Margot Wall's style of painting has matured since she began painting outport scenes for the marketplace in 1980. Her later works show greater clarity of colour, more creative composition and even more detail in the finished product. Wall is exceedingly modest, however, about her talent. When she was approached in August 1994 by the curator at Sir Wilfred Grenfell College Art Gallery in Corner Brook to participate in a solo exhibition the following summer, Wall was pleased and puzzled at the same time.

²⁹Elizabeth Margot Wall, radio interview with Lisa Roberts of CBC Radio at opening of Coastal Havens 16 July 1995.

Having relocated to Fredericton, New Brunswick, in August 1993, she was especially thrilled to be returning to Corner Brook for the opening of the exhibition on 16 July 1995 and was flattered to be receiving such eminent recognition. True to her humble character, Elizabeth Margot Wall asked me to speak on her behalf at the opening of Coastal Havens: 1982-1995. In a radio interview with Lisa Roberts of CBC Radio that same day, she was awed at the attention given her art: "I haven't done the perfect painting yet, and I don't think I ever will. It's just not going to happen. When I started painting, I sort of issued a challenge to myself. I wanted to make a painting that somebody would buy, and it wasn't the money. It was the idea. So I made one and it sold, so the gallery said could you get a couple of more some time. Then it progressed from there."

As a result of Wall's success in the commercial arena, she expressed regret in not being able to produce more works. She is limited by her eyesight, and on this topic, she said, "Having painted quite a lot over the years, my eyes have become strained. I find that I can't paint in the daylight, because it's too harsh plus, if I do, my eyes take such a long time to readjust I can't drive the car. So I try to do it at night, because the soft night light is kinder to my eyes than daylight." Elizabeth Margot Wall estimates her repertoire to contain six hundred paintings. That includes everything she has produced right from the beginning of her painting career

to the present³⁰.

In the six months following Coastal Havens she was plagued with bouts of bursitis due to obvious burnout. Prior to the opening of the exhibition, Wall had produced seven paintings in a two-month period--four for the marketplace (two for each gallery³¹) and one each for the exhibition curator, exhibition coordinator and catalogue essayist. Her early output was roughly forty paintings a year, but she has reduced her production to between eighteen and twenty a year. She does not paint in the summer or holiday time like Christmas, Easter or vacations. In order to minimize her discomfort after Coastal Havens, Wall was required to take medication and to refrain from painting, which caused her severe frustration. In a telephone conversation about a month after the show, she told me, "I'm never so happy as when I can paint, but I guess I have to follow the doctor's orders."

Eye strain has figured considerably in Wall's decision not to work for private shows because of the imposition of time restraints and the pressure to produce. As she explained it, "The enjoyment does suffer when that happens." When I broached Wall's reluctance to do shows with the Ewings, Tess Ewing agreed:

³⁰As of June 15, 1998.

³¹In the two commercial art galleries in Corner Brook, Newfoundland--the Ewing Gallery and the Franklyn Gallery--where her paintings are displayed, there are long waiting lists of hopeful buyers.

Yes, it is [true], very much so. She did not like the pressure. And also, Elizabeth liked to know that there was at least one piece by her hung in the gallery. If she brought in two or three and they sold within a couple of days, she was pleased in one way but not pleased in another, because she knew she wouldn't have another one ready maybe for three weeks or a month. If it was somebody we knew really well and we knew they had other works of Elizabeth, sometimes we would ask them, even though they had bought it, if they would leave it in the gallery for a period of time.

Her husband added, "We always had to put a 'sold' sign on it, and we could have sold it maybe a dozen times."

The Ewings relied on word of mouth to promote Wall's work, as Tess Ewing remembered:

It was almost instant appeal, you know, by viewers coming into the gallery. And, of course, we were so enthused about it. I think we talked about it a lot, and anyone who's bought her work talks a lot about it . . . Her work seems to appeal to the educated eye, to the educated collector, as much as it does to somebody just getting started or someone who's never had a painting before or never studied art . . . There's a happiness in her work . . . It's like it's always a nice day in Elizabeth's paintings. I guess that's what appeals. I remember our sort of wondering at first. We used to have people refer to it as folk art, but we sort of felt it's not naive, really--in the sense that some folk art is--has no sense of proportion or aerial perspective. She's very much aware of perspective. It's very difficult to categorize it.

Tess Ewing identifies folk art on the basis of simple design and composition, which she ascribes to Elizabeth Margot Wall's painting. Influenced by her aesthetic judgment of fine art, Ewing's high regard for Wall's work is based on the artist's technical skill and use of aerial

perspective. Tess Ewing is convinced, however, that Elizabeth Margot Wall would not have benefited from art classes--that by painting in her own way, Wall, like any determined artist, has developed a very distinct, intentional and conscious style. Unwittingly, in her remarks, Ewing also recognizes the community appeal of Wall's paintings: "They are true pictures of outports . . . and the unhurried, traditional way of life." From Tess Ewing's comments, it is clear that the Ewings did not have to heavily promote Wall's work; rather, it promoted itself.

What has become increasingly clear to me during the course of my research is Wall's very individualistic approach to her art as she enjoys the "fruits of her labour." In response to my question about who has been most influential in her painting career, she unhesitatingly replied, "I control it, and I always have." Motivated by her own feelings as she depicts the daily activities of a traditional outport way of life, Elizabeth Margot Wall is a woman who trusts her own instincts: "I paint what I like. If I couldn't enjoy it, I couldn't do it." She is devoted to painting, not to fame. Elizabeth Margot Wall paints for the intrinsic pleasure of producing idealized images to celebrate the everyday life of the fishing communities of Newfoundland and Labrador and is not one bit interested in celebrity status.

Dresden, Germany, is a far cry from Irishtown, Newfoundland, but perhaps it is Elizabeth Margot Wall's European background that has sparked

an affinity to the communities she is drawn to paint. As a non-native Newfoundlander, Wall has successfully provided a body of artwork of inestimable popularity--not only to Newfoundlanders but also beyond the province's boundaries. These days, Elizabeth Margot Wall the artist enjoys a regional, national and international reputation, and Elizabeth Margot Wall the woman enjoys an inner tranquillity by practicing her artistic expression and by satisfying the people who admire and buy her paintings. Yet, like Maud Lewis of Nova Scotia, Elizabeth Margot Wall's greatest contribution is to the folk art tradition in the province where she painted. Wall's work is most important to Newfoundland and to Newfoundlanders. Her distinctive and orderly villages are cultural metaphors to many people whose access to them is achieved only through memory and now through the marketplace. The next chapter will explore the power of Wall's paintings as cultural expressions.

Chapter 4

The Effects of Elizabeth Margot Wall's Paintings

I was introduced to Elizabeth Margot Wall's paintings in the spring of 1987 by the owner of Capstan Island, Labrador (See figure 7). An avid collector of Newfoundland art, Wayne King, a businessman from Grand Falls-Windsor, told me that he knew nothing about the artist at the time of his purchase, but later learned that her work was popular but scarce--that it was not being "mass produced." I recall that King's enthusiasm for Capstan Island was infectious. He told me why he was drawn to it even though he was surrounded by several beautiful artworks at the Ewing Gallery: "That one was alive. It had a personality of its own, and it just said to me, 'I'm going home with you.'"³² Although born and raised in an urban environment, King's attraction to Capstan Island was immediate. Wayne King was born in Stephenville Crossing where his father was a medical practitioner. At the age of two, he moved to New Orleans, Louisiana, USA, with his family. They returned to Newfoundland when King was five, and he lived in Corner Brook until he left for St. John's to attend university. Since graduating, he has resided in Corner Brook and Grand Falls-Windsor.

When I met Elizabeth Margot Wall for the first time several years later

³²Wayne King, tape-recorded interview, 25 June 1994.

Figure 7: Capstan Island, Labrador 1987

in August 1992, she breezed into the Ewing Gallery with a newly-finished canvas of Ramea, an island located off the southwest coast of Newfoundland, and some iris bulbs for the new proprietors. I was immediately piqued by her spontaneity and candour. "I am never totally satisfied with the paintings I produce," exclaimed Wall. Others are clearly moved by her results, however, and Ramea was purchased sight unseen by Madonna Bailey, vice-president and branch manager of United Bank of Switzerland in Montreal, Quebec. Formerly from St. John's, Bailey had requested "an Elizabeth Wall" when she visited the Ewing Gallery the previous summer. When contacted by the gallery advising of the availability of Ramea a year later, she replied without hesitating, "Send it." Between August 1992 and August 1993, I became even more convinced of the admiration for Elizabeth Margot Wall's paintings, and my appreciation of the extraordinary reception to Wall's art is the basis for this ethnographic analysis of her devotees.

In this chapter, I establish the popularity of Elizabeth Margot Wall's art and explore the reasons for that popularity. Who responds to her particular vision of Newfoundland's and Labrador's coastal communities, and what meaning does it hold for its respondents? The answers to these questions are based on formal and informal conversations I had with the artist and her patrons. Of the twenty-five people to whom I spoke, at least half evolved

from casual conversations with customers who were also friends and acquaintances.³³ One person approached me as a "convert" and the remainder were selected for particular purposes; that is, as dealers of Wall's paintings, professionals in the fields of fine art and folk art, and people who have experienced first-hand Elizabeth Margot Wall's art. The contributions I obtained form the basis of this chapter.

Focusing attention on the paintings in her personal inventory, Elizabeth Margot Wall explained the meaning, technique and aesthetic criteria of each canvas. The consumers of her artwork not only discussed paintings from their own collections, but also commented on a collection of photographs which I presented to them. In the process, I discovered that the physical object elicited a variety of personal experience narratives that expressed individual and communal identity as well as aesthetic appreciation and historical importance. The important theme that emerged was Wall's ability to evoke viewers' and consumers' own associations with people and more often places, which essentially is the key to their huge popularity.

Janet Weldon worked as a summer assistant at the Ewing Gallery during the summers of 1994 and 1995. Having grown up in Corner Brook and not being acquainted with rural Newfoundland, as an anthropology

³³As co-owner of the Ewing Gallery, I was privy to business records which includes a list of buyers of all the artwork that has been sold by the gallery. I also had an advantage in being able to discuss the impact of Wall's paintings with visitors to the gallery.

student Weldon found herself drawn to the social structure of Wall's artistic expression: "I like the culture/tradition side of it. That's probably one of the reasons I like her work in addition to the peacefulness it brings out."³⁴

Weldon was especially interested in the comments of customers as they viewed Wall's work:

I'd say about 95 percent of the people who come into the gallery always have something to say about her work . . . They come in and it's like a magnet. They see it and they go right to it: 'Just look at the colours!' They are just drawn to it. At first I didn't understand what it was, but after a while you anticipate it, you really do.

Age is no qualification to the appeal of Wall's paintings, according to

Weldon:

People come in and you see them, and it doesn't matter how old they are. I've had 20-year-olds come in; and, in fact, there was a man from Ontario and his wife and they were in their late 20s. They couldn't believe that Elizabeth wasn't 25 or 30 years old. They couldn't believe it. They thought her work was so lively and so colourful and just so vivid.

The pervasive interest in Wall's paintings is exemplified by Weldon's comments:

Anybody who comes in--people from Ontario, New Brunswick, anywhere in Canada, people from the States who come in on bus tours to the hotel and stay in the hotel--are drawn to it, again like a magnet. They say that's what they're looking for. They want something from Newfoundland, and that's what they look at. I have to tell them it's not for sale. It's

³⁴Janet Weldon, tape-recorded interview, 23 Aug. 1994. All quotes by Janet Weldon are from this interview.

kind of sad, because you'd like to sell it to them. But again, there's a waiting list because so many people are attracted to her work. I mean, there's paintings in there that people have wanted to buy, and I could've sold them ten, fifteen, twenty times over. It's really amazing.

Unlike Queena Stovall who portrayed the lives of rural Virginians from the position of a native rural Virginian (Weatherford xiv), Elizabeth Margot Wall renders an interpretation of Newfoundland's coastal communities from the position of a native urban European. She manages to persuade other non-native Newfoundlanders, however, of what it means to belong to a community by communicating her perception of Newfoundland's regional culture.

The interrelationship between a piece of Wall's art and its owner is realized on four levels--historical significance, aesthetic appreciation, personal identity and regional identity. The participants of this study consist of residents, academics, nonacademics, collectors, outport-bred individuals, rural-bred individuals, foreign-bred individuals and admirers. There is not one fisher among the group. Nonetheless, they all possess an aesthetic sensitivity which ranges from visual excitement to a disciplined examination of the intrinsic qualities of Elizabeth Margot Wall's canvases.

The paintings also lend themselves to the construction of meaning by becoming signs of cherished experiences and relationships. Not only does a Wall painting play an important role in expressing valuable personal traits,

but it also functions as a marker of the regional identity of its creator, owner and user. This association of people with place is supported by the geographical distribution of the communities in Newfoundland and Labrador which are discussed. There are references to Flower's Cove, Belleoram, Capstan Island, Norris Point, Irishtown, Lewisporte, Grand Beach Point, Heart's Content, Quidi Vidi and Benoit's Cove as microcosms of a distinctively Newfoundland experience.

A sense of interconnectedness is realized by those individuals who read Wall's visual landscapes as an historical record. Angela Baker who moved to the province in 1972 describes Wall's passion: "Here we have a woman who is merely doing what she loves, recording the environment that she loves and, unwittingly, producing this marvellous body of work that is a historical document. And when you look at what's happening to rural Newfoundland as a result of the moratorium on the fishery,³⁵her work is even more valuable." Many of the people I interviewed declared Elizabeth Margot Wall's paintings a valuable source of historical information.

Christopher Buckle, a businessman who recently returned to Corner Brook, acknowledges their historical significance with reference to the

³⁵In July 1992 the Canadian government announced a moratorium on fishing for northern cod, shutting down the most important of Newfoundland's five-hundred-year cod fishery. The government paid fishers and plant workers not to work, leaving thirty thousand jobless. The moratorium was to last two years, but to date it still continues (Brian Bergman, "Rediscovering Newfoundland," Maclean's 23 June 1997: 14-17).

catalogue that was published in conjunction with the exhibition, Elizabeth

Margot Wall: Coastal Havens: 1982-1995:

This is definitely a historical document, because we don't know what the future holds for rural Newfoundland. It's obvious that a lot of the communities that exist now aren't going to be around--to what extent, I guess, we don't know. But if you were to pick this up and look at it, I believe that there is a document of how these places looked in general terms--the way they were laid out and such. I'm sure if you showed any of these paintings to an older Newfoundland who came from a certain place, they would have a warm feeling. They would say, 'Yes, that's what our community looked like. That's what it probably used to be like.'³⁶

Elizabeth Margot Wall records for posterity observations of a traditional way of life found in her own community of Irishtown, in the communities she has visited throughout the province, and in photographs of places never visited or long since resettled.³⁷ Wall's paintings offer a description of a vanishing way of life and create a public dialogue about traditional culture within and beyond a community. As the suspension of the northern cod fishery threatens to destroy the social fabric of outport Newfoundland, Wall's paintings serve as valuable reminders of everyday

³⁶Christopher Buckle, tape-recorded interview, 16 July 1996. All quotes by Christopher Buckle are from this interview.

³⁷A discussion of resettlement in Newfoundland and Labrador can be found in Encyclopedia of Newfoundland and Labrador: "In the Newfoundland context the term resettlement refers to a process whereby organized efforts have been made to centralize the population. Between 1954 and 1975 there were three resettlement programs introduced in Newfoundland and Labrador by the provincial and federal governments, which resulted in the abandonment of 300 communities and 30,000 people being moved, mostly from small isolated fishing communities to larger 'growth centres'"(585).

events in the lives of rural Newfoundlanders.

The theme of the fishery is predominant in Wall's paintings.

Newfoundland's dependence on the sea dates to the sixteenth century. The formative years for Newfoundland were the century and a half between 1650 and 1800 when a few thousand English and Irish fisherfolk began to spend their winters here. Dr. Leslie Harris described the importance of Newfoundland as a raw material resource base with cod as the basis of its economy:

Settlement had spread along the coast of Newfoundland until there were as many as 1300 separate settlements. . . They [settlers from England and Ireland] wanted to live by the sea. They needed a good harbor that would provide shelter for their boats and buildings. They wanted enough space on the waterfront to build their wharves, stages, stores, and flakes. They also needed fresh water and wood for building and for fuel. Finally, they needed to be as near as possible to good fishing grounds. (26)

Historically, Newfoundland was a place apart despite a geographical proximity to the Canadian Mainland, and the essence of its culture is connected in an ineffable way to the experience of place where spatial detail is known and valued (Pocius, A Place to Belong 18). Scholars of early settlement have emphasized the importance of good location and convenient accessibility to available resources by English and Irish immigrants (Mannion). It did not matter to these early inhabitants that the land was steep and rocky. They built their houses on the banks of inlets, coves and

harbours close to the fishing grounds and settled there to fish and raise their families. The body of artwork examined in this thesis demonstrates how the spatial reality of outport Newfoundland is portrayed faithfully by Elizabeth Margot Wall.

Newfoundland's history has been interpreted largely as one of chronic dependence and raw exploitation from outside, factors which have contributed substantially to economic impotence and community chaos. What official history has neglected to report is the daily lives of fishers in the outport communities who were more preoccupied with the effects of the winds, tides, sun and fog and with "the availability of credit, the price of fish, the infrequent visit of a clergyman, or some other dignitary" (Byrne 72) than with a political identity. Subjected to the whims of successive British governments, the West Country merchants, and local merchants, the "hardy, happy fisherman," (Byrne 72) deeply attached to his island, became the stereotype of the Newfoundlander.

Ethnographic studies reflect a truer picture of the social organization of outport Newfoundland (Pocius, *A Place to Belong*; Ferguson; Ennis and Woodrow). Mark Ferguson has written a thoughtful analysis on the complexity of processing salt fish on the East Coast of Newfoundland. Despite the labour intensity, special skills and subjection to mercantile

capitalism, Ferguson observed from his ethnographic contributors a real sense of identity and self worth from accomplishing arduous and complex work. The men and women who participated in the salt fish industry enjoyed an egalitarian relationship due to the communal nature of their work spaces. The occupational contexts of the salt-fishing communities were the stages, fish stores, and flakes where important social interactions of work and daily life occurred. These social relations reinforced a strong sense of dignity and pride for fisher people.

Similarly, these same social networks were enjoyed by the ten women who shared their stories in Strong as the Ocean: Women's Work in the Newfoundland and Labrador Fisheries, a collection of stories edited by Francis Ennis and Helen Woodrow which celebrates rural women and their contribution to the fisheries. Their narratives reflect the work, home and community environment of these fisheries workers and the value of their labour. The experiences of these fishers demonstrate how the values attached to a traditional history and fishery--sense of space and place, sense of community and caring, sense of survival--are embodied in the fabric of Newfoundland life.

Elizabeth Margot Wall gives visual expression to a social dimension embued with these qualities, and her paintings serve as an intermediary between the viewer or consumer and the community represented. The

rugged landscape of Newfoundland and Labrador which is dotted with a disordered and unstructured array of cliffs, headlands, and hamlets is made ordered and harmonized by the brushstroke of Elizabeth Margot Wall. Consequently, her paintings are an eloquent expression of the social as well as the physical character of outport Newfoundland and Labrador.

Wall's paintings often have a certain historical context and she sometimes paints a community the way it was thirty years ago, as opposed to how it now appears. Catherine Steele's painting of her birthplace, Wall's Grand Bank, Burin Peninsula, which was painted in 1983, bears little resemblance to the Grand Bank of 1998.³⁹ This example shows how Wall's paintings maintain a link with our past and remind us of the optimism and pride of our heritage.

People tend to think of the past as a kind of mythical or imaginary place, "a foreign country where they do things differently" (Lowenthal, xvi). Cultural geographer David Lowenthal cited approvingly the words of Virginia Woolf in her unpublished autobiography entitled Moments of Being: "The present when backed by the past is a thousand times deeper than the present when it presses so close that you can feel nothing else (Lowenthal, 47-48). This sentiment is akin to the emotion expressed by Emma Butler when Michael Pearce showed her some photographs of Wall's paintings

³⁹Catherine Steele, personal conversation, 10 Aug. 1998.

when he visited the Emma Butler Gallery in St. John's in the fall of 1995. An ardent supporter and dealer of Newfoundland artists, Butler had not even heard of Elizabeth Margot Wall at the time of Pearce's visit. When she viewed the photographs, Butler gave way to tears and promptly placed an order with the Ewing Gallery for her own piece of Wall's art. The photos were a pleasant reminder of visits with her grandparents "around the bay"³⁹ as a child, and Butler told me, "It was as if I were stepping into the past."⁴⁰

Remembering the past as more agreeable than the present is one conceptual purpose of cultural products like Elizabeth Margot Wall's images of outport houses clinging to the banks of narrow safe harbours. Wall's canvases are contemporary manifestations of folklorism (a concept I will deal with in greater detail in the next chapter). Folklorism in the Newfoundland context is a sociopolitical response to a declining fishing economy, explains folklorist Elke Dettmer:

Throughout the 1980s the inshore fishery has steadily declined, despite the occasionally good summer of fishery here and there. But while future economic prospects are bleak, the quality of life in rural Newfoundland has generally remained good; most people who live in the coastal fishing villages, the outports, own their land, their house, their boat, and they often share

³⁹An expression meaning "to visit a number of coastal 'settlements,'" according to the Dictionary of Newfoundland English, 1990 ed., 32.

⁴⁰Emma Butler, personal conversation, 24 July 1996.

food and skills on an informal, reciprocal basis. Much of their time is free and flexible and in the outports a slower pace of life prevails that urban citizens have long lost. This lifestyle, however, is increasingly dependent on government support in form of unemployment insurance and welfare; new economic developments are absolutely necessary to make the outports viable again. ("An Analysis of the Concept of Folklorism" 9)

Using the past as a source of creativity, folklorism is an expression of distinctive elements that deliberately celebrates a traditional culture threatened by a transitional social order, and thus functions as a cultural coping mechanism. In this manner, Wall's paintings serve for Newfoundlanders as a defensive strategy:

While Newfoundlanders are facing social and economic problems in the real world, they have repeatedly tried to cope with them in cultural terms by referring to their past traditions, and thus engaged in the process of folklorism. Here folklorism above all takes the form of a persistent, romantic fascination with pre-industrial folklore that is still part of recent local memory. Sentimentally re-interpreted from the vantage point of the present, this folk culture continues to provide the basis for a distinct cultural identity, an image that appeals to Newfoundlanders as well as outsiders, including scholars and tourists. (Dettmer, "An Analysis of the Concept of Folklorism" 11)

Elizabeth Margot Wall's paintings project an image of a romantic and rural way of life--albeit a disappearing one--that appeals to non-Newfoundlanders as well as Newfoundlanders, as interpreted by Lorne Holland:

I suppose outport life in the eyes of a person like me, a "come

from away,"⁴¹portrays a romanticist. There's a romance about outport life. The reality about outport life is that it was probably pretty harsh. There wasn't good medical care. People would die of things that you shouldn't die from normally, but because you couldn't get immediate care, these things would happen. But, I guess, what she captures--you mentioned that she doesn't put in car wrecks or telephone poles--I've never seen a really paved road either, a paved highway. If you notice the Norris Point roads (Fig. 1), they look like they're the original roads. So, I think what she's done is she's taken Norris Point and set it back to the days before they got their roads. I mean, that's outport Norris Point; and, in that regard, she captures the romance of the outport--you know, vibrant communities, catching lots of fish and doing quite well. Norris Point always did, I believe.

The traditional but vanishing way of life associated with the fishery, which is an important marker of Newfoundland's and Labrador's economic and cultural identity, will be forever inscribed by the paintings of Elizabeth Margot Wall. As one informant so succinctly put it: "I think that Elizabeth Wall's art is the greatest tribute to outport Newfoundland."⁴²

Elizabeth Margot Wall's paintings have two dominant motifs: nostalgia and romance. Her images of outport communities record a languishing culture that resonates a nostalgic version of order and balance. Angela Baker comments on these themes:

As someone who has adopted Newfoundland, she [Elizabeth Margot Wall] sees it, I think, with a fascination . . .

⁴¹An esoteric expression relating to a person born outside the province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

⁴²Carol Ann Weldon, tape-recorded interview, 11 July 1994.

Nostalgia is something that you have lost; nostalgia is something that belongs to you, is familiar to you. This is not something that she'd lost, and it was not something that was part of her own growing up, but there is still an element of nostalgia in her work. It's like wistful love. That's a sense that I get from it, but I think there's also very much a romanticism in it. I think that perhaps with her European background there's a romantic appeal to the smallness of Newfoundland rural communities. There's a cozeyness, a homeyness about it all.⁴³

The romantic function of Wall's work and its romantic appeal may be connected with the cultural revival of Newfoundland in the seventies (discussed in chapter two as the "Newfoundland Renaissance"), which in turn offers interesting parallels to the nineteenth century Romantic Revival in Europe. The Romantic Movement was a widespread intellectual reaction to the rationalism and materialism of the eighteenth century Enlightenment Period. Politically, it was inspired by the revolutions in America and France and to the major economic, social and technical transformations of the Industrial Revolution in Britain. This resulted in a desire by artists and writers to protect and preserve aspects of rural life and culture and to introduce creative expression in literature, art and music. The publication of a book of poems by Wordsworth and Coleridge, Lyrical Ballads, in 1798 marked the beginning of the Romantic Movement in England. This was the first in a huge succession of works of art, music and literature which were

⁴³Angela Baker, tape-recorded interview, 24 Nov. 1996/

united by a variety of characteristic features: pastoralism, or love of nature; a taste for the artistic and the exotic; liberal and nationalistic political perspective; predominant sentimentality and nostalgia; adaptation of folk art forms. Essentially, a romantic work of art found its expression in the unique point of view of its creator.

In a political context, Newfoundland's cultural renaissance occurred in the seventies, in the wake of the North American reactionary phase of the sixties which rejected fifties' conformism and promoted progressive principles and global consciousness--what Newfoundland patriotic writer F.L. Jackson refers to as "the counterculture generation"⁴⁴ (3). Jackson explains that Newfoundlanders in the seventies were responding to a political passiveness resulting from domination by "governors, commissions and demagogues" (29), which culminated when Newfoundland joined Canada in 1949 after a bitter and highly-disputed referendum. Under the premiership of Joey Smallwood, a government-sponsored resettlement program was instituted, and many Newfoundland outports disappeared under the guise of "modernization" and "industrialization."⁴⁵

⁴⁴Jackson was referring to the well-known phrase popularized in Theodore Roszak, The Making of a Counter Culture (Garden City: Anchor Books, 1969).

⁴⁵During the Smallwood era--the two decades from 1950 to 1970--a "develop or perish" approach to industrialization was adopted. Smallwood directed most of his energy, in the early years of Confederation, toward attracting new industries to Newfoundland. Smallwood was alleged to have advised the fishermen to burn their boats (although he denied this remark) and to leave their outports and relocate to larger places--to the sites of the new factory jobs he had

Many rural Newfoundlanders at the time viewed the shift from fishing settlements to industrial and trade centres with mixed feelings. Although it meant better education and medical services, there was concern over the loss of community and ancestral bonds. David Blackwood, one of Newfoundland's most celebrated artists now residing in Port Hope, Ontario, expresses his concern that with resettlement came a loss of self-reliance and self confidence (Henderson 18)--a loss of identity. Born and raised in Wesleyville, Bonavista Bay, Blackwood represents a group of reactionary artists, writers, musicians and actors who have dealt with the theme of resettlement.

As a social protest, for example, well-known Newfoundland artist Gerald Squires produced a number of acrylic works in 1976 entitled The Boatman: A Rentless Journey as an elaboration of the sentiments expressed in an earlier painting, Resettlement, which shows a provincial government Social Services employee standing with his briefcase in an outport graveyard. On the tombstones are the names of those people who were forced to resettle during the sixties.

Earlier forms of cultural nationalism are visible in the works of English

promised in exchange for resettlement. Throughout his career, Smallwood remained a visionary of a grand industrialized future. All of these new industries, however, failed at once or eventually and resulted in a disenchantment with the domination by central Canada (Byrne 248-59).

landscape painters John Constable (1776-1837) and J.M.W. Turner (1775-1851) whose pictures reflect the spiritual fusion of nature and man.

Responding to societal disruptions, Constable painted the landscapes of his childhood, and Turner's depictions of steamboats and engines were a commentary on England's industrialization. The primal power of the landscape, however, was eloquently captured by Constable in The Haywain and Turner in Steamer in a Snowstorm. Gombrich contrasts their individual approaches:

Turner . . . had visions of a fantastic world bathed in light and resplendent with beauty, but it was world not of calm but of movement, not of simple harmonies but of dazzling pageantries. He crowded into his pictures every effect which could make them more striking and more dramatic. . . . The Dutch artist of the seventeenth century did not only paint what he saw at a glance, but also, to some extent, what he knew was there. He knew how a ship was built and how it was rigged, and, looking at his painting, we might be able to reconstruct these vessels. Nobody could reconstruct a nineteenth-century steamer from Turner's seascape. All he gives us is the impression of the dark hull, of the flag flying bravely from the mast--of a battle with the raging seas and threatening squalls. We almost feel the rush of the wind and the impact of the waves. We have no time to look for details. They are swallowed up by the dazzling light and the dark shadows of the storm cloud. I do not know whether a blizzard at sea really looks like this. But I do know that is is a storm of this awe-inspiring and overwhelming kind that we imagine when reading a romantic poem or listening to romantic music. (389, 392-33)

In expressing the emotion reflected in Turner's bold approach,

Gombrich states: "We feel small and overwhelmed in the face of the powers

we cannot control, and are compelled to admire the artist who had nature's forces at his command" (393). "Constable's ideas," writes Gombrich, "were very different""

Fig. 326 [The Haywain] shows the painting which made Constable famous in Paris when he sent it there in 1824. It represents a simple rural scene, a haywain fording a river. We must lose ourselves in the picture, watch the patches of sunlight on the meadows in the background and look at the drifting clouds; we must follow the course of the mill-stream, and linger by the cottage, which is painted with such restraint and simplicity, to appreciate the artist's absolute sincerity, his refusal to be more impressive than nature, and his complete lack of pose and pretentiousness. (393)

Constable's vision was one of clarity, simplicity, and serenity.

Professor Leslie Sasaki expresses a similar sentiment about Elizabeth Margot

Wall's Harbour Le Cou (See figure 5):

I think, like all good landscapes, it should take any viewer into it, and transport them, sort of, over that hill, into that valley, over that next hill, through that little bit of forest, over that hill, through that kind of thing. I think that something that good landscape painting does--that it really takes you, and it's through the eyes--you know, our eyes have great legs on them [Laughs]--and they can go across that bay and walk over that hill from this side and just kind of look over there and do that kind of thing. So, I think there are these aspects of the paints that really do that for me, where I just want to zip over there. I just sort of meander through my eyes on top of those hills and climb up there and go back into that next range of mountains, and that kind of thing.

While Constable and Turner were motivated by political considerations, Elizabeth Margot Wall's inspiration has no political base.

Rather, she is a romantic who paints with a sense of compassion the unspoiled spaces in the new country she so readily embraced. Wall explained why she was attracted to the rugged landscape of Newfoundland that moved her to take up a paintbrush:

It's a particular appeal this island has. It's hard to explain. It's sort of an intangible thing. Now that I have been away for two years I still miss it. I'll always have a soft spot for Newfoundland, because after living in the province for twenty-three years, I naturally considered myself a Newfoundlander. Maybe if you've been born here, you don't really see it. It's your everyday life--from the time you knew how to see. I see so many things here, and I point them out to people and they didn't realize--little things like shapes of mountains and contrasts of green, things like that, often the way the water looks with a certain sky. All the landscapes--you never tire of it. It looks different each day. It does. If you look for it, it looks different every day.⁴⁶

By re-creating a pristine idealization of the Newfoundland environment, Elizabeth Margot Wall appeals to a cultural romanticism and an existential nostalgia. Nostalgia is what draws many Newfoundlanders to these paintings, and by having Wall's artwork on their walls, the aesthetic preference of certain collectors affirms their cultural heritage. "The quest for cultural identity," writes Jackson, ". . . expresses a yearning after nostalgic images to soothe souls doomed to live in a faceless present" (21). Despite all the economic gloom and fishery woes, Elizabeth Margot Wall's romantic

⁴⁶Elizabeth Margot Wall, radio interview with Lisa Roberts of CBC Radio at the opening of Coastal Havens 16 July 1995.

portrayals of distant outports are flamboyant examples of the social structure that existed with a thriving cod fishery.

Newfoundland writer Bernice Morgan's pursuit of a cultural heritage took the form of personal family research and resulted in the writing of two books:

When I was growing up I had such a longing to read about my own place. For fifteen years I had been thinking about these books [Random Passage and Waiting for Time] and I couldn't understand why someone hadn't written them. I was mystified. I wanted that story for myself. We'd gone from being under one colonial power to another colonial power, and we were intimidated by everyone. We all heard growing up that Newfoundland had no real culture, we were lazy people, our history was insignificant. I knew it wasn't true and other Newfoundlanders too. . . .A lot of journeys are accidental, you take a journey on trust. Random Passage was very much a search for my mother. I was the oldest of four children and when she died I was nine. A journey to capture something of what life might have been. . . .(7)

Morgan's decision to give fictional form to Newfoundland's history, from early settlement to the collapse of the fishery, earned her the Canadian Authors Association Award for Fiction in 1995 (Gwyn, "A Sense of Place" 20) .

Elizabeth Margot Wall's depiction of outport settlements stems simply from a well-meaning, conscious desire to present a favourable image of a traditional, pastoral society conformable to a nationalistic ideology.

Elizabeth Margot Wall's role as historian is clear as she interprets what she

sees and records it for future generations. Instead of writing an essay or keeping a journal, for example, of how life is at a particular time, folk artists like Wall record much more. Most of what we know of ancient civilizations comes from the artifacts left behind. From these objects, we learn how the people lived, worshipped and survived. On just as phenomenal a scale, Wall carries on this tradition of recording the present for the future, but she takes this one step further. In painting the outport communities and small villages of Newfoundland and Labrador, she preserves our past as well as our present.

The community of admirers that accepts Elizabeth Margot Wall's detailed paintings of the ordinary social life of a vernacular culture respond to the traditional dimension of her creative style. Henry Glassie says that "art is made by people who direct their inner spirit to achieve excellence in terms of tradition. . ." (The Spirit of Folk Art 106). Tradition is manifested in Wall's work on a number of levels. When Elizabeth Margot Wall sets up her easel, chooses a particular community from her collection of photographs, and commences to paint in meticulous detail the various aspects of its everyday activity, she establishes a personal relationship with that community, and hence a tradition "where emotion, commitment, and deep communication are all crucial entities. . ." (McDonald 64). The personal relationship extends to a social process when individuals respond to the

finished product created at the easel. "Being the use of the past to create the future," writes Glassie, "tradition is the force that shapes and perpetuates communities" (The Spirit of Folk Art 198).

Elizabeth Margot Wall's paintings speak to the personal history of their owners and admirers by offering meaningful and utopian glimpses of the past and evoking memories of special people and places. For people like Carol Ann Weldon, Wall's paintings "anchor time" (Tuan 187) and capture highly charged moments from the past. At the time of our interview, Carol Ann Weldon was chair of the Art Gallery Advisory Committee at Sir Wilfred Grenfell College Art Gallery in Corner Brook. She is also the mother of Janet Weldon who is referred to earlier in the chapter. Carol Ann Weldon told me that Belleoram (See figure 8) represented a bond with her father: "My father lived there as a boy and talked so lovingly of the place, and Dad and I were so close that it means a lot to me to have a painting of Belleoram."⁴⁷ This positive response highlights the special relationship Weldon shared with her father and bestows to her a sense of personal identity.

Yvonne Thurlow, a teacher residing in Corner Brook, was born and raised in Flower's Cove on the Northern Peninsula of Newfoundland. She is the aunt of Michael Pearce referred to earlier. Thurlow described her

⁴⁷Carol Ann Weldon, tape-recorded interview, 11 July 1994. All quotes by Carol Ann Weldon are from this interview.

Figure 8: Belleoram, Fortune Bay 1992



W.A. 92

attraction to Flower's Cove, Northern Peninsula (See figure 9): "This was the first one I bought. It was the first show I had seen by Elizabeth Wall. It was at the Ewing Gallery. I was certainly attracted to it because I grew up there; and even though there's lots of artistic liberties, I think, I can recognize a lot of houses. So, it's a personal liking as well as I like the artwork itself."⁴⁸ For Thurlow, Flower's Cove is a link to the community where she grew up. Rosalie Elliott's painting of Quidi Vidi, St. John's (See figure 10) was on loan for the retrospective exhibition, and the retired school teacher who spent her childhood in St. John's had this to say when asked about the significance of Quidi Vidi:

Outside of the artistic qualities of the work, I think there's another reason. So many communities are dying, and I think we're feeling the loss. And I think this is one reason why these paintings are dear to so many people. This is Quidi Vidi, St. John's. This particular painting means a lot to me, because I grew up in St. John's and this scene is very familiar to me and also to my mother who died in 1982, and I bought it for that reason. I've always been in love with it.⁴⁹

Quidi Vidi represents Elliott's emotional link with her mother, and serves to maintain her personal and community identity.

Michael Pearce's painting of Benoit's Cove, Bay of Islands (See figure

⁴⁸Yvonne Thurlow, radio interview with Lisa Roberts of CBC Radio at the opening of Coastal Havens: 1982-1995, 16 July 1995.

⁴⁹Rosalie Elliott, radio interview with Lisa Roberts of CBC Radio at the opening of Coastal Havens: 1982-1995 16 July 1995.

Figure 9: Flower's Cove, Northern Peninsula 1987

Figure 10: Quidi Vidi, St. John's 1989

11) is reminiscent of his parents' birthplace on Newfoundland's Northern Peninsula. His mother (who is Yvonne Thurlow's sister) is from Flower's Cove and his father, Daniel's Harbour. Benoit's Cove elicited fond memories for Pearce:

We've got fairly close family ties, and my mother's home on the Northern Peninsula, the setting in Benot's Cove put me in mind of some of the houses and of some of the landscape up there. It did strike a personal chord with me. And, of course, the colours of the houses were just like my memories of going as a child to these communities and seeing the colours which, at that time, I thought were sort of tacky, you know, but quite beautiful once it's done in a painting against the settings.

Benoit's Cove was a convocation gift to Pearce when he received two degrees from Memorial University of Newfoundland in May 1991. His parents had placed his name on a waiting list at the Ewing Gallery through his aunt, Yvonne Thurlow, whose painting of Flower's Cove fascinated Pearce. In addition to the colour of the houses and the detail of the landscape, Pearce was impressed by Elizabeth Margot Wall's decision to apply what he considers to be equal importance to the background and the foreground--the predominance of the church in the background and the power of the fenced graveyard in the foreground.

Aileen Woolridge has two of Elizabeth Margot Wall's paintings in her own art collection and has given three Wall's to her daughter. Allison Woolridge is an actress who lives and works in various parts of Ontario.

Figure 11: Benoit's Cove, Bay of Islands 1991

Having live outside the province for a number of years, Allison Woolridge is a devoted Wall fan and especially cherishes her painting of Meadows, Bay of Islands (a gift from her parents at Christmas 1998) with a view of the snow-covered Blomidon Mountains in the moonlight. The opportunities for employment in Newfoundland as an actress are limited, and Allison Woolridge told me she derives much pleasure in reflective contemplation of her birthplace through Wall's visual statements.⁵⁰ For expatriates like Allison Woolridge and Madonna Bailey, Wall's paintings function as coherent expressions of their ties to Newfoundland.

Terry Gullage's fascination with the composition of vernacular architecture attracted her initially to Elizabeth Margot Wall's paintings and prompted her to place her name on "the waiting list." A teacher who has always in Corner Brook except for periodic departures on extended vacations and to attend university, Terry Gullage was introduced to Wall's work by Yvonne Thurlow. Gullage related the circumstances of her first Wall acquisition:

We [Gullage and Thurlow] went to a show that she [Elizabeth Margot Wall] had at the Glynmill [Inn], and that was where Yvonne bought one at that time of Flower's Cove. It was a winter one, you know, of the ice and the church and everything, because Yvonne is from Flower's Cove. . . I really liked them, but the ones that I really liked were gone. So then I said, 'Well, I'm going to keep my eye open for an

⁵⁰Allison Woolridge, personal conversation, 29 Dec. 1998.

Elizabeth Wall painting that I really like.' So one day I was home and I didn't have the car or anything and Yvonne phoned me and said there was a painting down at the Ewing Gallery--an Elizabeth Wall, and it just came in. So I got a taxi and rushed down and went in and it was this one--Trinity (See figure 12)--and I really really liked it. So I bought it right at the time; and as I was buying it, there was another man there trying to buy it too, but I had first dibs on it.⁵¹

Gullage herself enjoys photographing historic houses, especially saltboxes⁵² and understands Wall's concern with depicting an idealized version of outport communities. The colours Wall chooses for her houses are culturally distinctive, and as Gullage explains, "You never get coloured houses outside of Newfoundland." The artist's perception of outport architecture is in synchrony with the owner of Trinity, and Gullage's special attraction to Wall's art is connected to the artist's skill in using bright colours to paint the vernacular houses in outport communities.

Terry Gullage's twenty-year-old daughter Jennifer, a student at Algonquin College in Ottawa, Ontario, at the time of the interview, is the proud owner of Southside Hills, St. John's (See figure 13). Southside Hills was Jennifer Gullage's present to herself. She purchased it at the Franklyn Gallery in Corner Brook in January 1995 with the assistance of a loan from her mother who quickly injected, "I had to lend her some money and she

⁵¹Terry Gullage, tape-recorded interview, 6 March 1996.

⁵²"Saltboxes" refer to a type of vernacular architecture introduced during the initial generation of permanent settlement in Newfoundland in the early 19th century.

Figure 12: Trinity, Trinity Bay 1988

Figure 13: Southside Hills, St. John's 1995

paid me back gradually because she's working at MacDonald's. . . She paid it off in installments, but it's her own." Southside Hills has a "whimsical quality," according to Jennifer. When I asked her what particular meaning it held for her, she replied, "I don't know if it has any meaning--like, I don't remember being there [physically] and having a good time, or anything like that. I like looking at it. From the first time I saw it, I had never seen animals in her paintings. I just like looking at the little cat and dog and fish. . . I love the colours."⁵³ Jennifer Gullage appreciates "its cartoon-like quality, like that great big turquoise house is like a cartoon. It jumps right out at you."

Southside Hills is Jennifer Gullage's first attempt at becoming an art collector, and she appears to enjoy looking at it because of its artistic "affects." When Jennifer decided to hang it in the front entrance of her parents' home and leave it there when she left to attend university in Ottawa, Southside Hills became an artistic communication, displayed not only for the pleasure of her parents but also for their friends and visitors.

Wall's paintings serve not only as objects of intrinsic value and objects of memory for their admirers and collectors, but they also represent a valuable piece of regional culture. As Christopher Buckle expresses it:

⁵³Jennifer Gullage, tape-recorded interview, 6 March 1996. All quotes by Jennifer Gullage are from this interview.

I think you need a qualifier there to say, 'Newfoundland culture of an earlier period,' because for someone to walk into your gallery and see this now [referring to Coastal Havens: 1982-1995 catalogue], they may be able to go out in several places in Newfoundland and see roughly the same thing, but I guess in ten years would they be able to? Well, they probably couldn't, no, because if they saw this exact scene, there would be a pole here for service and so on. But, yeah, I think it's definitely a piece of Newfoundland culture. I think it's a valuable piece, but keeping in mind that things change.

Buckle points out that Wall does brighten up Newfoundland, for example:

I think it's more colourful than maybe a native Newfoundlander would portray it. . .I mean, when you look at these, they look like little Paradises. They're idyllic. You know, they're beautiful with lots of colour and such; whereas I think maybe a native Newfoundlander wouldn't put as much colour in. . .I feel that there's more colour in the painting than there is present in the actual scene, but I like that.

Christopher Buckle feels a real connection and pride for Newfoundland. Having lived on the mainland of Canada for six years pursuing an education, he decided to return to his home province. Unable to obtain work in the field of urban planning in Newfoundland, he and a friend set up a small business in St. John's so that he could remain within the province, and just recently Buckle moved to his birthplace of Corner Brook. As he related to me in a recent conversation, Christopher Buckle recognizes that his own identity is inextricably linked to place.

Regional identity is understood as a basic human need for rootedness,

or a sense of spatial well-being. Gerald Pocius explored the social meaning of belonging to the community of Calvert, a three-hundred-year-old fishing village on Newfoundland's south shore, and concluded that the essence of everyday life in Calvert is the spaces its residents occupy (A Place to Belong). The natural landscape bestows to the people of Calvert a true sense of dignity and a sense of their history. On a personal level, their past, like Christopher Buckle's, continues as "an experiential link: . . . 'through daily contact with particular spaces and accompanying explanatory oral narratives" (52). Through the process of socialization the people of Calvert have developed a strong "sense of place" by talking about their emotional bond to a specific environment which was inhabited and experienced by their ancestors.

Newfoundland's regional identity is linked to the natural environment which is characterized by geographical isolation, an unfairly hostile climate, a rugged terrain, a rocky coast, and a turbulent and unforgiving North Atlantic Sea that has yielded bountiful but far from inexhaustible harvests.

Newfoundland's cultural identity has also been shaped by its social and political development. Elizabeth Margot Wall's oil paintings are evocative symbols of regional identity for Kathleen and Ford Neal. Ford Neal is a retired businessman living in Corner Brook. He was born in St. John's, Newfoundland, and Kathleen Neal hails from Port Credit, Ontario. The Neals

moved to Corner Brook in 1951. They have three pieces of Wall's art in their collection and feel privileged to display her oil paintings in their home. As Ford Neal expresses it: "They have enhanced our home for sure, and they have drawn the attention to any visitors we've had in our home who are not familiar with Elizabeth Wall."

Ford Neal expressed his interest in Elizabeth Margot Wall's depiction of the physical environment: "My liking of the whole thing is that in Newfoundland all my life there's been a dark side to living. You know, all of it--the depression, the lore, then we had a little upswing, and now the fishery, and she brightens up Newfoundland in her pictures."⁵⁴ Kathleen Neal agrees that the extraneous items like car wrecks and telephone poles that Wall chooses to omit "aren't necessarily a part of the landscape." Wall's paintings symbolize stability and structure, and as Ford and Kathleen Neal revealed, a sense of interconnectedness with Newfoundland, the hidden dimension of belonging to a place.

In their compelling social commentary of "the spirit of an uncommon people," photojournalists Momatiuk and Eastcott were inspired by "the ties that bind the local people [of Newfoundland and Labrador] to the land, the sea--and one another" (9). Momatiuk and Eastcott recorded the words of Gisela Westphalen, a physiotherapist and artisan, who lived in Curzon

⁵⁴Kathleen and Ford Neal, tape-recorded interview, 19 July 1996.

Village, Wood Point, Bonne Bay, Newfoundland, from 1968 to 1989:

Our nearest neighbour said again and again, 'Your light is company. I never go to bed without first looking across. When I see your light, I knew we have neighbours again.' I found it beautiful, but it was foreign to me. Having always lived in cities, I enjoyed the darkness.

After many years of living in this village, I now understand what a light in a house means. I knew the families and their houses, their kitchens, their porches. When I walk through the village at night, I knew this light is in the living room, that one in the bedroom. Passing the houses is like visiting neighbours. Some are watching television; one can see that very clearly from the outside. If there is a light in the kitchen, it is time for their evening cup of tea, and I am familiar with that ritual.

It is not nosiness. It is a feeling of belonging and having all kinds of rights to do this. In some instances, when I know there is an older person living alone, it is almost a duty. I certainly wonder if the light is out earlier than usual or left on later than usual. The next day, I make a point of finding out if there is something wrong. Not directly, because if you ask direct questions, you alarm people, but there are ways (156-57).

Westphalen's eloquent narrative illuminates the meaning of Grand Beach Point, Burin Peninsula (See figure 14) for me. My husband and I purchased Grand Beach Point in 1994. I have a particular affinity for night scenes, and it was our first exposure to one of Wall's. Like Jennifer Gullage who confessed to me at the time of our interview that Grand Beach Point was her favourite, I had difficulty articulating my preference. Westphalen's account of the community cohesion she experienced in Curzon Village,

Figure 14: Grand Beach Point, Burin Peninsula 1994

however, conforms directly to the feelings I elicit from Grand Beach Point.

The importance of interdependent living is contained in microcosm in Grand Beach Point. Some of the details--smoke emanating from chimney stacks, quilts hanging on the clothesline, light filtering out of the windows in the moonlight, wooden picket fences, patterned curtains in the windows--conjure images of my own childhood and contribute to my own sense of belonging to a community whose members enjoyed the benefits of a shared social structure. I grew up in Curling, a suburb of Corner Brook, and my family took great comfort in the light from our neighbour's window when my father was out of town. Elizabeth Margot Wall's paintings are therefore tangible expressions of a regional experience.

In discussing Grand Beach Point, Leslie Sasaki indicates that for him the poignancy of a Wall painting is the skillful but nonchalant insertion of things like ATVs (all-terrain vehicles): "Look at that little ATV there at the back door (Fig. 14). It's not given any more prominence than the boats or anything like that. . .It doesn't look like there's much attempt to make it feel folksy or anything like that. It fits in as just being part of the given reality of things." Sasaki's response is an examination of the perceptual form of Grand Beach Point. It is based on an aesthetic sensibility which stresses standards of formal excellence. While Sasaki verbalized perhaps a more "disciplined" reflection than some of the other informants, Michael Owen

Jones has argued for "a concept of taste" as a more viable response to a work of art: ". . .which is not constant and which includes such factors as the nature and purpose of the object created, personal values deriving from one's experiences and goals as well as from the internalization of group values, and one's sensitivity, ability to apperceive, and experience in the evaluation of the objections that are judged ("The Concept of 'Aesthetic' in the Traditional Arts" 104).

As Jones points out, reactions to art are difficult to articulate for some individuals who may respond to the arts by way of association or involvement. The emotional qualities aroused by the images of Wall's paintings were real, for example, for Wayne King, Carol Ann Weldon, Rosalie Elliott and Christopher Buckle. Jones contends that verbal responses ought not to be accorded any greater aesthetic significance than nonverbal (89), so that although the nature of Sasaki's "trained" response differed from King's, Weldon's, Elliott's and Buckle's, it enjoyed no greater value. More than a century ago, British craftsman, architect, designer, lecturer and poet William Morris (1833-1907)⁵⁵ revolutionized the concept of public taste when he said that "everything made by man's hands has a form, which must be either beautiful or ugly" (qtd. in The Spirit of Folk Art 53).

⁵⁵Margaret Drabble, ed., The Oxford Companion to English Literature, 5th ed., (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1985) 671).

For Janice Fillatre Martin, her painting of Dark Tickle, Notre Dame Bay (See figure 15) represents a place of fantasy, as she expresses delight with her recent acquisition after a two-year waiting period:

The fall scene is really beautiful. I love the quilt on the clothesline there and the details are beautiful. The colours are characteristic of her--you know, the blues and the yellows catch your eye right away and the bits of red here and there. It's just so clean and neat and perfect . . . I don't know if that's probably part of the reason why I like her work so much, because it's so miniature and so perfect. It's sweet. It's adorable. I love that neatness and that perfectness in something so small. And the colours are so bright and crisp. You know, I think if you were to stand on a hillside--if you were right there now in Dark Tickle--things probably wouldn't be as vibrant as they are in her pictures but the picture draws your attention immediately.⁵⁶

Janice Fillatre Martin was born and raised in Corner Brook. She is the mother of four sons aged six to fifteen. She told me that she has placed Dark Tickle in a private corner of the living room--"not really on the beaten track"--and she retreats to her "fantasy place" whenever she can spare a quiet moment. In August 1997, her twelve-year-old son was diagnosed with a malignant cerebral tumour. In the process of coping with the stress and worry of a sick child, Fillatre Martin finds comfort in Wall's Dark Tickle.

A strong sense of identity, or context of "who one is," is reflected in the comments of Wall's patrons. Their spontaneous reactions point to the

⁵⁶Janice Fillatre Martin, tape-recorded interview, 24 Sept. 1996. All quotes by Fillatre Martin are from this interview.

Figure 15: Dark Tickle, Notre Dame Bay 1996

importance of art "in its translation of the ordinary and everyday into the extraordinary and strange . . . as a kind of 'commentary' (Abrahams 89, 103) that individuals and groups made on who they were and what they were about" (Oring 222). For people like Carol Ann Weldon, Yvonne Thurlow, Rosalie Elliott, Madonna Bailey, Allison Woolridge, Michael Pearce and Janice Fillatre Martin, in paying attention to their Wall paintings, they relive memorable occasions and pleasing relationships and succumb to a wistful fantasyland. Thus, as physical objects, Belleoram, Flower's Cove, Quidi Vidi, Ramea, Meadows, Benoit's Cove and Dark Tickle serve the purpose of preserving the memory of personal ties and function as symbols of reminiscence (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, "Objects of Memory" 330) and rituals of restoration. The social significance of objects and memory has been described by Hannah Arendt:

The things of the world have the function of stabilizing human life, and their objectivity lies in the fact that . . . men, their every-changing nature notwithstanding, can retrieve their sameness, that is, their identity, by being related to the same chair and the same table. In other words, against the subjectivity of man stands the objectivity of the man-made world rather than the sublime indifference of an untouched nature . . . Without a world between men and nature, there is eternal movement, but no objectivity. (137)

According to this view, people are dependent on the material environment for their identity and development. For the people I spoke with, Wall's paintings define the essential elements of and give material expression

and spiritual connection to their ancestral and imaginary places. New York art critic Diana Jean Schemo sums it up well: ". . . while good art requires skills . . . art at its best connects words, sounds, movement or color to emotions crystallized within us. It allows us to glimpse something sublime within human reach, to fulfill the unuttered promise of experience, to find the poetry in our loneliness" (1). In this regard, the art of Elizabeth Margot Wall succeeds in conveying meaning for the people who accept and appreciate it on its own merits and demonstrates a consumer sensitization, or "aesthetic literacy" (discussed in chapter 2) that operates without categorization.

In commenting on Elizabeth Margot Wall's invented, romantic landscapes, Lorne Holland describes them as "idealistic" designs. Holland related this impression to Lark Harbour, a community situated 50 kilometres south of Corner Brook in the outer Bay of Islands:

Then there's the drive along the south shore of the Bay of Islands highway or the cruise up the bay from a boat. The vistas would almost make your eyes ache, you know, they're so beautiful. Everywhere you look it's different. You drive out to Lark Harbour and come over that hill and look down into Lark Harbour--we always liken it to Brigadoon. Brigadoon is a mystical place that appears every hundred years and everybody's happy and they celebrate through the day and then they're gone again for another hundred years. Well, Brigadoon . . . BrigaLark Harbour [Laughs]. Lark Harbour is a lot like that. We just love to drive out there.

Leslie Sasaki gives a similar explanation for the public appeal of Elizabeth Margot Wall's landscapes:

I think there may be very many reasons why people like them or purchase them. I would think that perhaps one of the strong reasons might be the kind of idealization [they evoke]. It's an idea of Newfoundland maybe that we'd like to think about In some sense, it's very ordered and pastoral and idyllic. That may be partly an outsider's view, you know, she's European There's a certain conception of what we think of as normal and everyday is seen as very exotic over there, you know, big, wide, open spaces. It's frontier. It's unspoiled. I'd put it in the context of saying, 'Well, here's someone who's looking at what's around her in an everyday context, and this is how she's interpreting that.

That Elizabeth Margot Wall rejoiced in her adopted homeland is demonstrated very clearly in her depiction of a classical Arcadia which conveys the essence of things felt as much as seen--what George Maslov describes as "psychic connection" for him: "I think that what Elizabeth's work shows--the structure and the geometry of the houses, the orderedness, the quietness within the community or village--could be the way the village is. But to me it's not necessarily the community she's painting. To me it's her psyche that's coming out, and that's what's appealing."

The aesthetic mission of the object is complete, asserts Henry Glassie, when viewers discover the artist's pleasure in the object and they repeat the pleasure within themselves. When this happens, the object, according to Glassie, communicates feeling (The Spirit of Folk Art 64). In that sense, Elizabeth Margot Wall's folk art works because she and the consumer public share experiences and values that enable them to celebrate the same images

and messages. Often the emotional response of an individual to a work of art is generated by the association made with it, as Jones suggests:

"Beauty in art may be generated not by that which objectively conforms to artistic principles, but by that which develops from associations between the object and lingering memories or pleasant fantasies in the percipient. . ."

("The Concept of 'Aesthetic' 95).

As one way to maintain or restore harmony to their lives, people like Wayne King, Kathleen and Ford Neal, Terry and Jennifer Gullage, Janice Fillatre Martin, Jean and Lorne Holland, Jan Grebneff, Leslie Sasaki and George Maslov turn to Wall's paintings for the essence of wholesome beauty. Social scientists Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton explains the significance of this communicative process: "The qualities invested by painters in their work, the order they bring to their paintings, presumably act as catalysts for attracting and directing the viewer's attention toward pleasures. Or, possibly, appropriate moods and sentiments are released because of the cultural conventions attributed to art" (65). Jennifer Gullage's reaction, for example, to Grand Beach Point: "Oh, I went head over heels over that one" reveals an instinctive response, whereas her mother's is more conservative and concerned with the compositional design of Wall's houses, "Houses are my specialty . . ."

Elizabeth Margot Wall depicts, to a large degree, activities and scenes

that reflect her interpretation of Newfoundland's and Labrador's outport communities, as she invests each community with a location in time by painting the different seasons and with a sense of place by painting local landmarks, like the church or the lighthouse. Janet Weldon told me she was indifferent to Wall's art as a teenager, but later became captivated by the church in the winter scene of Belleoram. According to Yi-Fu Tuan, Weldon's attachment to the church may be an unconscious one: "Attachment of a deep though subconscious sort may come simply with familiarity and ease, with the assurance of nurture and security, with the memory of sounds and smells, of communal activities and homely pleasures accumulated over time. It is difficult to articulate quiet attachments of this type" (159). At the time of our interview, Weldon was groping for words to express her feelings.

Janice Fillatre Martin, Leslie Sasaki, George Maslov, and Jean and Lorne Holland view the communities portrayed in Wall's paintings as mythical spaces, or "the spatial component of a world view, a conception of localized values within which people carry on their practice activities (Tuan 86). Elizabeth Margot Wall's mythical space is actually a conceptual extension of the contents of the photograph she renders to canvas. She evokes the romantic world, both in composition and arrangement, and perpetuates the notion of the artist as a gifted storyteller by excluding the irrelevant and embellishing the essence. The story is an idealized rendition

of the subtleties of a traditional fishing society with the assurance of simple "communal activities and homely pleasures" (Tuan 86).

Finally, aesthetic judgment is no longer restrained by the dogma of the modernist period.⁵⁷ Kim Levin adds a further insight to our understanding of the modernist period:

For the modernist period believed in scientific objectivity, scientific invention: its art had the logic of structure, the logic of dreams, the logic of gesture or material. It longed for perfection and demanded purity, clarity, order. And it denied everything else, especially the past: idealistic, ideological, and optimistic, modernism was predicated on the glorious future, the new and the improved." ("Farewell to Modernism" 2)

These preoccupations with modernism were replaced by a shift in consciousness in the 1960s with a new emphasis on subjective experience. In the postmodern world, art became much more flexible and less well defined:

Post-modernism is impure. It knows about shortages. It knows about inflation and devaluation. It is aware of the increased cost of objects. And so it quotes, scavenges, ransacks, recycles the past. Its method is synthesis rather than analysis.

⁵⁷The term "Modernism" is a complex theory of art understood as an institution and as a practice. Modernism refers to the paradigm for the practice of art initially produced in Europe in the 1860s-90s. By the late 1960s Modernism constituted the dominant institution of art, art criticism, and art history in Western culture. Modernism also refers to a particular kind of painting and sculpture, particularly abstract work. Materiality is the law of Modernism which demands purity and separateness of the various mediums (and thus the specialization of a practitioner within a given medium): Thus two-dimensionality (flatness) and opticality through colour (as opposed to illusion) were the essences of painting" (Pollock, "Feminism and Modernism" 107-8).

It is style-free and free-style . . . Structured by time, rather than form, concerned with context instead of style, it uses memory, research, confession, fiction--with irony, whimsy, and disbelief. Subjective and intimate, it blurs the boundaries between the world and the self. It is about identity and behaviour. (Levin, "Farewell to Modernism" 4)

Consequently, modernism's desire to maintain a rigid distinction between the various arts was marred by an interest in experiential judgment and the mixture of media. Uninhibited by the restrictions of modernist objectivity, the lovers of Elizabeth Margot Wall's freely apply their postmodern subjectivity. "I never understood abstract art," confessed Wayne King, who has been a collector of eclectic art for the past twenty years. In his travels King always manages to acquire a new piece of art representative of the places visited, but his true passion is Newfoundland art and he has pieces by obscure as well as reputable artists. For King, collecting art is "an expensive hobby," and he includes original prints, reproductions and posters in his collection as well as original oils, acrylics and watercolours. He has no preference for medium, but a painting has to "speak" to him, as Capstan Island did:

It's got a personality, there's no doubt about it. And it's a happy painting. I've got other Newfoundland paintings by other Newfoundland artists, and they're not at all as happy. As a matter of fact, some are quite dreary. . . I think that the colours are a real big attraction. She's got all the different colours of the houses, but they're not uncommon colours really, but the vision of the colours is quite astute.

The fact that Elizabeth Margot Wall has no professional training came as a complete surprise to King, "especially in light of the illusionism she achieves." Elizabeth Margot Wall paints not only *what* she sees, but *how* she sees it. Capstan Island is an on-the-spot document of what is going on both inside and outside the artist and communicates a pleasing experience through a traditional landscape.

The value of Elizabeth Margot Wall's artwork for Kathleen and Ford Neal is extrinsic. The Neals gain prestige by association with these objects, as their desire for distinctiveness is realized by their three one-of-a-kind Wall canvases. At the same time that Belleoram satisfies a nostalgic desire for Carol Ann Weldon, it also provides "an exoticism of the self" (Stewart 148), as she addresses the great demand but scarce availability of Wall's paintings by a large segment of the population: "I think the demand for her work is great, and if demand makes for a great artist, then I think Elizabeth ranks with the top. After all, she is established in life, she doesn't need the money . . . That makes her work special, and if you can get one, you're special that you're able to have one."

Michael Pearce expresses a similar remark as he relates meeting Elizabeth Margot Wall at the opening of the retrospective exhibition:

For me it was an incredible experience to meet her and to see the other works that I've never seen. I've had an opportunity to see a dozen probably through some people in Corner Brook

and with mine (Benoit's Cove), but I was basically overwhelmed with everything. To me, my only complaint, let's say, was that I was overwhelmed. There was too much there, and I wanted to be there by myself and I wanted to look at every one by myself. She's a very nice lady. She had heard my name mentioned somewhere before, and she retained that, which was quite nice when I introduced myself. She's very personable. The whole thing was well-organized, and the booklet [catalogue accompanying the exhibition] was absolutely beautiful. I bought three copies of it. So, it was a great experience.

In a world that canonizes the artist, Janice Fillatre Martin feels fortunate to have Dark Tickie for her very own: "I'm not an art collector, but I am very proud of the fact that I have one of her [Wall's] one-of-a-kinds. I have also seen pictures in her book [exhibition catalogue] that I would love to own, like some of the nighttime scenes. Elizabeth Margot Wall's attention to the relevant details of landscape transforms nature into culture and allows the viewer to enter the signifying practices of the work, as Fillatre Martin observes: "I think she helps us to appreciate the natural beauty that is there. She takes away all the junk so that we can see the purity, what's really there behind all that."

Elizabeth Margot Wall's desire to communicate a personalized visual perspective of Newfoundland and Labrador is also realized on a personal and regional level. In this chapter I have discussed the significance of Wall's paintings as memory objects for Madonna Bailey, Allison Woolridge, Michael Pearce, Carol Ann Weldon, Yvonne Thurlow, Rosalie Elliott, Christopher

Buckle and as a sanctuary of restoration for Janice Fillatre Martin.

Temporally, a Wall painting "moves history into private time" (Stewart 138) and offers brief visits to birthplaces and locations of personal importance, meditative reveries and momentary sensations of confirmation. Spatially, Wall's tableau scenes are fragments of a larger reality that permit symbolic reflections of the past in familiar locations, retrieve time and strengthen a sense of self.

Being urban European in origin may have something to do with Elizabeth Margot Wall's enthrallment with Newfoundland outports, their rural charm, peace and simplicity alluring in their contrast with urban, post-war Europe. By capturing romantic renderings of a physical and social environment rooted in the fishing industry, Wall provides material signs of abstract referents. Wall's works are symbolic of a cultural heritage that is appreciated by native Newfoundlanders like Christopher Buckle, Janet Weldon, Allison Woolridge, Madonna Bailey and Michael Pearce as well as transplanted Newfoundlanders such as Angela Baker, Jan Grebneff, Jean and Lorne Holland, Leslie Sasaki and George Maslov. Wall's paintings are physical manifestations of a regional consciousness that distinguishes Newfoundland and Labrador by its environment and its lore. The collective awareness of place exhibited by these admirers defines them as members of a regional folk group. By responding to the cultural continuity of rural

Newfoundland and Labrador represented in Wall's art, this group promotes the very essence of belonging, metaphorically and materially, to place.⁵⁸

Furthermore, as physical representations of a traditional material reality, Wall's paintings weave landscape and history into the texture of Newfoundland life. Fundamentally, Elizabeth Margot Wall is an historian whose symbolic landscapes give artistic expression to an imperiled culture fraught with visual fervour, social memory and national identity.

What effect will postmodern commodification of Elizabeth Margot Wall's have on an even broader audience? Will the meaning change again? Will Wall's art be affected by the political climate? These issues, among others, will be explored in the following chapter.

⁵⁸According to folklorist Alan Dundes, "The term folk can refer to any group whatsoever who share at least one common factor" (The Study of Folklore 2).

Chapter 5

The Cultural Uses of Elizabeth Margot Wall's Paintings

This chapter will examine the various ways in which people adapt Elizabeth Margot Wall's paintings to new purposes. Wall's paintings have been utilized for academic, entertainment and commercial ends, and I will discuss how different contexts can affect the meanings of a work of art. As well, I will argue that the secondary use of Elizabeth Margot Wall's paintings is an act of folklorism "intricately connected to folklore as it inspires new forms of cultural expression based on folklore that address current psychological needs or satisfy the demand for aesthetic enjoyment" (Dettmer, "An Analysis of the Concept of Folklorism" 8). An analogy is Lévi-Strauss's concept of "bricolage," or the signifying practice of adapting or appropriating events or images, in an effort to symbolically generate new meanings (Hebdige 103-06).

With its emphasis on heritage and cultural conservation, I will also argue that the reproduction and communication of Elizabeth Margot Wall's artwork in new forms of art and entertainment enhance a sense of regional identity for its users. Furthermore, the sentimental and nostalgic elements of Wall's work provide cultural and emotional symbols typical of traditional Newfoundland culture.

A regional identity is accomplished through the process of regionalization which merges a well-defined geographical area with folklorism. Essentially, under the influence of folklorism, the regionalization of a culture is a quest for a cultural heritage that expresses a longing for an imagined past to provide a sense of continuity in the midst of social and cultural transformation. This approach to cultural heritage presents an idealized model of cultural stability by emphasizing particular traditions that exhibit national and regional characteristics. The danger of this type of thinking is stagnation and provincialism, cautions F.L. Jackson, who urges fellow Newfoundlanders to take on the past only as a resource to be used in orienting a collective future (6). In a critical analysis of tourism as a development strategy to revitalize Newfoundland's economy, however, sociologist James Overton highlights the importance of promoting a Newfoundland culture: "In a province where economic analysts and politicians argue for a concentration on sectors of the economy where there is a 'comparative advantage' it is easy to see why a tourist industry based on 'nature,' the Newfoundland 'way of life', and 'heritage' should be popular" (105).

The conscious manipulation of folklore for academic, entertainment and commercial purposes is often referred to as the process of folklorism in

practice.⁵⁹ Not only does folklorism meet psychological and aesthetic demands, but also it offers a valuable resource for generating new sources of income urgently needed to ensure the viability of traditional communities. It also provides a practical avenue of cultural intervention at a time of social and cultural marginalization of displaced fisheries and plant workers, for example, in a Newfoundland context. The focus on the outport way of life and the fishery has always expressed a positive attitude toward the past. By selectively stressing the most aesthetically-pleasing aspects of the environment in her paintings, artists like Elizabeth Margot Wall present an appealing image of a traditional way of life as a potentially marketable cultural product.

In a recent newspaper article, one resident of Ramea on Newfoundland's southwest coast suggested that economic development and cultural stability are, by all means, possible in rural communities most affected by the failure of the cod fishery. "One's survival will depend substantially on one's own attempt to facilitate their own existence," he argues. Promoting self-reliance and dignity in the face of adversity, he

⁵⁹The objectification of culture has been the subject of much controversy between the popular and academic practice of folklore. Folklorist Richard Dorson declared the term "fakelore" to products transformed for the marketplace (Folklore and Fakelore: Essays toward a Discipline of Folklore Studies). As the public value of folklore has increased, "Terms such as 'folklore' and 'folklorimus' seek to legitimate scholarly interest in the commercialization of folklore for mass-marketing and tourism purposes" (qtd. by Brunvand in "Fakelore," American Folklore: An Encyclopedia 242).

urges:

Instead of bemoaning our situation and throwing our hands up in desperation, let's look at the strengths that we have in rural communities while being cognizant of our weaknesses and only then will we be able to take advantage of opportunities that may exist. . . . We have a choice to make in rural Newfoundland and Labrador as we approach the new millennium. We can meet the challenges ahead with the attitude that we will triumph or we can stay the course and blame others for our economic problems. Regardless of the choice we make, the challenge remains; the difference, however, will be the outcome.⁶⁰

In effect, Jim Marsden appeals to the spiritual dimension of Newfoundlanders to transcend the corruption of "conflict, contention and rivalry" and to "enjoy the challenges of cooperation" by defining their own humanity. "For the real worth of a people's culture lies not in the artifacts and images from the past as such, but in the spiritual and ethical essence they represent," Jackson contends (32). As well, Pocius argues that people get their sense of the past through the spaces and the landscape they occupy, rather than the things they own and use (A Place to Belong). The sense of place evoked by the brushstroke of Elizabeth Margot Wall in the creation of idealized landscapes confirms the viability and durability of a Newfoundland culture. In this manner, Wall's canvases are contemporary manifestations of folklorism which project an image of "a region's collective

⁶⁰Jim Marsden, "Economic Development: A Matter of Choice," editorial, The Western Star 14 July 1998: 6.

self-concept" (Schlereth 170).

"A break in tradition occurred when the inshore fishing industry failed⁶¹," writes Dettmer, "while subsequent adjustment to an industrial economy proved difficult and partly unsuccessful ("An Analysis of the Concept of Folklorism" 214). The most significant economic crisis in recent times occurred with the collapse of the cod stocks off Canada's east coast in the late 1980s and early 1990s when the Canadian government imposed a two-year moratorium on Newfoundland's five-hundred-year old cod fishery in July 1992, leaving over 20,000 people without employment. A federally-funded financial aid program called TAGS⁶² was instituted to assist fisheries and plant workers affected by the closure of the inshore fishery. The moratorium subsidy which was extended to 1999 was cut back, and on 20 June 1998 a \$750 million "final aid package for the shattered East Coast fishery" was announced by Federal Fisheries Minister David Anderson,

⁶¹Here, Dettmer is referring to the federal government's decision in the mid-70s to extend the inshore fishery on the south coast of Newfoundland to a two hundred mile Canadian fishing zone, resulting in the demise of the inshore fishery due, in large measure, to foreign overfishing. In No Fish and Our Lives: Some Survival Notes for Newfoundland, a collection of weekly newspaper articles, Cabot Martin passionately states: "In the sixties and seventies the foreigners raped our fish stocks and reduced our inshore fishery to poverty levels. But for some strange reason this did not generate a determination to ensure that such a tragedy would never be repeated. Within a mere five years of getting a 200-mile limit, Ottawa took a series of decisions that guaranteed a repetition of that calamity and the current dismal course of events," xi.

⁶²TAGS is an acronym for The Atlantic Groundfish Strategy Program.

Human Resources Minister Pierre Pettigrew, and Veterans Affairs Minister Fred Mifflin (Newfoundland's representative in the Federal Cabinet).⁶³

This post-TAGS program, which was promoted as the last for East Coast fishers and which simulates the original intent of TAGS, is designed to buy licences, retire people over fifty-five years old, spend money to create jobs and pay out a final lump-sum income-assistance payment. The announcement was protested as people reacted to a major shift in the economy. No doubt the socioeconomic crisis in outport Newfoundland caused a justifiable malaise, but as journalist Peter Fenwick has argued, Newfoundlanders have faced economic adversity before and have developed a tradition of supporting themselves by exploiting many resources besides the cod fishery, such as the seal hunt, mining, and forestry.⁶⁴ The sense of regional commitment expressed by Fenwick is a manifestation of a distinct Newfoundland identity, explains Overton:

In all these accounts [by a number of writers] it is the way of life and the attitudes and experiences of the rural small producer that form the core of a distinctive Newfoundland culture. The outport is the seat of homegrown Newfoundland culture, authentic and popular. It is a culture that has developed organically in isolation and it is the environment (especially the sea) that has been one of the key forces which has moulded the

⁶³Erin Anderssen, "Fishery Package Spurs Resentment," The Globe and Mail [Toronto] 20 June 1998: A4.

⁶⁴Peter Fenwick, "Outport Newfoundland More Than Fish," The Western Star 27 June 1998: 6.

Newfoundland character. Newfoundland culture unites people across social divisions based on class, religion, gender, region, etc. It is something that exists as an observable 'fact' for many people, even if there is some disagreement as to the precise nature of this culture. Even those who see Newfoundland culture as a reaction to put-downs and stigma still assume that there is a common culture or character which is being negatively evaluated, usually by outsiders. Thus, whether it is viewed in negative or positive terms the assumption of most observers is that there is a single, distinct Newfoundland ethos, character or culture. (52)

In spite of, or because of, an ethnic composition, Newfoundlanders have been subjected to an excessive amount of political scrutiny and criticism (Overton 55-6). "Newfoundland is a dependent culture, not a self-grown, independent one. The people have no 'economic poise and self-possession'" was visiting sociologist Kenneth Westhues' "Meditation on Newfoundland" (qtd by Overton 55). Numerous theories have been put forth about Newfoundland's place in Canada's political and economic organization since joining Confederation on 31 March 1949. The dependency theory, as proposed by Frank, Mandel, Veltmeyer, Amin and others, for example, explains the economic dependence by regions like Newfoundland upon the benevolence of federal Canada (Matthews 69-71). Consequently, programs like the moratorium subsidy and the "post-TAGS program" have been viewed as "handouts" by some of the richer provinces of Canada. On the other hand, in a sociological examination, Ralph Matthews proposes a dependency

theory approach which views depressed regions to be the result of external social and economic exploitation (69), and Newfoundland's historical record supports this position.

Newfoundland's fiscal position at the time it entered Confederation in 1949 was a healthy one: "Throughout the 1940s, Newfoundland's economic recovery was substantial, due to vast defense expenditures, and the growth of peacetime industries, and the economy was projected to be stable for the foreseeable future" (Fitzgerald 137). Furthermore, in Canadians at Last: Canada Integrates Newfoundland as a Province, historian Raymond Blake outlines Newfoundland's value to Canada:

Confederation . . . brought greater security to Canada. It removed the threat that the United States would secure territory on the east coast as it had done earlier with the acquisition of Alaska on the west coast. Ottawa need not worry any more that an independent Newfoundland would drive a hard bargain over matters of civil aviation or defence, matters very important to Canada in the dangerous world of the period. After 31 March 1949, the federal government had a free hand in those areas. Gone, too, was the fear that Newfoundland might strike a deal that would earn its fish a special place in the American market at the expense of frozen fish from the Maritime provinces. Canadian exporters could breathe easier knowing that their Newfoundland markets were secure and should expand the union. Ottawa also rejoiced in the fact that the vast iron-ore deposits in Labrador were now assured for Canadian use. (178)

In a stunning review of Blake's confederate "orthodoxy," historian John Fitzgerald challenges the historical myths surrounding Newfoundland's

"flawed" negotiations of the terms of union with Canada. Fitzgerald writes,

. . . there is superb documentation of the absolute lack of commitment by the federal government, during the negotiations of the terms, and of both the Canadian and Newfoundland governments after confederation, to properly manage Newfoundland's saltfish industry. After 31 March 1949, when the federal government assumed control of Newfoundland's fisheries, it blatantly ignored and mismanaged them. Readers are told that the fisheries were less modern and had to compete with Quebec fish and the self-supporting Nova Scotia fish industry, both of which would have cried foul if Newfoundland were to receive any special federal financial assistance. (132)

Fitzgerald continues:

Other chapters in Canadians at Last explore the disastrous effects of confederation on Newfoundland's manufacturing industries, concentrating on how the removal of tariffs on imports and competition with Canadian suppliers ripped through the Newfoundland economy, and how the federal and new provincial governments stood by while thousands were thrown out of work. (131)

Fitzgerald calls attention to Blake's reference that "the federal government blamed this on the Newfoundland government" (131). In a spirit of goodwill, Fitzgerald declares Canadian at Last "good and provocative reading," but asserts: "If central Canadians wish to understand Newfoundland's sense of separateness and the zeal with which we cling to this rock, they would do well to note that like Québec, we remember" (136).

Economic historian David Alexander viewed the growth of regionalism

in a similar manner:

The Cinderella of the story has always been Atlantic Canada. It is the only region which acquired no economic benefits (in the economist's sense) from Confederation. The nature of its economic base--ocean resources and derived maritime activities--required the energies and services of a national state with a vigorous international orientation. This is precisely what Upper Canada is not and never has been. ("Canadian Regionalism: A Central Problem 4).

It is the nature of regionalism, or a regional ideology, to preserve and promote a sense of identity for a people, not to foster a sense of powerlessness, as George M. Story stated:

So we survive, though without much enthusiasm or sense of common purpose in Confederation, chiefly, I suppose, because of the instinct of every living thing, whether an individual or a culture, to persist in its own being. And, like any other people set apart by history and geography and a shared experience, Newfoundlanders, though not prone to conceptualize our problems, might agree that the failure of Confederation has been the difficulty of achieving within it a balance and harmony between the various aims of gaining a livelihood, chiefly because of the powerlessness to manage, or often to share control of, the processes of change and development in our region. In Confederation we are not even in the position of a kept woman, which might have its own lugubrious pleasure; we are poor cousins seated below the salt, occasionally encouraged to perform our ethnic make-work act. (qtd in Alexander, "New Notions of Happiness: Nationalism, Regionalism and Atlantic Canada" 32)

Alexander accepted Newfoundland culture as a "fact" ("New Notions of Happiness" 31). People need a sense of belonging to a community, he argues, and Alexander regards the growth of regionalism in Canada as a lack

of "useful and mutually attractive purposes" (31) at the national level. What is necessary for "the material and spiritual rehabilitation" of regions like Newfoundland is a sense of attachment to "a collective purpose embodied in the national government, its institutions and symbols" (40). By distinguishing "nationalism of the ugly sort" from "patriotism that arises like a plant from the traditional culture" (31), Alexander promotes an ideology that embraces and fosters regional differences at a federal level.

The provincial patriotism defined by Alexander is a strong theme in the writings of F.L. Jackson, as he argues for "the preservation of traditions . . . not because a 'traditional way of life' has some mystical value in itself, but because in traditions like the wisdom and experience of time and place and the deeper consciousness of spiritual identity, that are necessary if a people are to survive and prosper in the course of history and the challenges it presents" (7). In this chapter, I will discuss how cultural producers respond to this challenge and others by objectifying and commodifying a distinctive Newfoundland ideology depicted in Elizabeth Margot Wall's paintings as "a place to come home to" (Matthews 36).

The view of Newfoundland culture as a regional construct is a postmodern concept that refers to the inventive use of folklore outside its original context and links current practices and meanings with those of the past (Bendix; Hobsbawn and Ranger; Warshaver; Dettmer). Using the past

as a source of creativity, Elizabeth Margot Wall's art is an expression of distinctive elements that deliberately celebrate a traditional culture threatened by a transitional social order, and thus functions as a cultural coping mechanism.

In the following pages, I explore a variety of ways in which cultural specialists have made Elizabeth Margot Wall's artwork available to the public. One of the first cultural "interpretations" of Wall's art was the retrospective exhibition of eighty-two paintings from private collections held at Sir Wilfred Grenfell College Art Gallery, Corner Brook, from 16 July to 27 August 1995; and circulated to the Art Gallery of Newfoundland and Labrador, St. John's, from 14 September to 15 October 1995. This exhibition was curated by Colleen O'Neill and coordinated by Carol Ann Weldon, who write in the Foreword:

Over the last few centuries many communities were settled along Newfoundland and Labrador's rugged and broken coastline. It was mainly the English and the Irish who came, to live by the sea, and fish from its waters.

In Coastal Havens: 1982-1995, Elizabeth Margot Wall takes us on a journey along the coast of Newfoundland and Labrador, which extends for hundreds of kilometers, into its tickles⁶⁵, sounds⁶⁶, runs⁶⁷ and reaches⁶⁸, into its harbors, coves,

⁶⁵A tickle is a narrow channel or strait, between two islands, where the tide forcefully runs.

⁶⁶A sound is a narrow stretch of inland salt water.

⁶⁷A run is a series of connected tickles.

bays and inlets. Starting on the east coast of Newfoundland in Quidi Vidi, St. John's, we make our way to St. Mary's Bay and Placentia Bay, to the Burin Peninsula and into Fortune Bay. We travel along the south coast and then move up to St. George's Bay on the west coast, continue north to the Bay of Islands, then on to the Strait of Belle Isle. We cross over to Labrador and visit a number of settlements along its coast, then return to the island of Newfoundland and continue around the tip of the Great Northern Peninsula to Notre Dame Bay. From here we go to Fogo Island, then cross Hamilton Sound to Bonavista Bay on the north coast. We journey around Cape Bonavista to Trinity Bay, then Conception Bay, ending our journey at Middle Cove, near Quidi Quidi.

The work of Elizabeth Margot Wall is well known to many Newfoundlanders. Coastal Havens is her first exhibition in a public gallery. We feel fortunate to have had the opportunity to organize this exhibition, and this accompanying catalogue. The exhibition and catalogue serve as a tribute to Elizabeth Margot Wall, and, as well, as a tribute to the communities of outport Newfoundland and Labrador. (9)

This public gallery provided an ideal forum to draw attention to the idea of a Newfoundland culture through the paintbrush of Elizabeth Margot Wall's "journey" around coastal Newfoundland and Labrador. The far-reaching implications of such an exhibition can only be assumed, but approximately two hundred people attended the opening⁶⁹. The atmosphere was invigorating and lively, and I was pleased to speak on behalf of such a gifted artist. Wall herself was delighted with the spirited

⁶⁸A reach is another name for a tickle or a run.

⁶⁹Gail Tuttle, present curator at Sir Wilfred College Art Gallery Art Gallery, told me in Dec. 1998 that the average attendance at openings is 50.

crowd. I later learned that it was during a visit to Corner Brook that Dr. George J. Casey had an opportunity to view the exhibition which planted the seed for the cover of a textbook, and Christopher Buckle "got turned on" to Wall's paintings at the St. John's showing.

One of the gifts I received for Christmas 1996 was a collection of Newfoundland short fiction entitled Tempered Days: A Century of Newfoundland Short Fiction collected and edited by Dr. George J. Casey, a Professor of English at Memorial University of Newfoundland, and Dr. Elizabeth Miller, also a professor in the Department of English. The cover is a striking reproduction of Elizabeth Margot Wall's Flower's Cove (See Figure 11) from the collection of Yvonne Thurlow (discussed in chapter 4). The photo by David Morrish, a professor of photography, was acquired from Sir Wilfred Grenfell College Art Gallery and was selected from the exhibition catalogue Coastal Havens: 1982-1995. Dr. Casey told me he had attended the exhibition during the course of field research in Corner Brook in the summer of 1995, and this particular image was chosen because of its attractiveness and its reflection of the themes in the book.⁷⁰

Dr. Casey and Dr. Miller were assisted by graduate and undergraduate students in selecting the stories to be included in the anthology and in

⁷⁰G.J. Casey, personal interview, 15 June 1997. Except where otherwise indicated, all quotes by Casey are from this interview.

choosing its cover. Casey had no explanation for the choice of a winter scene over a spring scene other than its consensual source. "We wanted a book with an historical perspective, with a wider spectrum, which would provide a more comprehensive historical development of Newfoundland fiction," said Casey, whose book includes stories from the Victorian to the present age.⁷¹ The stories are arranged chronologically, blend with each other thematically and cover such topics as the sea, religion, community, church and traditional way of life. They are an enlightening combination of Victorian folktales, oral stories translated to the page, and Newfoundland favourites such as works by Margaret Duley (1894-1968), Newfoundland's first major female novelist, now mostly out of print. The collection spans one hundred years of writing in this province, and Casey explained the reason for choosing this time period: "There already is a lot of good modern work published. We wanted to provide a sampling of over one hundred years to help our students with their studies."

The cover of Tempered Days easily represents a village in many of the stories, including the imaginary Ragged Harbour in Canadian journalist Norman Duncan's "The Fruits of Toil" (1904). Duncan's story is a sentimental and dramatic observation of the hardships--the recurrent poor fishery,

⁷¹G.J. Casey, personal interview with Kathryn Welbourn of The Express, 11 Dec. 1996, 21.

wretched poverty and diseases of starvation--endured with optimism and pride by fisherman Solomon Stride and his wife Priscilla. "Tempered days" refers to the spring of the year and the preparation of the fishery:

In the spring, he put up the stage and the flake, and made the skiff⁷²; which done, he waited for a sign of fish. When the tempered days came, he hung the net on the horse, where it could be seen from the threshold of the cottage. In the evenings he sat with Priscilla on the bench at the door, and dreamed great dreams, while the red sun went down in the sea, and the shadows crept out of the wilderness. (Tempered Days 11)

Wintertime and the Christmas Season is the setting of Rev. Geo. J. Bond's "Uncle Joe Burton's Strange Xmas Box" (1901) and Anastasia English's "A Harmless Deception" (1904). Bond's story takes place in a "little fishing village [lay] half-buried under a winding-sheet of snow" (2) and English's in "a wealthy suburban residence in St. John's city" (25). Both of these native Newfoundland writers articulate acts of kindness reflective of the real Christmas story and in dialects imitative of their respective regions. "A Harmless Deception" is all about class prejudice, whereas "Uncle Joe Burton's Strange Xmas Box" is a classic example of community loyalty.

The last two stories in the collection--Percy Janes's "Encounter in England" 1987 and Carmelita McGrath's "Jack the Trapper" (1994)--are dispassionate and realistic renditions of resident/non-resident experiences.

⁷²In the Newfoundland vernacular, "skiff" is a small sea-going boat, adapted to rowing and sailing, used in the coastal fishery to set and haul nets and traps and for other purposes (Story, Kirwin and Widdowson 485).

Janes expresses the world view of a young Newfoundland writer, Peter Baird, who emigrates to England in search of literary recognition. Before long, Baird cohabitates in a platonic relationship with a former Newfoundlander who is an older successful female writer. As it turns out, she is a boozing and vulgar lunatic who finally throws Baird out of her house.

The protagonist in Carmelita McGrath's "Jack the Trapper" (1994) is a biologist from Ontario conducting research "on migrations" (225) in coastal Labrador for a doctoral degree. The experience is at once foreign and inviting for Carl F. Carter, but for Carter's wife Marian, another non-native Newfoundlander whom he met at university, daily life is oppressive and uneventful and she eventually leaves him. Both stories revolve around tolerance or the lack of it of opposing ideologies, and the characters are portrayed as victims of social forces. Peter Baird is victimized by a bombastic and pompous paranoiac, and Marian Carter is stifled by an insular physical and emotional environment.

George Casey grew up in the coastal community of Conche on the Northern Peninsula. He remembers it as a community which had no road until 1969. A painting of Conche (1986) in the 1995 exhibition evoked fond memories for Casey, and he expressed an interest to me as co-owner of the Ewing Gallery in acquiring a piece of Wall's art, preferably an image of

Conche. Despite Casey's attachment to Conche, the final decision, in consultation with Dr. Miller and the student assistants, was Flower's Cove as the cover for the textbook.

Not only does Tempered Days demonstrate a romanticized interpretation of the outport way of life, but the more thoughtful writers are circumspect as well in their treatment of contemporary situations and in the avoidance of "ideological traditionalism" (Pocius, A Place to Belong 275). They, like F.L. Jackson, promote a more judicious form of regional identity:

They [Newfoundlanders] will certainly want to remain rooted in the foundations of their own local past and their own natural and cultural heritage; but they will want to feed on these roots to grow. They will certainly not be satisfied to contemplate a future role as enchanted cultural islands, preserved forever untouched by the storms of modernity, solely for the benefit of others (Jackson 6).

While the painting on the cover of Tempered Days and the stories contained in the collection present an image of the distinctiveness of Newfoundland culture, it grants to the reader a greater sense of cultural consciousness. The province's regional identity is based on its geography, history and fishery, and this anthology is invested symbolically with the values attached to that identity. The positive response by two first-year students in English 1080 during the fall class of 1996 suggests a contemporary frame of regionalism. The first is a male student's:

Tempered Days has a lot of unique stories and the cover is very

well done. The church represents religious aspects. The sea which is so often talked about is represented. The boats represent a fishing lifestyle. The ice drifts also represent the danger of this lifestyle. The houses are close together which give a sense of unity among the small communities. This scene could have been taken from any of the coastal communities. The fact that the editors chose the stories which date back through the generations give us an idea of how Newfoundlanders have changed during the years . . . Each of these stories is a snapshot in time. Overall, I think it is a marvellous collection.⁷³

References by this student to "church," "sea," "boats," "ice drifts," and "houses" reflect a sense of community spirit, and Newfoundlanders' adaptability to growth and decline appeals to his regional consciousness. On an aesthetic level, the student appreciates the formal quality and content of the cover which he links to its referent--the cod fishery associated with outport Newfoundland. As a "snapshot in time," Flower's Cove is a compelling source of historical information which records significant aspects about the daily activities of outport living for this student.

The second response is a female student's:

This book is very pleasing to the eye. I love the cover--not only the picture but the feel of it. It is not like any other book I have. Many people have commented on the cover of the book as it sits with me in the Thompson Student Centre early in the morning. The first thing my friends say is, "Cool! What an awesome colour!"⁷⁴

⁷³G.J. Casey reported this response in our interview on 15 June 1997.

⁷⁴G.J. Casey reported this response in an interview 15 June 1997.

This student's evaluation of the cover of Tempered Days is based on an aesthetic impulse. Her response is generated by the perceptual form of the image. The editors have been successful in shaping the intrinsic perception of these students, as they chose the cover for its visual appeal as well as its traditional elements. Thus, George Casey and Elizabeth Miller have provided a compilation of Newfoundland's ethnic distinctiveness as illustrated by Elizabeth Margot Wall's Flower's Cove, Northern Peninsula 1987 to a wide readership. Reproduced as the cover of a university textbook, the function of Flower's Cove has changed from a symbol of personal identity for Yvonne Thurlow (who purchased the original painting as a reminder of her childhood) to one of regional identity for George Casey, Elizabeth Miller and a broader audience, the readers of Tempered Days.

Elizabeth Margot Wall's art also speaks to Newfoundland-born singer and songwriter, Phyllis Morrissey, who has performed extensively in Newfoundland and Canada. Morrissey has a powerful sense of her own culture and she wishes to share it with others. She told me that she is in the process of researching and producing a television show entitled Bridge Across Time, a theme which she borrowed from an Irish poet, to be broadcast on CBC Television in 1999. Basically, Morrissey wishes to promote cultural expressions like song, narrative and visual images as symbols of Newfoundland culture, and she plans to incorporate Elizabeth

Margot Wall's art into Bridge Across Time on screen in a visual backdrop.

As an entertainer, Phyllis Morrissey is concerned about sharing Wall's work artistically: "I mean, I've got to do it artistically, because this is the kind of thing that I want to bring to people from the stage. . . I won't be speaking off the cuff; it will be narrated, but I'll be deciding what goes in the narration, and I would love to use some of Elizabeth's paintings in the background. . ." ⁷⁵ Morrissey went on to explain the idea of Bridge Across Time:

Bridge Across Time has to do with the call to Ireland and also, I suppose, the west country of England--more of the Irish in my part, because both ancestral sides are Irish--and it's a call. What is this about? What am I trying to get to? I think what it is is the call home. . . . Especially out in this part of the island [the interview took place at Morrissey's home in St. John's], because so many of the Irish settled here. And I thought, What is this thing about going back? It's been five or six generations since the people first came here. What is it that transcends time and geography? There was a poet one time who was here from Ireland, and he made such a comment. He was over in Fogo and he was talking about something that transcends generations and geography, and it stayed with me. That one line stayed with me out of all the things he wrote, and I thought, "This transcends generations--and when I say 'this' I'm pointing to Elizabeth's work [pictures in the exhibition catalogue]. That's the same thing that I'm trying to do with this project, Bridge Across Time."

Elizabeth Margot Wall's paintings of outpost Newfoundland are charged with personal significance for Phyllis Morrissey. They are invested

⁷⁵Phyllis Morrissey, tape-recorded interview, 11 Oct. 1996. Unless indicated otherwise, all quotes by Morrissey are from this interview.

symbolically with spiritual energy inherited from her ancestors, and they communicate an interpretative way of life which Morrissey calls her poetic "home." Viewing a painting of Burin at the Ewing Gallery during a visit to Corner Brook in September 1996, Morrissey was neither familiar with the artist nor the work, but "it was just the painting that attracted my attention, and I thought, **what is this!**" In Corner Brook to distribute her newly-released compact disc entitled Woman of the Island, Morrissey agreed to a formal interview where she described her attraction to Burin as immediate:

It evoked something from me . . . it resonated in me the same way that the concept of Women of the Island did with me. It's that feminine aspect--that nurturing, caring, emotional aspect--which is the feminine aspect in all of us, men and women, to do something, but I didn't know what it was to do. . . . It's something about this feminine aspect that relates so well with home--hearth, warmth, fire, love, whatever it is that we deem the word 'home.'

"Objects anchor time," writes Tuan (187). Phyllis Morrissey is lured to Elizabeth Margot Wall's paintings because through them she experiences psychological growth. In use, Wall the creator and Morrissey the consumer communicate outwardly in space through these visual images. Places like Little Bay Islands, Notre Dame Bay (See figure 16) hold a particular meaning for Morrissey:

You want to go in one of the houses because you know the fire is going to be on, the stove is going to be on. There's probably going to be some tea. You know, the kettle is going to be on, and some woman's going to be there in the kitchen

Figure 16: Little Bay Islands, Notre Dame Bay 1993

fussing around, maybe making bread or doing something like you probably would have had in your childhood.

The theory of semiotics, or the science of signs, is an interpretive method for understanding how meaning is generated, in this case, between artist and viewer. Little Bay Islands functions as an "external signifier" which evokes a "corresponding signification," or another reality, for Phyllis Morrissey (Mukarovsky 4). According to Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton, activities of interaction (or transactions) are psychic activities (or communicative sign processes) which translate as vehicles of meaning to express and reflect cultural values and ideas (175). In other words, the tangibility of Elizabeth Margot Wall's world has a transformative effect on Phyllis Morrissey's intangible universe. Wall's art functions to symbolize and communicate to Phyllis Morrissey valuable reminders of her regional identity, as she articulates the feeling of belonging to a special place.

Phyllis Morrissey's world view is directly stated on the inside cover of the CD booklet accompanying Woman of the Island⁷⁶:

Previous generations survived on our island in the cold North Atlantic through their self-reliance, perseverance and strong sense of community. Today, our survival as an island planet depends on an expanded sense of community--an interconnectedness with the earth--her oceans, animals and people. This nurturing attitude is the feminine principle inherent in both men and women.

⁷⁶Woman of the Island was recorded and mixed at Record Time Productions, St. John's, NF, in 1995.

It is my hope that the songs in this recording inspire you to nurture your own sense of caring--your own spirit. To me, Woman of the Island symbolizes this spirit:

For she is woman, woman of the island
Strong as the ocean, solid as a rock in a raging storm.
She is our yesterday, she is our tomorrow.
Woman of the island, in you our hopes can be reborn.

From the point of view of the user, Little Bay Islands has a "nurturing attitude" which is felt through the emotions as the present. From the point of view of the creator, Little Bay Islands does not simply happen to have a future. Its future is intended at the moment of conception. Like the childhood experiences of Elizabeth Margot Wall, it functions as an inspiration to others' remembered childhood experiences, like Phyllis Morrissey's, so that a piece of visual reality is actually borne out of the past. The painting then becomes a timeless object which connects creator and user in a series of contexts.

First and foremost, Phyllis Morrissey derives tremendous satisfaction in identifying with a fellow artist who adheres to the feminine principle in applying her art. Considered by Morrissey as a universal phenomenon, the feminine aspect is really the work of intuition which she sees as "free flowing in this woman and she draws us into that." A feminine sensibility to Morrissey is "that nurturing, caring, emotional aspect [which] is the feminine aspect in all of us, men and women . . ." It is this abstract quality which Morrissey considers central to her own art as well as Wall's. Like Wall,

Morrissey has no formal training, but explained their shared sense of intuition:

The feminine aspect is intuition, whereas, logically, curators of an art gallery or a museum might think, 'We've been trained to know what fine art is, so it is this and it is very technical. So we have to follow these guidelines. Well, that's the left brain. That's the male-oriented, logical, analytical side. Whereas, Elizabeth has that intuitive, feminine aspect very strong in her, obviously. And it's freed. In some people, I think it's blocked, and they have only their analytical side because the other side is blocked for whatever reason, be it early trauma or fear or insecurity or whatever, and they can't use their intuition, because maybe that will evoke too much emotion, or whatever. I don't know. But it's free-flowing in this woman, and she draws us into that.

These comments explain the connection between the visible and the invisible. Visually speaking, Wall's paintings invoke a transformative effect on Morrissey that link her to her spiritual "home," and inspire Morrissey to convey this message on public television. Heart's Content, Trinity Bay (See figure 17) is the abstract authority for Morrissey and functions as a model of Newfoundland culture:

I think of all the pictures in the book [Coastal Havens catalogue], Heart's Content speaks the loudest to me, because it has more. There's more accumulation of signs that show life in Newfoundland than there are in the others. I'll tell you what's in this one that isn't in the rest. It's pretty well the same as the rest, but the water is rougher. There's a ragged fence, and the colour of the grass is more barren. I just only now noticed the little robin on the post. Over there [the left side of the painting] there's a lot of greenery and yellow greenery which is almost like meadows, and we don't have a lot of that except maybe in the Bay of Islands where Elizabeth lived. See this dark grass [in

Figure 17: Heart's Content, Trinity Bay 1991

the foreground] and these few misplaced little tiny trees--fir trees or spruce, or whatever they are--they're not even and they're slumped over. I find that's more true. And yet, just across the way here where the clothes are blowing on the line, you can see there's a little bit more breeze, because you can see the whitecaps on the water, and you can see the clothes are blowing a little bit more, a little harder, so that's like the fall of the year. And, of course, you can only see a part of the church, but you can see part of the church on the hillside.

Just as Elizabeth Margot Wall knows satisfaction in interpreting on canvas what she sees in the natural environment, Phyllis Morrissey understands metaphorically Heart's Content as an externalization of Wall's inner environment--what George Maslov referred to as "a psychic connection." Morrissey sees Wall's paintings as important cultural products because "what she is evoking transcends geography . . . and she lets you, the observer of her pictures, have an experience, which is something you can't buy." In order to help her develop Bridge Across Time, Morrissey quotes Yi-Fu Tuan's theory of perspective landscapes to explain her understanding of the "timelessness" of Wall's pictures:

When we look at a country scene we almost automatically arrange its components so that they are disposed around the road that disappears into the distant horizon. Again, almost automatically we imagine ourselves traveling down that road; its converging borders are like an arrow pointing to the horizon, which is our destination and our future. The horizon is a common image of the future. (qtd in Wheeler 20)

Elizabeth Margot Wall's landscape paintings represent to Morrissey her own idea of spatio-temporal structure and "hopeful time":

We've got a strange way of looking at time and space--time especially. It's like this is the past over there--I'm pointing to the left--and then you go up the road, to the end of the road, to the right, or whatever it is--either way--and that's our future. Whereas that's only our conscious mind's way of trying to understand time, but really, there's no time like that. There's no past, present and future. There's only **now** and what we look at now resonates somehow, you know, so that we're looking to our future almost by looking at our past. It brings us home. Our future is home, like we're going somewhere. Where are we going? We want to arrive. Where do we arrive? Some place where we'll feel this is what? This is home. I'm there. So where's there? It's got to be like the word h-o-m-e. And yet, we always think of that as being in the future These pictures evoke this feeling of going home and yet it's something about the past. . . .She draws you to your sense of home, and I think every human being is looking for that in their future, but we don't understand it logically.

As I understand Morrissey's explanation, symbolically Bridge Across Time will present a spiritual dimension which unites ancestral muses with fellow human beings. Through narrative, song and image, Morrissey will attempt to demonstrate and celebrate a distinctive regional identity.

The third method of regional promotion to be examined is that of commercialism. As a dealer of Elizabeth Margot Wall's paintings for the past six years, the Ewing Gallery recognized the financial feasibility of reproducing Elizabeth Margot Wall's images to satisfy the aesthetics of a demanding and adoring audience, and the decision to convert three of Wall's original oil paintings into a poster was therefore an entrepreneurial one⁷⁷ The

⁷⁷The difference between a reproduction and an original print is essentially the determining factor of its artistic value and hence its market value. Original prints are images created by an

selected, sentimentally-affected elements of Newfoundland culture serve as a source of artistic inspiration for Elizabeth Margot Wall, and the promotional nature of folklorism evident in their creation extends to the commercial use of Wall's oil paintings. Here folklore becomes a marketing tool designed to commodify tradition by portraying Newfoundland in an appealing manner to potential consumers and tourists. The Ewing Gallery's decision to market Wall's original oil paintings of the everyday social world of outport Newfoundland in another artistic form was driven by a concern for economic recompense and an effort to participate in a developing tourist industry.

As already discussed in chapter three, Wall is not interested in producing multiple lithographic prints in spite of its lucrative potential, yet there exists an extensive waiting list for potential buyers. Capitalizing on such celebratory activities as the Cabot (1977) 500th Anniversary Celebration, the 1999 Canada Winter Games in Corner Brook, the 50th Anniversary of Newfoundland's Confederation with Canada, Soiree '99, and

artist using one of several standard techniques. An image is usually drawn onto or etched into a stone block or metal plate. The plate is then inked and pulled through a press by the hand of the artist leaving an image on paper. Lithography, for example, requires that the artist draw the image onto a lithographic stone and the stone is then etched with acid. When moistened, water adheres to the stone except where grease pencil lines occur. When inked, the ink adheres only to the greasy areas. The stone is then pulled under great pressure producing the print. Lithography is a costly and skillful technique. A reproduction is often a photograph of a work of art, such as an oil painting, acrylic painting or watercolor, that is mechanically reproduced on a commercial printing press. It is basically a poster depicting an existing work of art. Reproductions do not require the physical involvement of the artist as they are made through a photo-mechanical process. The artistic value of a reproduction is considerably less than an original print and is priced accordingly.

the Viking Millennium,⁷⁸ the Ewing Gallery seized the opportunity to develop a commodity that targets not only the domestic market but also the tourist market that is attracted to such events.

As the public manager of Elizabeth Margot Wall's artwork, the Ewing Gallery was required to obtain formal permission from Wall for copyright purposes in order to reproduce some of her original works. In view of increased public awareness and demand for her art as a result of the Coastal Havens retrospective exhibition in Corner Brook and St. John's, Wall was receptive to the idea of making her images available and affordable to a greater number of people.⁷⁹ Because she experiences occasional health problems and does not anticipate a more productive output in the foreseeable future, Wall agreed to take advantage of an accessible market to coincide with planned events and festivals as a tourism booster.

The decision to promote a regional identity in the form of a reproduced image conforms to the reality of a postmodern society where many forms of past experience may be considered as a model for the present. A cultural product placed in a timeless setting is subject to the interpretation of its user and allows marketing strategists to move beyond regional and provincial

⁷⁸Most of these events are being designed by the Department of Tourism, Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, to promote tourism development in the province.

⁷⁹The posters retail at \$20 unframed and can be packaged in a postage tube for easy portability.

idioms. Thus, the vitality of an artfully reconstructed fishing village alive with colourful and distinctive architecture, signs and symbols of a fishing industry, a rugged yet fascinating landscape, is open to universal as well as indigenous significance.

The images chosen for reproduction on a poster advertising "Outport Newfoundland" and "The Ewing Gallery" (See figure 18) were Grand Beach Point, Burin Peninsula (See figure 14), Dark Tickle, Notre Dame Bay (See figure 15), and Mercer's Cove, Conception Bay (See figure 19). These images represent three different regions of Newfoundland and reflect a conscious selection based on prospective clientele. In the course of fieldwork interviews, I discovered that Grand Beach Point located on the southcoast coast of Newfoundland is a favoured picture because it portrays a night scene, not a common occurrence in Elizabeth Margot Wall's creative process. Dark Tickle lies in the north central part of the island and illustrates a rare fall scene. Finally, the icebergs in Mercer's Cove on the province's east coast are always a fascination to visitors. Elizabeth Margot Wall incorporates icebergs as part of the landscape, and she portrays them in late spring and early summer, because one of the best times to see icebergs is during whale-watching season when their paths cross in the waters off Newfoundland. Thus, Mercer's Cove offers tourists the icebergs they associate with Newfoundland without creating any inconsistency for those

Figure 18: Poster depicting "ELIZABETH MARGOT WALL:
Newfoundland Outports

ELIZABETH MARCIOT WALL

NEWFOUNDLAND COASTPORTS



Joost Winy Gallery

Figure 19: Mercer's Cove, Conception Bay 1991

more accustomed to life here in all its seasons.

A closer examination of the qualitative properties of Grand Beach Point, Dark Tickle and Mercer's Cove reveals their additional value as a cultural resource symbolizing a unique environment and a distinctive ethnicity. The two-storey houses visible in Grand Beach Point and Dark Tickle, for example, are a surviving form of the early nineteenth century known as "a saltbox roof" style introduced to the new world by British settlers (Pocius, A Place to Belong 201). Settlement patterns depicted in Grand Beach Point, Dark Tickle and Mercer's Cove were determined by the fisherfolk's need to be as conveniently close as possible to the sea. Sea-frontage was crucial, and the first settlers had their pick of choice locations to build their wharves and stages (Dark Tickle). Storehouses (Mercer's Cove and Dark Tickle) were usually back from the water and adjacent to dwellings, with gardens and meadows tightly divided on land along the ocean and facing the shore (Mannion).

The viewer readily recognizes the tools of the fishery--dories and trap skiffs--in all three images, and in Mercer's Cove boats are being prepared for the season's fishery, as evidenced by the two cans of paint sitting next to the trap skiff. Loster pots are stacked in a neat pile at the end of the lobster season in Dark Tickle, and the dog "is just sitting there looking out, watching

the seagulls probably."⁸⁰ The all-terrain vehicle in Grand Beach Point is used for recreational activities as well as for hauling logs from the woods. A common practice in outport Newfoundland is the stacking of logs in a vertical arrangement resembling a teepee's wooden frame. Outport Newfoundlanders tend to paint their houses not only in bright hues of pink, yellow, blue, red and green, but also in horizontal and vertical bands of colour. The melody of human hearts sings from the windows and bellows from the clotheslines, as Janice Fillatre Martin directed my attention to the lace curtains and the beautiful quilt in Dark Tickle--"all carefully chosen, sewn, and crafted"--the laundry joyfully flapping "under that big dryer in the sky."

Each tableau--Grand Beach Point, Dark Tickle, and Mercer's Cove--is a metaphor and microcosm of that larger cultural scene known as outport Newfoundland and Labrador. The minute depiction of each community assumes a silent and spatial significance and captures a moment of its everyday life. When consumed, "it becomes a metaphysical vessel, a means of transit into past worlds" (Hufford 56), or it becomes an object of self-definition or self-enhancement. The iconic and indexical features of these tableaux combine to communicate a symbolic context for the consumer.

As a public folklorist, I am ever mindful of the critical issue of authen-

⁸⁰Janice Fillatre Martin, tape-recorded interview, 24 Sept. 1996.

ticity, or appropriate cultural interpretation, in relation to tourism promotion (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, "Mistaken Dichotomies" 33-36; Brady 138-151; Dettmer "Moving Toward Responsible Tourism" 187-97). My role as art dealer has afforded a valuable opportunity to practice public folklore by drawing regional and national attention to the art of a number of regional artists and by promoting an appreciation of the traditional history and fishery which symbolize the ethnic distinctiveness of Newfoundland people. The folk art of Elizabeth Margot Wall, in particular, is a vital resource for the ongoing construction and maintenance of the positive aspects of outport life and the social identities dependent on them. Having commodified Wall's art to communicate the cultural values and context that created it has inspired a new kind of cultural expression that addresses important psychological needs and satisfies the demand for aesthetic pleasure. A poster featuring three popular images of Elizabeth Margot Wall's original canvases feeds the art market, nurtures Wall's profile, and indulges an acquisitive public. Due to the scarcity of Wall's original art, the poster is a pleasant and reliable substitute for its purchasers who often place their names on "the waiting list."

These conscious uses of folklore by academics, entertainers and entrepreneurs are tied to the economic and social realities of Newfoundland and Labrador. I argue that the cultural producers who have appropriated and

commodified the folk art of Elizabeth Margot Wall have presented a responsible and realistic portrayal of Newfoundland's distinctive cultural heritage. No longer reliant on the mythological and stereotypical "hardy, happy Newfoundlander," the story of outport culture, as defined and delineated by Colleen O'Neil and Carol Ann Weldon, George Casey and Elizabeth Miller, Phyllis Morrissey, Graham and Sandra Wheeler, personifies a "national self-consciousness" inspired by a "pattern that connects" Wall's particular point of view with contemporary social and cultural needs (McCarl 127).

As insiders in Newfoundland's cultural life, their brand of national consciousness is what David Whisnant refers to as "positive cultural intervention" (13-14) and derives really from Johann Gottfried von Herder's late-eighteenth century ideology.⁸¹ Following Herder's tendency, as a national expression Elizabeth Margot Wall's art is clearly of and for the people and is a therapeutic force in a modern society fraught with a failed fishery and high unemployment. True, Wall's images of outport communities record a culture threatened by extinction; nevertheless, they resonate a spiritual energy to move on, to cling to a "pattern that connects," and to

⁸¹Folklore as a respected academic specialty originated in Europe at the close of the eighteenth century as a romantic and nationalistic consciousness. In Germany, Johann Gottfried von Herder, considered the father of romantic nationalism, was responsible for introducing the artifactual model of folklore to the world. Herder believed the nation's spiritual essence, or "volksgeist," to be embodied in its folk traditions, and he devoted himself to their collection and preservation. Herder's was a political philosophy that embraced art and scholarship as a means of changing the status quo in Europe (See William A. Wilson's essay on Herder).

reclaim a heritage that continues to appreciate that "big dryer in the sky." In the first instance, it was the sensitiveness of a non-Newfoundlander like Elizabeth Margot Wall who recognized outport Newfoundland's unique architectural and artifactual flavour, translating it to canvas and thereby transforming her as a true Newfoundlander.

The innovative uses of folklore on the part of cultural cultivators offer a means of compensation to Newfoundland's flagging economic environment. People like Colleen O'Neil, Carol Ann Weldon, George Casey, Elizabeth Miller, Phyllis Morrissey, Graham and Sandra Wheeler are, in effect, acting as cultural convenors⁸² by consciously cultivating and generating contemporary forms of folklorism for academic, entertainment and commercial purposes and thus shaping the public perception of folklore. As Gerald Pocius' article on Simani's locally-composed "The Mummers Song" illustrates, the successful application of folklorism had a profound impact on the public perception of mummering ("The Mummers Song in Newfoundland" 80). Simani is a group of musicians from Fortune Bay interested in revitalizing Newfoundland's mummering ritual⁸³, and the

⁸²Phillip Hiscock has discussed at length the function of Joey Smallwood as "cultural intervenor" in his role as the writer and presenter of The Barrelman radio programme from 1937 to 1943.

⁸³Mummering, or mumming or janneying, as it was also called in Newfoundland, is the practice of house visitation dressed in disguise during the Christmas Season (25 Dec. - 6 Jan.) This custom began in the 1840s and in its original Newfoundland context, mummering was a customary re-enactment of social reality where fisher people reinvented themselves as a special

commercial success of "The Mummers Song" demonstrates the expansive potential of "invented tradition":

Whatever the effects--intentional or unintentional--that Simani had planned for their song, whatever moods they were trying to evoke when composing it, Newfoundlanders greeted it with an enormous enthusiasm. This was due to the fact that mummering--largely because of the song--had moved beyond the erudite concerns of scholars to become a symbol for the public at large of something uniquely Newfoundland. (79)

The economic benefits of newly-created cultural forms have a reverberating effect. Elizabeth Margot Wall, creator of a unique visual cure, stands to profit from royalties received from the television production and the artistic reproductions. George Casey informed me that the royalties received from the sale of Tempered Days will be donated to the Michael Cook Scholarship Fund for students in Theatre and Drama at Memorial University of Newfoundland.⁸⁴ The marketing of Elizabeth Margot Wall's work as "tourist art"⁸⁵ will enhance the career interests of dealer and artist

and separate entity in rituals of class inversion that demanded relations of reciprocity and integration. It was an occasion of impromptu performance of music, dance and recitation in exchange for alcoholic drinks, syrup, cake, cookies, and other treats. Today the practice of mummering is scattered and declining, perhaps reflecting some of the changes taking place in society, although it continues to be practiced for entertainment and fun (See Dictionary of Newfoundland English 337-38); an influential collection of essays published in 1968, Christmas Mumming in Newfoundland, by Halpert and Story, presents a comprehensive examination of this custom).

⁸⁴Michael Cook, former professor of English at MUN, passed away in 1992.

⁸⁵Tourist, or ethnic, art is regarded predominantly as a socioeconomic phenomenon in response to the threat of a society's ethnic or economic circumstances (Graburn 24).

alike and will foster the development of a viable economic and social climate.

By revitalizing and imitating representations of traditional culture⁸⁶ in new contexts, the interpreters of Elizabeth Margot Wall's visual art are providing forceful symbols of a regional identity for Newfoundlanders and non-Newfoundlanders and, at the same time, are creatively inspiring new forms of art, entertainment and commerce.

⁸⁶On folk revivals see Rosenberg, Transforming Tradition: Folk Music Revivals Examined.

Chapter 6

Conclusion

The paintings of Elizabeth Margot Wall have served for me as point of entry into the exploration of their meaning and meaning-making in this thesis. A non-Newfoundlander, Elizabeth Margot Wall arrived in St. John's in 1970 and shortly thereafter started visiting outport communities and taking photographs on which her paintings would eventually be based. Later she translated these images to canvas, and the result was her interpretation of the daily existence of Newfoundland's and Labrador's rural communities. In meticulous and colourful detail, Elizabeth Margot Wall has produced hundreds of idyllic communities by investing each in time and space. Although she identifies discrete communities, the sense of place that she conveys is a general one. The idealized vision that Wall projects is a "patterns that connects" artist and consumer in an act of artistic communication. Elizabeth Margot Wall's message is clear, as her communities proclaim: "This is a place to belong."

When Elizabeth Margot Wall quipped, "Why put it in the dryer when you can use that big dryer in the sky?", she was speaking metaphorically about the ever-present clothesline in her paintings. Wall's reflection of a significant cultural component of a traditional society is made visible. Her

meditation of "a clean lifestyle" embodied on canvas establishes pleasure in depicting an earthly paradise by capturing quotidian activity in a specific time, place and social context and in an art language that vividly transmits illusion and enrichment. Her taste for ordinary experience is exceeded only by her extreme care in depicting natural details, so that the viewer becomes privy to a visual conversation between artist and community. "While I am painting it [a scene], I sort of feel I am there," she told me. Wall's paintings successfully evoke a sense of place in others as well. Rosalie Elliott's painting of Quidi Vidi and Yvonne Thurlow's of Flower's Cove, for example, emphasize a strong identity they feel with their childhood communities. "Her [Wall's] work epitomizes the feeling of 'home' and of wanting to belong to a community, of trying to come back to something, especially when you're away from here," is the way Phyllis Morrissey feels about the place where she lives.

No doubt the cultural producers discussed in this thesis have, consciously or unconsciously, exploited and manipulated Wall's great facility for representing a unique regional identity to a broad range of viewers and consumers. Part of Wall's talent evolves from an intuitive sense of cultural connectedness that has resulted in hundreds of eloquently romantic portrayals of Newfoundland's and Labrador's rugged landscape.

The decision by Drs. G.J. Casey and Elizabeth Miller and their assist-

ants to choose Wall's Flower's Cove for the cover of a university textbook is telling. Following F.L. Jackson's philosophy "that people respect their heritage and keep what is best in it alive, for a traditional culture is the root and legacy of a people's collective genius," (156) Casey and Miller, as educators, are attempting to preserve the real traditions of Newfoundland and Labrador as interpreted by a variety of fiction writers celebrating a century of "common history, nature and society" (Jackson 160). A reproduction of Wall's painting on the collection's cover is an allusion to that regional identity.

When the male student reduced the image to its signifying properties-- "church," "sea," "boats," "ice drifts" and "houses"--he in effect was expressing an attachment to the social fabric which has shaped the very existence of established fishing villages along the stark coastline of Newfoundland and Labrador. The point of selecting an image to represent an ethnic distinctiveness is to create a new context for Elizabeth Margot Wall's art. The image on the cover works in a new medium and in combination with the stories contained in the book, and thus functions as a kind of social expression. A single image like Flower's Cove is a window into the collected writings of Tempered Days that contemplate the actual foundations of the Newfoundland and Labrador experience. The female reader who was attracted visually to Tempered Days was also stimulated, it is hoped, by the

storytellers. By exposing students to writings that reflect their own cultural background, educators like Casey and Miller contribute potently to the development of a rich cultural heritage.

By incorporating Elizabeth Margot Wall's artwork into a recorded stage performance, Phyllis Morrissey will establish another form of artistic expression. Because Bridge Across Time is a personal endeavour, the production will reflect Morrissey's idea of the spirit and perseverance of the Newfoundland psyche to be shared on public television.

Ewing Gallery's decision to market Elizabeth Margot Wall's work in still another context--the production of a poster--was based not only on an economic rationale but also a desire to promote Elizabeth Margot Wall as a reputable artist. The small scale of Wall's paintings plus their brilliant and spirited rendition define them as ideal matrixes for efficient reproduction. In the contemporary art world where social and economic realities are unstable and all-pervasive, consumers are demanding a more appropriated imagery and dealers are responding accordingly. Commercial printing presses readily convert visual images from one medium to another--that is, from an original oil painting to a mechanically-reproduced poster--and thus serve to satisfy the desires of a consumerist economy in the context of an art gallery. While the Ewing Gallery is interested in providing Wall's work at an acceptable price, it was the academic setting of Sir Wilfred Grenfell College Art Gallery

in Corner Brook and the Art Gallery of Newfoundland and Labrador, St. John's, that made Wall's folk art more widely known to the public.

Elizabeth Margot Wall's original oil paintings are an articulation of the social framework of the special cultural identity of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. The transformation of the medium in no way diminishes the social meaning of the image. Whether the picture radiates from a canvas or a specialized poster paper is irrelevant to the consumer who is interested in its symbolic content only. Its meaning is realized as a perceptual activity, and the relationship between the art and the socioeconomic conditions of its production and distribution are of no real concern.

The significance of a poster image (See Figure 18) for the tourist is the tangible memento of an authentic cultural experience. Susan Stewart describes it as "the exotic experience": "Once the exotic experience is readily purchasable by a large segment of the tourist population, either more and more exotic experiences are sought . . ." (148). Seen in this way, tourists connect to Wall's unique ability to interpret a distinct cultural heritage by keeping alive the very traditions on which it is based. "Such objects [as Wall's paintings] allow one to be a tourist of one's own life, or allow the tourist to appropriate, consume, and thereby 'tame' the cultural other," suggests Stewart (146). Elizabeth Margot Wall's talent to re-create the natural environment of coastal communities displays the artifice of a

skillful artist, but her facility to capture its spiritual dimension (its "cultural otherness") springs only from a reflective design.

In short, the thread that unites artist and consumer is an artfully-stitched Arcadia that joins the strands of a society's historical and psychological wholeness in a "pattern that connects" the two. The dialogue between them is based on an ideology known as a distinct "cultural identity" personified in Elizabeth Margot Wall's paintings. The sense of place conveyed by these images reflects a community attachment that transcends geographical boundaries. The individuals I spoke to recognize the artistry of Elizabeth Margot Wall as the material expression of a regional and mythical consciousness. Because Wall's idealized vision is not inconsistent with a remembered or imagined past (often from childhood), the response is universal and pervasive.

The cultural interpreters of Wall's work have established the successful application of this philosophical concept by orienting Wall's artistic expression into a collective reification of cultural identity. Finally, the satisfaction expressed by the admirers and consumers of Wall's art in this thesis confirms this hypothesis and elevates the realm of folk art, and the folk art of Elizabeth Margot Wall in particular, to its rightful position in contemporary life.

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