

History With a Habitation

G. M. Story

Volume 12, numéro 2, spring 1983

URI : https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/acad12_2rv01

[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

Éditeur(s)

The Department of History of the University of New Brunswick

ISSN

0044-5851 (imprimé)

1712-7432 (numérique)

[Découvrir la revue](#)

Citer ce document

Story, G. M. (1983). History With a Habitation. *Acadiensis*, 12(2), 120–124.

Reviews/Revues

History with a Habitation

"AS GEOGRAPHY WITHOUT HISTORY seemeth a carcasce without motion", observed Captain John Smith in his *Generall History of Virginia* (1624), "so History without Geography wandreth as a vagrant without a certain Habitation". It might serve as the motto of the Hakluyt Society which now, once again, has placed students of Atlantic Canada, and none more than Newfoundland, in heavy debt: to the 16th-century record in the two volumes of David B. Quinn on the voyages and colonising enterprises of Sir Humphrey Gilbert (1940) and J.A. Williamson's documents and studies on the Cabot voyages and Bristol (1962),¹ the Society has now added Gillian T. Cell's *Newfoundland Discovered: English Attempts at Colonisation, 1610-1630* (London, The Hakluyt Society, 1982), a collection of original 17th-century documentary sources which present the island, for more than a century the most familiar part of North America to English and European migratory fishermen and whalers, as a site for formal attempts at settlement.

Nearly all the major documents, and many others, are represented here, organized in four divisions. The first of the colonies (at Cupids in 1610) is presented through a skilful selection from the Middleton manuscripts preserved at Nottingham, the text of Guy's journal (1612) at Lambeth Palace, and concluding with Mason's *A brieffe discourse* (1620). This is followed by Whitbourne's *Discourse and discovery*, in its several forms (1620-23) the most important of the early works of propaganda for settlement by a sober veteran who had spent a lifetime in the Newfoundland trade and grasped its place in the context of the developing Atlantic community. Lord Falkland's colony is introduced here by Whitbourne's "loving invitation" (1622) and *inter alia* the Irish tract, *A short discourse* (1623), by T.C. Finally some 30 documents and printed extracts concern Calvert and the colony of Avalon and its capital Ferryland (1621-37), including the "charter of Avalon", so important in the study of the typology of English colonies in the New World. The documents are skilfully chosen (Vaughan's mannered prose works and Hayman's doggerel verses are rightly omitted as scarcely containing significant historical matter); and they are superbly edited.

That demanding task is not commonly so well done as to be allowed to pass without particular comment, for in the present volume, in addition to the great diversity of the documents posing different problems of transcription and presentation, the editor was faced by the especially complex textual and bibliographical history of Whitbourne's *Discourse*, which survives in 11 variant issues and editions. Professor Cell presents the text of 1622, the substantive variations of 1620 and 1623 being set forth in footnotes. There are other ways of editing a

1 David B. Quinn, ed., *The Voyages and Colonizing Enterprises of Sir Humphrey Gilbert* (London, The Hakluyt Society, 1940); J.A. Williamson, ed., *The Cabot Voyages and Bristol Discovery Under Henry VII* (Cambridge, The Hakluyt Society, 1962).

text such as this, but her method is clear and rational, and it is the first time that this valuable work has been so treated. Judicious in its selection, meticulous in its accuracy, annotated with disciplined learning, and with a thorough name and topical index, the volume is a model of how heterogeneous collections of early documents should be edited, and printed.

The texts are introduced by a compact essay of some 60 pages with just the right information needed to approach and interpret the documents; it sketches the background and fortunes of these abortive colonies, their personnel and organization, propaganda for and pragmatic experience of this part of the New World, dream and reality; and at the end, no colonies. For as Professor Cell has argued elsewhere, Newfoundland was different from other English colonies. In Virginia, the West Indies, and (to some extent) in New England, colonies were eventually, and paradoxically, successful because without settlement they offered comparatively little of value to the European economy; the creation of that "value" involved the creation of a new labour force and of new methods of production: hence settlement. But Newfoundland had been important to the European economy for a century before serious colonising attempts through its staple, fish; "no tobacco as in Virginia. No sugar as in Barbados. No fur trade which. . . enabled the New England colonies to survive. There was only fish. . ."²² The old pattern of migratory fishing continued to be profitable without settlement until the informal settlement of the Napoleonic War period led to realistic resident competition. So the early colonies collapsed, or were abandoned, and their promoters turned (like Calvert) elsewhere. As the final document printed in this important collection expresses it (the words were written in 1636/7 to the privy council by the warden and assistants of Trinity House): "none of all th[e] adventurers] which haue attempted in the Nufoundland to settle there to liue, and draw[e] others to them, never thryved, the Lord Baltimore Captaine Mason, Master Guy of Bristoll, and other men ingenious and of excellent partes, yet wearye[d] and soe removed", leaving the thin remnants of a settled population, and those who joined them during the next century and more, to the precarious combination of fishing with subsistence farming which, Professor Cell concludes, "though it was not 'the golden fleece' which Vaughan had promised, could allow individuals to survive".

The appeal of Luca Codignola's small volume, *Terre d'America e burocrazia romana: Simon Stock, Propaganda Fide e la colonia di Lord Baltimore a Terranova, 1621-1649* (Venezia, Marsilio Editori, 1982) will, perhaps, be chiefly to those sympathetic to one of the central themes of H.R. Trevor-Roper's valedictory lecture at Oxford in 1980, in which, discoursing on the central subject — history and imagination — he argues that "History is not merely what

happened: it is what happened in the context of what might have happened".³

The what-might-have-happened in the present volume is the successful creation in Calvert's Avalon of an overseas English Catholic colony, a stepping-stone for missions elsewhere in the American colonies and, by an easy transit through the North-west passage which the latest maps showed, in China and the East Indies as well. The project has been recently sketched by R.J. Lahey in "The Role of Religion in Lord Baltimore's Colonial Enterprise";⁴ in this volume we are given the texts of some 93 letters in Italian and Latin, dated between 1622 and 1649, preserved in the collections of the Sacred Congregation *de Propaganda Fide* and the Archivio Generale of the Carmelite Order at Rome, documenting the subject in rich detail. The letters are annotated, there is a helpful bibliography, and the whole subject is introduced by an essay of a hundred pages; a well-wrought little book which an English publisher, somewhere, might like to take up.

At the centre of the volume is the figure of the Carmelite priest Thomas Doughty (Father Simon Stock), and it is largely through his eyes, and the responses to him of the Roman bureaucracy, that this particular blind passage of history (as some may regard it) is displayed. Formed by the missionary tradition of Cardinal Allen and Robert Persons, Stock is in England as part of the household of the Spanish ambassador, Gondomar, in 1621 as negotiations for the Spanish Marriage still drag on. Intent on the affairs of his co-religionists in England, knowledgeable about the Roman institutions, indefatigable in feeding them information and advice, he is evidently close to Calvert, the King's Principal Secretary and a leading proponent of the Spanish connection, and almost certainly involved in Calvert's conversion to Roman Catholicism; and when the Ferryland colony, which the former Secretary (now Lord Baltimore) proceeds to create with a royal charter unique in its absence of restrictions on Catholic colonisation, needs a new governor, it is Stock who recommends the Catholic soldier Sir Arthur Aston, and Stock too who secures authorization from Rome for the dispatch to the new colony of suitable Carmelite missionaries, or Jesuits if necessary. And when Baltimore himself visits Newfoundland in 1627, two secular priests accompany him, one of them wintering there; on Baltimore's return to take up permanent residence the next season, he brings another priest and a party of some 40 Roman Catholic settlers, several of them the "spiritual children" of Father Stock.

Of course none of this was to work: the colony was distracted by denominational squabbles, by financial problems, by the war with France and Spain, by pirates, by the "sadd face of wynter" in 1628/9; and Baltimore cast his eyes south to Jamestown and Chesapeake Bay. Easy with hindsight to make his

3 The lecture is printed in Hugh Lloyd-Jones, Valerie Pearl and Blair Worden, eds., *History & Imagination: Essays in Honour of H.R. Trevor-Roper* (London, Duckworth, 1981), p. 364.

4 *Maryland Historical Magazine*, LXXII (1977), pp. 492-511.

Newfoundland venture another dead-end of history. In any case, we are not much interested these days in the old stock explanation of the colonial enterprise which could, for example, describe William Bradford's *Of Plymouth Plantation* (1620-47) as like nothing "in human annals since the Story of Bethlehem". Yet ideologies too count for something in history, and this interesting volume deserves more than passing attention, even if it reminds some readers of the first half of the epigram of Henry James: "the historian, essentially, wants more documents than he can really use".

One of the best essays in the collection David B. Quinn has assembled in *Early Maryland in a Wider World* (Detroit, Wayne State University Press, 1982) resolutely avoids the common hazard of histories of a single small colony — looking outward from the middle of a European settlement — by examining "Indians and Frontiers in Seventeenth-century Maryland", with the stress on those plural nouns of the title. Francis Jennings demonstrates that "there were a number of frontiers being created in the Chesapeake [by Frenchmen, Spaniards, Virginians, Dutch] when Lord Baltimore's first ship arrived in 1634" and that this arrival "added just one more complication to an already complex situation". The essay is beautiful in its handling of shifting boundaries and their perception by Europeans and Indian tribes and confederacies, and it concludes with a plea "to look with open eyes at what happened in history and let that determine our theories".

This essay is also typical of the particular strength of the volume: without neglecting the internal history of Baltimore's new colony (the longest piece, by Russell Menard and Lois Carr, gives a careful account of the colonisation enterprise, and there is a survey by W.P. Cummings of the early maps of the Chesapeake Bay area and their relation to settlement and society), the distinction of the book lies in its treatment of Maryland in the 'wider world' of the title. This is displayed, for example, in Richard Dunn's essay which looks at masters, servants and slaves comparatively in Maryland and the Caribbean, and specifically in papers by J.H. Elliott on the strain and tensions in Spain and its empire, and J.H. Parry on the Spaniards in eastern North America. Of particular interest to students of the Atlantic Canada colonies is the sequence of three papers on "the world of the English": G.R. Elton's deceptively informal sketch, "Contentment and Discontent on the Eve of Colonization", which sees the dominant theme of English colonisation in the 17th-century as "English, by license, enterprise, and continued connection" and not, as backward-reading from 1776 suggests, the movements overseas of freedom-seeking separatists; Professor Quinn's "Why They Came", displaying (as in his Introduction) characteristic mastery of the state of the subject; and John Bossy's fine analysis, "Reluctant Colonists: The English Catholics Confront the Atlantic", in which he studies the ecclesiastical constitution of Maryland as "a kind of encapsulated model of the situation of the English Catholic community", the dilemmas of which are implicit in Signior Codignola's book.

The volume originated in a series of lectures given during 1977 and 1978 at St. Mary's College of Maryland. What often results, as editors of similar collections know, is one of those half-books in which the excellence of occasional papers remains unintegrated. This book is an exception: judicious selection of speakers and topics, and the guiding hand of a veteran scholar-editor make *Maryland in a Wider World* a valuable contribution to the study of the rise of the first British empire, and "History with a Habitation".

G.M. STORY

The Irish Connection

TWO RECENT WORKS concerned with Ireland and Canada differ greatly in subject matter and approach, yet there are certain connecting links between Edmund A. Aunger, *In Search of Political Stability: A Comparative Study of New Brunswick and Northern Ireland* (Montreal, McGill-Queen's University Press, 1981) and Cecil J. Houston and William J. Smyth, *The Sash Canada Wore: A Historical Geography of the Orange Order in Canada* (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1980). Both have much to say about religion, ethnicity and politics; both were written by academics outside the discipline of history and were published by university presses; both contain numerous charts and diagrams or maps based on statistical analysis. For the historian these volumes raise several questions: how do our academic colleagues in the social sciences use historical material and the work of historians? are these volumes valuable to historians for the information which they provide? do these works present theoretical models or methodological techniques which might usefully be adopted by historians?

In Search of Political Stability is tightly organized, logically sequenced and plainly stated. While this does not make for exciting reading, it does mean that Aunger's argument is easy to follow. The introductory chapter, for instance, informs the reader that the book is a theoretical case study: theoretical in that certain theories of what contributes to political stability/instability in fragmented communities are applied and tested; a case study in that two comparable fragmented communities, New Brunswick and Northern Ireland, but with quite different records of stability, are examined. The author's hypothesis is that New Brunswick "is both socially fragmented and politically stable . . . [and] will be characterized by both crosscutting cleavages and cooperative elites" (p. 14). (A cleavage is "a division along which there is socio-political opposition" (p. 7); "crosscutting" means that cleavages do not coincide or are not "congruent" with the fundamental fragmentation of the community). Conversely, Northern Ireland "is both socially fragmented and politically unstable . . . [and] will be characterized by either congruent cleavages or confrontative elites, or both" (p.