

## **Anthropological Uses of History and Culture**

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Volume 18, numéro 1, autumn 1988

URI : [https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/acad18\\_1re05](https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/acad18_1re05)

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### Éditeur(s)

The Department of History of the University of New Brunswick

### ISSN

0044-5851 (imprimé)

1712-7432 (numérique)

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### Citer ce document

Pool, G. R. (1988). Anthropological Uses of History and Culture. *Acadiensis*, 18(1), 226–137.

assumes a greater degree of importance. For that I have Donald Akenson to thank.

PETER TONER

### Anthropological Uses of History and Culture

IN 1883 WILLIAM MORRIS WROTE THAT "The most grinding poverty is a trifling evil compared with the inequality of classes".<sup>1</sup> Many of the unfortunate people described in the books under review had both poverty and class inequality. Living on the verge of chaos and starvation, they were forced to filter ingenious means of "making a living" through the prism of culture. In the books being considered here we see how anthropologists and sociologists have sought in history the answers to powerlessness, inequality and underdevelopment in the Atlantic provinces.

Anthropologists have frequently investigated inequality from a cultural perspective. Anthropology's bias toward those who "fall behind" for one reason or another has resulted from the method of examining patterns of social behaviour in those contemporary societies thought to approximate that of our precursors. Since humankind's earliest societies left no written record, social and cultural anthropology focused on the study of culture from below and the "history" of the underdog. Anthropologists walked and talked with the natives, interpreting their culture to the rest of the world. Anthropologists understood culture as a product of accumulated knowledge and understandings about the world, a kind of encapsulated history. Culture then, as a condensed version of belief, was thought to be conservative since it validated traditional modes of thought and action. However, such an analysis has its limitations since the "modern" society goes unstudied and perhaps more fundamentally because studying a native society today may not reveal much about the past, when there was no modern society to influence it.

Re-evaluations of anthropological practice have stemmed from historians' insights into culture,<sup>2</sup> but also from anthropologists' own recognition of interpretive problems.<sup>3</sup> In the process the boundary between historical and cultural analysis has been blurred, although only sporadic and occasionally naive attempts have been made to combine the two.<sup>4</sup> The failure to combine

1 Cited in Robert Stewart, ed., *A Dictionary of Political Quotations* (London, 1984), p. 117.

2 See Raymond Williams, *Culture* (Glasgow, 1981) and *Keywords* (New York, 1976).

3 See Ladislav Holy and Milan Stuchlik, *Actions, Norms and Representations: Foundations of anthropological inquiry* (London, 1983).

4 Max Gluckman suggested some time ago that social anthropologists were justified in making

history with anthropology is not surprising. First, anthropologists often did not provide the detail and narrative satisfying to historians. Second, culture is a complex concept and even anthropologists cannot agree how to define this term. The historian Raymond Williams has even suggested that culture is one of the two or three most complicated words in the English language.<sup>5</sup> Culture is used in one sense to mean aesthetics, art. It is also used quite frequently as a catch-all for the unexplained or the vague, or as the bedrock of traditionality (e.g., middle class culture). Anthropologists have familiarity with the problem of defining culture.<sup>6</sup> Yet among them many static notions of culture abound: "reflective action", "tradition", "mode of thought", "material representation" are but a few floating around. Culture, in its material and ideal aspects, should be seen as all of these notions, not excluding the possibility of fundamental repositioning of thought, tradition, action and social formation. As long as anthropologists saw themselves as the objective collectors of information taken at face value (more or less), they remained separated from their object and failed to understand cultural malleability. Culture is now more thoroughly recognized as fundamentally *creatable*.

Since the 1970s a number of reconstructions of cultural analysis have changed anthropology, including the very important contribution of Pierre Bourdieu, who has influenced some historians. He explained in great detail not only how objectivity is limited, but also how, by means of a "critical break", we can construct "an inquiry into the conditions of possibility".<sup>7</sup> To accomplish this break Bourdieu used another term, *habitus*, the basis of which is tradition and habit, which immediately transects history: "In short, the habitus, the product of history, produces individual and collective practices, and hence history, in accordance with the schemes engendered by history".<sup>8</sup> Habitus is both product and producer. Bourdieu's intention is to replace culture, which may be confused with art or colloquial meanings, with habitus in order to focus on the dynamic. In short, habitus refers to the historical process *in conjunction with the limits*

"naive" assumptions outside their field but that this "naivety would limit the conclusions which could be drawn". *Closed Systems and Open Minds: The limits of naivety in anthropology* (Edinburgh and London, 1964), p. v.

- 5 *Keywords*, p. 76. Ian McKay brilliantly picks the teeth of many cross-disciplinary works in anthropology and history in a review article, "Historians, Anthropology and the Concept of Culture", *Labour/Le Travailleur*, 8/9 (Autumn/Spring 1981/1982), pp. 185-241.
- 6 Nearly 40 years ago A. L. Kroeber and Clyde Kluckhohn wrote reviewed over 160 different definitions for culture. Of these, 22 were classed as historical as was one of Kroeber's: "By 'culture' anthropology means the total life way of a people, the social legacy the individual acquires from his group". "Culture: A Critical Review of Concepts and Definitions", *Papers of the Peabody Museum of American Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard University*, XLVII, 1, (1952), p. 48.
- 7 Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (London, 1977), p. 3.
- 8 *Ibid.*, p. 82.

*history imposes on possibility*. Armed with the notion of habitus, anthropologists delve into history to understand process and the proceeds of social formation as well as the *modus operandi* of individual and collective action. Another contributor to a better understanding of culture is Clifford Geertz who has revealed much about how anthropological writings "are our own constructions of other people's constructions of what they and their compatriots are up to".<sup>9</sup> Cultural analysis is in short an interpretive process, where the anthropologist is "guessing at meaning, assessing the guesses, and drawing explanatory conclusions from the better guesses". Geertz limits inaccurate interpretation through a microscopic approach to ethnographic description.<sup>10</sup>

It is the cultural focus,<sup>11</sup> which makes Gerald Sider's *Culture and Class in Anthropology and History: A Newfoundland illustration* (London, Cambridge University Press, 1986) the central and most crucial book considered here. It would be unfortunate if one missed the message by trying to read Sider as history, even less so as narrative.<sup>12</sup> For there is an intent here not only to broach an historically focused anthropology but also to explore how culture and hegemony are linked in Newfoundland society. Since conventional anthropological usage of culture has fallen by the wayside in the study of social change and of dichotomous class-based societies, another usage of culture is necessary. Somewhat in conformity with Bourdieu, Sider is intent on suggesting how culture, understood in its core meaning as "the form and manner in which people perceive, define, articulate, and express their mutual relations", leads to a mode of behaviour whereby the hegemony of the merchant class was deflected and undermined (p. 120). Culture, in Sider's view, rather than being a mould for social relations, except within strictly limited spheres, becomes the vehicle for novel modes of thought and behaviour. Indeed, Sider portrays the outport communities as fertile ground for a culture of "resistance" rather than one of despair.

Sider's Newfoundland is familiar, but his story is new:

- 9 See *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York, 1973), especially his "Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture", pp. 3-30.
- 10 *Ibid.*, p. 20. See also Paul Shankman, "The Thick and the Thin: On the Interpretive Theoretical Program of Clifford Geertz", *Current Anthropology*, 25, 3 (June 1984), pp. 261-2.
- 11 Sider cites Geertz and Bourdieu but avoids the latter's notion of habitus.
- 12 Raymond Williams argues that from the 15th century the study of history "moved towards an account of past real events". History transcends its narrative when it is connected to the present and future, viz., as study of the process of civilization or humankind. Williams, *Keywords*, pp. 119-20. Some reviews of Sider's book by historians point to the disjointed and limited use of data. See J. K. Hiller, et al., "Newfoundland's Past as Marxist Illustration", *Newfoundland Studies*, 3 (Fall 1987), pp. 265-9; Bryan Palmer, while not dismissing the argument, writes that Sider's book is "so essentially ahistorical...that it requires considerable patience to wade through the self-indulgence of the text and sift out the valuable from the valueless", *Canadian Historical Review*, LXIX (June 1988), p. 280.

The domination that fisher families encountered was so severe that it permeated all other aspects of their social life. It shaped the outlines of their economic activity, keeping them poor and their equipment small-scale, and thus limiting the size of the potential catch. Moreover, the specific forms that domination took introduced specific competitive tensions within villages and families that played a key role in the shaping of family life and village culture. Yet for all the constraints and pressures that pervaded and shaped much of their social life, fisher families controlled their own social relations of work, built and owned their productive equipment, and wove the various threads of this self-determination within the fabric of their social life, alongside and crossing the strands of imposed poverty and need (pp. 27-8).

While historians may debate the details of his sources and the accuracy of his interpretations, few would dispute the control merchants had under the truck system. Paying low prices for fish and keeping fishermen in debt by advancing flour and other commodities for the season, the merchant could make profit from both ends, thus limiting the power of producers to resist. In Newfoundland the alternatives to the fisheries were limited since agriculture was difficult and is practised little even today. Outport fishermen did not even have the option that ex-slaves in many Caribbean societies had when they gave their labour in exchange for rent-free cultivation of plantation land. The truck system, under the dominance of the merchants, along with the forced monoculture of fishing, led to a number of features of outport culture which Sider analyzes in Part II.

Sider argues that the customs of mummering and scoffing, which he and others have described in detail elsewhere, were symptomatic of merchant hegemony.<sup>13</sup> Briefly, Sider sees mummering in outport Newfoundland as the practice of striking out at familiarity. Mummery, in every instance neighbours and kin, "invade" the privacy of others with a loud knock, impelled speech, their faces covered with masks strewn with moss and fungus, their hands hidden with gloves, their posture altered and stomachs padded with stuffing. The knock is forceful and strange: customary visiting it is not. Hosts must respect the mummery and offer them rum and food; mummery joke and prank, sing and dance, pinch and perform as they are increasingly questioned until their identity is uncovered. At that point they settle down as regular guests, drinks are served and normal reciprocity is resumed. Scoffing is the dramatic opposite where the host is absent at a meal "bucked" or stolen. In scoffing from a neighbour, food

13 Gerald M. Sider, "Christmas mumming and the new year in outport Newfoundland", *Past and Present*, 71 (May 1976), pp. 102-25; "The ties that bind: culture and agriculture, property and propriety in the Newfoundland village fishery", *Social History*, 5 (January 1980), pp. 1-39; Herbert Halpert and George M. Story, eds., *Christmas Mumming in Newfoundland* (Toronto, 1969); James C. Faris, *Cat Harbour* (St. John's, 1972).

(sometimes a large quantity) is stolen, cooked and then eaten as though one is partaking in a normal "family scoff" or dinner. The food is always bucked from nature — never is it fish for exchange, nor goods purchased from the merchant, who is never scoffed. For Sider this practice symbolizes the dramatic equality of the community of the oppressed. The cuffer is a similar custom analyzed in the same way. A cuffer is an ordinary story told as an illustration of danger and peripherality, but it has elements of bizarre events and conduct — it is a not entirely obvious stretching of the truth.<sup>14</sup> Sider shows how such cultural practices, sometimes highly dramatic occasions, can be explained by reference to the historical domination by the merchant class.

Such cultural phenomena are familiar to anthropologists observing peasants elsewhere. The dramatic, the normal; the sharing, the theft; the truth, the lie: negations confirm day-to-day imperatives of struggle. Sider turns Newfoundland culture on its head and sees it as an expression of mercantile hegemony where others see dramatic cultural practices as reversals necessary to confirm the ordinary or moral solidarity of the community. Sider's interpretation of Newfoundland culture is his greatest accomplishment but he may also be telling his own cuffer by omission. At one point he quotes a missionary Rev. John Moreton, to illustrate how the fishermen faced life with a determination of their own:

Having complete command of their time, these people are of a strange imperturbable habit. Unaccustomed to move at other men's bidding, they are hardly to be excited to action unless impelled by their own perception of need. "When I see my own time" is a phrase continually in their mouths (p. 118).

Sider then leads us into a discussion of hegemony with the introduction of Sumerian proverbs. He sees two as pertinent to his argument: "Into the plague-stricken city one must drive him [the peasant, the underling] like a pack-ass" and "Not all the families of the poor are equally submissive" (p. 121). These are instructive for Sider who argues that in the absence of compliance, hegemony must be extended into daily life. Therefore, to understand hegemony,

14 I have experienced some examples in working with New Brunswick fishermen, where stories about large lobsters abound. Some of these are true, but others "where a claw as long as my arm grabbed the trap and then fell back into the water" are not so true. The point is that fishing is tedious, repetitious, cold, dangerous work. Leonard Wilson of Lorneville, New Brunswick, told a story of being caught in a storm, where they had to stoke the fire with boards from the boat and take shelter in a cove for three days. In the story he said: "Now our table was fastened onto the mast and underneath that lamp he had the sugar-bowl and the lamp was full of stove oil and the oil leaked down and went into the sugar — and I'll tell you, if you want a tasty dish, cook some rice, nothing but boiled rice, and then put sugar on it with stove oil in it — the tastiest thing you ever seen in your life". Alan Anderson, *Salt Water, Fresh Water* (Toronto, 1979), p. 217.

one must look at the specificity of work and appropriation, i.e., how wealth created by one class is passed to another. Sider shows how, in the case of outport Newfoundland, appropriation took place at the point of exchange. The means of production were therefore not coincident with appropriation, which contributed to the semi-autonomous nature of the outport economy. Out of the semi-autonomous economy resistance was shaped through the reality of outport life in a cultural form. Sider points out that "the opposition to elite cultural hegemony hardly occurs in the simple act of suggesting alternative values or spinning oppositional value systems out of bitter critique and thin air" (p. 122).

Sider has told a marvellous tale of how culture developed out of Newfoundland history, although other interpretations of Newfoundland culture have been put forward. Hegemony plays no part in most of these interpretations. Robert Paine, for example, points out that the Newfoundland idiom "after" (e.g., "I'm after going to the store" does not necessarily imply a power relationship: going to the store is a future encounter with the dominant merchant), but is derivative of Anglo-Irish tradition transplanted to several regional Englishes.<sup>15</sup> The idiom "after" may simply imply intent and might easily be used in several social situations. Similarly, outport mumming is elsewhere interpreted as role reversals or reversions, i.e., as an expression of the conflict between person (the public image) and self (one's own image). As Handelman has suggested, it may also be a confirmation of familiarity among kin and community, an interpretation which has no place in Sider's analysis.<sup>16</sup> There is, however, nothing incompatible between Handelman's and Sider's interpretation of mumming, which can reflect class inequality as well as the personal dynamics of life in outport villages.

A weakness in Sider's approach is his failure to show how outport culture resisted elite hegemony. In the section following his discussion of hegemony he touches too lightly on over two centuries of "the struggle to impose and resist domination" (p. 122). At one point he suggests that the counterhegemonic strategies were not "minimal" but rather that they are difficult "to specify except in the occasional spectacular upheaval" (p. 126). Two pages later one reads a definitive statement of opposition to hegemony as "entailing not just alternative values but rather the structuring of these values into social relations and the continual production of values from autonomous domains of folk social relations" (p. 128). At this point, Sider asserts, we have reached the point of understanding the role of government in the "confrontations and conjunctions

15 "That Outport Culture", review essay in *The Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology*, 25, 1 (February 1988), p. 153.

16 "Inside-Out, Outside-In: Concealment and Revelation in Newfoundland Christmas Mumming", in Edward M. Bruner, ed., *Text, Play, and Story: The Construction and Reconstruction of Self and Society. 1983 Proceedings of the American Ethnological Society*. (Washington, 1984), pp. 246-77.

of producers and appropriators" (p. 128). It is still unclear how mumming or any other outport cultural tradition led to resistance. Is the symbolic refusal to tip hats in the early 20th century observation of Governor Ralph Williams a form of counterhegemonic tendencies: "The Newfoundlander of the humbler classes is self-contained, undemonstrative, and shy, and he does not readily transform his goodwill into demonstrative action" (p. 124)? Sider provides very little evidence of collective action, passing over the Fishermen's Protective Union in the early part of this century. It is instructive that in his discussion of hegemony he "omits" another Sumerian proverb that he cites elsewhere: "That which is given in submission becomes a medium of defiance".<sup>17</sup> It is unclear how far the fishermen were conscious of their *class* position, but it is likely that they understood their oppression by the merchant class. The essential question is: how does outport culture *lead to* resistance?

What is clear, as Sider suggests, is that the fishermen "lived in hopes", "owning their own", focusing on the self and family, with a strong sense of dignity. The fishermen's dignity, "particularly in their dealings with power,...merges uneasily with an incapacity to effectively resist the impositions of power" (p. 184). Perhaps to Sider this is an uneasy fusion, but individual dignity may contribute to acts of strength, as in the case he cites:

A fisherman, seeking to discharge part of a debt owed to a merchant, offered a brace of freshly shot sea ducks. The offer was refused. He put them on the counter, anyhow, saying as he left, "I guess you'll have to pluck me instead"... It is *perhaps* out of this mixture of dignity and powerlessness that a certain kind of ideology is born: the ideology which asserts "We are only loggers" (p. 184; emphasis added).

It seems that we need to know under what circumstances the individual's identity is *collectively* expressed. Unfortunately, Sider skirts over the question. Nor should we make too much out of too little evidence of such symbolized values as the FPU motto *suum cuique*, "implying, on one level, that the producing fishermen deserved a fair return, but also implying much *more*" (p. 184; emphasis added). The reader is left rather in the lurch as to what else is implied. While there are some interesting examples in Sider's text, we need to know how individual and collective resistance are fused. Still he does provide the foundation for further examination of counterhegemonic tendencies.

Peter Sinclair presents quite different types of detail in his study of the northwest shore, *From Traps to Draggers: Domestic commodity production in northern Newfoundland, 1850-1982* (St. John's, Institute of Social and Econ-

17 Sider, "The ties that bind", p. 1. Hiller complains that the FPU was not given sustained analysis in "Newfoundland's Past as Marxist Illustration", p. 268.



omic Research, 1985). Here there is discussion of social differentiation based primarily upon theoretical sociology, which gives an uneasy feeling of irrelevancy. Essentially Sinclair argues on two fronts. First, domestic commodity producers (i.e., Newfoundland's family based fishery) face "structural pressures", which are interpreted by the producers (via culture), who set their own pace in response. Second, the external pressures from the dominant economy lead toward proletarianization, but it is not everywhere felt to the same degree — alternatives are sought in certain circumstances. In northwest Newfoundland Sinclair found that "along with expansion in domestic commodity production, partial differentiation has resulted in a petty capitalist fishery based on dragging", which has been largely ignored by previous research (p. 29).

Sinclair includes considerable detail on changes in the inshore fisheries since the mid-19th century. Technological changes (e.g., the invention of the cod trap) and externally induced changes (e.g., the establishment of a lobster cannery) are described and the consequences outlined. The familiar story of merchant domination is told and we are given statistics on the fluctuating numbers of fishermen, catches and income. Unfortunately Sinclair is not always specific with respect to time. For example, while cautioning us on using oral records, he writes that "my informants in Port au Choix speak of the period under review [1850-1965] as one in which their parents and grandparents were resigned to a life of unchanging toil for the benefit of the merchants. 'You fished to eat' was the basic attitude" (p. 48).

Sinclair excels in showing how the Newfoundland fleet developed from cape islander lobster boats through longliners to shrimp and cod draggers in the early 1960s. He examines the forces propelling technological change, and the setbacks and the alternatives chosen and financed by fishermen, sometimes with commercial loans. Even with these loans only the exceptionally fortunate boat captain could accumulate capital. The next phase began in the 1970s when massive subsidies precipitated a rapid expansion in the shrimp fishery. By 1976, 30 of the 39 boats were 52-58 feet long; by 1982, there were eight 65 foot boats, joined in 1983 by two \$850,000 steel-hulled draggers (p. 67). It is clear that many of the fishermen were by 1980 no longer domestic commodity producers, sharing in the ownership and operation of the boat and trap, but participants in highly capitalized fishing enterprises. In short the owners were dependent petty capitalists hiring a crew of workers (p. 95). Yet it is easy to overestimate the social impact of these changes. Sinclair heard it stated "repeatedly that kinship has become unimportant in the formation of crews since the introduction of the longliner" (p. 97). In fact, of all the vessels in Port au Choix at the time of his field research only five were crewed by non-kinsmen, which points to the strength of habitus, despite the statements of fishermen to the contrary.

Sinclair then provides evidence on how the state has entered into the picture. With respect to fishermen the position of the state is ambiguous. It subsidizes capital investment costs and the incomes of fishermen and it supports through

unemployment insurance both petty capitalist and domestic commodity production. But it also limits the access to fish stocks (p. 107). Government is an active participant in the process of change and by defending capitalist interests, it has a crucial role in shaping the conditions which create a strong working class. Having read Sider we may add that the working class is politically motivated in part because of Newfoundland's history of oppression.<sup>18</sup>

*From Traps to Driggers* is an integrated case study of development where "the historical record is ambiguous in that both petty capitalists and domestic commodity producers have expanded" (p. 148). In one sense Sinclair is a believer in the poverty of theory — what is really important is the role of the state, and we should not assume any unitary motive or control of its apparatus.<sup>19</sup> In another sense he gives prominence to theoretical categories, which in the case he examined were absent. Sinclair's book provides a backdrop against which Sider may be more clearly understood as the basis for the class struggles of today, which come from below (the inshore fishermen) as well as from the middle (the Port au Choix draggersmen). Sider shows the role of the state to be all too old; Sinclair shows, that despite the state's pervasive intervention, history may not proceed exactly as we expect.

Two other publications merit attention. Cynthia Lamson and Arthur J. Hanson, eds., *Atlantic Fisheries and Coastal Communities: Fisheries decision-making case studies* (Halifax, Dalhousie Ocean Studies Programme, 1984) is focused on the theme of state intervention in Atlantic Canada, with varying attention to history and culture. Developed out of Dalhousie's Ocean Studies Programme and the Institute for Resource and Environmental Studies, this book reflects the interdisciplinary work done at Dalhousie and is grounded in community-based research in Nova Scotia. The editors selected a quote from Roméo LeBlanc to begin the book: "to decide properly whether the fishery should be developed or deserted, we must get to the level that politics only guesses at, the level of the deep and social repercussions from our decisions" (p. iv). Anthony Davis's treatment of a southwest Nova Scotia fishery stands out as the most informed at the community level, based as it is upon anthropological fieldwork.<sup>20</sup> He clearly demolishes economists' common property assumptions

18 Gordon Inglis has brilliantly examined the antecedents and political context of the development of the Newfoundland Fishermen, Food and Allied Workers Union in *More than Just a Union: The story of the NFFAWU* (St. John's, 1985). Even more detail on state-supported fishing enterprises is given in Sinclair's *State Intervention and the Newfoundland Fisheries* (Aldershot, Gower, 1987) where diverse chapters on public ownership, quota control and licensing policy are presented in the broader context of Newfoundland's underdevelopment.

19 See Theda Skocpol, *States and Social Revolutions* (Cambridge, Mass., 1979) and Sinclair's endorsement of the relative autonomy of the state, *State Intervention*, pp. 60-1.

20 "Property Rights and Access Management in the Small Boat Fishery: A Case Study from Southwest Nova Scotia", pp. 133-64.

about fishermen taking the "last fish".<sup>21</sup> What Davis shows is how local use rights were allocated by mutual consent, a practice which has some historical depth. State restriction of coastal resources is new: fishermen have only over the past three decades been told by the state that they cannot fish when, where and how they like. Prior to effective enforcement and, it might be added, the interception by offshore corporate fishing fleets, local control was the only control. Conflict now may be abated only with great effort, involving co-management between the community and the state. In "The Transformation of the Bay of Fundy Herring Fisheries 1976-1978" John Kearney shows how co-management may be held as a "vision of people collectively formulating their own objectives and deciding their own future" (p. 200). The experiment he describes was too short and the principle of co-management was abandoned by the Kirby Task Force in 1983.<sup>22</sup> Gene Barrett, somewhat further from the milieu of the net but certainly informed by the historical impact of state and corporate power on fishermen, takes on the question of corporate organization. In his article on "Capital and the State in Atlantic Canada: The structural context of fisheries policy between 1939 and 1977" Barrett boldly suggests that "as long as economists fail to account for the role of corporate power, fishery policy will be vulnerable to periodic political interventions which threaten a return to the laissez-faire policies of the past" (p. 78). It is tempting to blame economists who predominate in fisheries' bureaucracies. More generally these essays show how and why federal fisheries policy, by failing to understand the social repercussions, plods along the barren path of broken promises and handouts, creating poverty and intensifying corporate power.

Rex Clark begins his introduction to *Contrary Winds: Essays on Newfoundland society in crisis* (St. John's, Breakwater, 1986) with the statement that: "In Newfoundland society many inequalities are hidden; however, many are obvious.... Frequently we are asked to believe that the myriads of injured persons within this society are the results of the unconnected failings of unconnected individuals. But in a world ordered in classes, by means of class power, this is not so" (p. 5). In his own essay Clark "attempts to identify the language of class struggle as it took shape under pressure of village life" (p. 5). Apparently drawing upon Sider's earlier papers and presentations at Memorial University, Clark argues that village struggles were "against gifts, against the family as a form of labour organization and against the village as a closed universe" and in favour of class solidarity (pp. 17-18, emphasis added). Clark's interpretation of Newfoundland culture, based on Sider as well as Clark's "native" view, seems to go a little beyond the evidence. Clark bases some of his

21 For more anthropological approaches to common property in fisheries, see James M. Acheson and Bonnie J. McCay, eds., *The Question of the Commons* (Albuquerque, 1987).

22 *Navigating Troubled Waters: A New Policy for the Atlantic Fisheries. Report of the Task Force on Atlantic Fisheries* (Ottawa, 1983).

argument, frustratingly presented, on a series of glosses on the meanings of words and idioms from the *Dictionary of Newfoundland English*. He connects the word mummering correctly to stranger, thence to migrating waterfowl called jennies (a female Harlequin duck) who come like strangers. The verb "to janny" is defined as "to participate in various group activities by disguised figures during Christmas". Next he connects mummering to salt cod. Poor John is an idiom for salt cod and since the term janny in *The Dictionary of Newfoundland English* refers us to jenny as well as to johnny, Newfoundlanders must have connected the ritual of mummering to the production of salt cod. Clark sums up his series of glosses:

To take stock, in the nineteenth-century village, mummering began when a group of workers (or their children) came together and disguised themselves. The first stage of this customary practice ended with mummers putting on their faces. We can now see that this represented the villagers handing over the products of their labour (fish) to harlequin ducks, strangers, or traders. Villagers referred to this process of putting on disguises as getting *fitted-out*.... The implication is clear. Since *fit-out*, in one sense, meant the means of production, and since, as mummers, villagers fitted each other out, they were now in control of the production process (pp. 14-15; emphasis in text).

It is quite a jump from such interpretations of terms used in outport culture, *so constructed*, to merchant hegemony and the class struggle! For fully informed analysis of Newfoundland society, readers might consult the other selections which range from articles on unions (Walsh, Inglis), and fisheries policy (Sinclair), to crime (Leyton) and oil (House, Overton). In all, *Contrary Winds* is an interesting book, one undergraduate readers would enjoy, but it should not be taken as a model — there are so many typos that it might receive an average grade from a sympathetic marker.

In these books quite different notions of how anthropologists and sociologists interpret data are illustrated. Among those selected here there is a tendency to look for inequality in current state/community relations as well as to seek out history as an answer. From an anthropological point of view, we should be looking for historical data insofar as it provides us with a map for the present. We should not be trying to do history, but we should be relying on history for some of our answers. Interfering with the investigations to varying degrees is our discovery of how deep are fundamental inequities in the distribution of wealth. Inequality was here in a merchant dominated form, and is here still, sustained by the state. Having looked for fundamental equality in various contexts and come up empty-handed we are apt to despair in our sympathy for the underdog. We are faced with a contradiction: living in a democracy and seeing oppression.

While we might not expect it in 19th century Newfoundland (or the 20th?) we might anticipate some move toward it now. Outport Newfoundlanders lived and saw a different reality: "We must live in hopes less we die in despair". Anthropologists and sociologists see overwhelming dominance by political scions, sometimes directed by bureaucratic logic — the word "Peckfordism" readily falls from our collective lips. Perhaps this is because we have not made a critical break with our own habitus, and only with reflective inspection of our own biases, traditions and understandings can we begin.

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### Recent Literature on Native Peoples: A Measure of Canada's Values and Goals

A COLLECTION OF BOOKS THAT "SELF-SELECTED" by arriving at the office of the review editor of this journal does not lend itself to easy or probing discussion. Nor does the fact that more than half of these dozen or so books are collections of essays. At first reading, the only connection seemed to be that they are concerned with various aspects of native life — both historical and contemporary, but particularly historical. As my reading persisted, it became apparent that this highly selective recent literature tells us as much about Canadians, past and present, as about the native peoples. All these works, except for the early ethnographic ones, document some aspect of relations with whites. Neither white nor Indian researchers present anything but a bleak view of what these relations have been like. Never does one find a hint that the well-being of the native populations was the guiding force in developing government policies. One might charge, in response, that with hindsight this is easy to say. The policies of assimilation and paternalism were born of humanitarian interests in England in the 1830s and for that time represented an enlightened approach to the native situation. However, for other groups, Canada has tolerated differences and a degree of autonomy in expressing these differences. The Quebec Act of 1774 enshrined the rights of French Canadians to remain linguistically and religiously distinctive; Mennonites were permitted to transfer their unique societal institutions to Canada beginning in 1825 in Upper Canada; and in the latter part of the 19th century no special pressures were applied to immigrants from Eastern Europe to encourage them to forsake their cultural and religious practices. On the other hand, Canadians respond to the Indians by asking what ought to be done with them. Whether this attitude was born of guilt over having stolen Indian lands or pity at their subsequent long-standing marginal existence, for the last several hundred or so years the Canadian authorities have felt moved to impose restrictions and conditions to which the various Indian societies have