

# The Representation of Newfoundland in Nineteenth-Century French Travel Literature

RONALD ROMPKEY

THE IDEA OF NEWFOUNDLAND as a place is, for the most part, based upon its representation in British texts associated with the North Atlantic fishery, by means of an imperial discourse expressed by seafarers, army officers, clergymen, physicians, explorers and colonial administrators linked to the British régime. Newfoundland has been formed as a *locale* by what Edward Said attributes to authority, a phenomenon that establishes canons of taste and value and transmits traditions and perceptions.<sup>1</sup> While Newfoundland is not an imaginary place, our idea of it has been shaped by histories, letters and memoirs, by what Hayden White refers to as “fictions of factual representation,” based upon the notion that facts do not speak for themselves but that the historian or chronicler fashions them into a discursive whole.<sup>2</sup>

French writing in the nineteenth century, therefore, widens the frame of reference, for it incorporates a separate discourse and introduces a notion of Newfoundland related not to imperial authority but to the lives of the people. We shall now examine a variety of French visitors associated with the overseas fishery to determine the variety of travel literature and their different perspectives so as to provide an opportunity for further exploration. Thus, our purpose is not to undertake a theoretical analysis of these relatively unknown works but, rather, to bring them to the attention of travel literature scholars and highlight their research potential.

Let us begin in 1713. By signing the Treaty of Utrecht, the French abandoned Acadia, the Hudson Bay territories and the island of Newfoundland but preserved the right to catch and dry fish for six months of the year on the section of the west

coast later known as the French Shore. Consequently, in later years, the development and settlement of that part of the island would advance more slowly. Britain accepted the French requirement to build stages and other premises required for fishing but not to fortify the coast or live there beyond the fishing season. Fifty years later, with the Treaty of Paris, the French gave up Canada, the island of Cape Breton, part of the Mississippi Valley and their fishing rights on the coast of Canada to Britain, which subsequently placed the Labrador coast under its Governor in Newfoundland. However, France retained its fishing rights on the French Shore, and St. Pierre and Miquelon were returned to it as a base of operations. The Treaty of Versailles (1783) again reduced the section of Newfoundland coast allotted to the French, removing the section between Cape Bonavista and Cape St. John and substituting part of the west coast down to Cape Ray. Thus, the French Shore would extend from Cape St. John to Cape Ray.

Between the Revolution of 1789 and the First Empire, the French abandoned the French Shore, allowing their customary fishing grounds and harbours to be taken over by local settlers. In 1815, when they again took possession of St. Pierre and Miquelon and their coastal fishery, travel writers resumed the representation of Newfoundland. The first writers arrived in 1816, just after the Congress of Vienna had sorted out the European territories involved in the Napoleonic wars, and the Bourbons, who returned to the throne in 1814, and governed France until 1830. Louis XVIII tried to reconcile revolutionary and imperial France and in 1814 founded a constitutional monarchy, getting rid of the *tricolore* and bringing back the monarchical white flag. But when his brother, the Comte d'Artois, succeeded him as Charles X, the signs of revolt had already begun. During 27, 28 and 29 July 1830, the so-called July Revolution chased Charles X from Paris, after which action he abdicated in favour of the Duc de Bordeaux and took exile in England. In August, Louis-Philippe, head of a junior branch of the Bourbons, took the reins of government and re-established the *tricolore*.

The July Monarchy lasted eighteen years. But the L gitimistes and Bonapartists refused to support Louis-Philippe, and the Republicans provoked a series of insurrections. During one demonstration in Paris in 1848, a number of incidents occurred in the streets, and on 24 February, Paris was once again the scene of revolution. The king abdicated in favour of his ten-year-old son, the Comte de Paris, and fled to England. Formed on 25 February 1848, a provisional government refused to recognize the Comte de Paris, proclaimed a republic and called an election for a general assembly. But the Revolution of 1848 did not resolve the country's economic crisis, so that less than four years after its establishment, the Second Republic fell like the first, the victim of a bonapartist coup. The election of Louis-Napol on Bonaparte as president of the Republic in 1849 gave power to the enemies of the republican regime, and after the *coup d' tat* of December 1851, Louis-Napol on dissolved the assembly and re-established universal suffrage. A year later, he proclaimed himself emperor as Napol on III.

The constitution of January 1852 gave the head of state almost absolute power, and until 1860 the Empire was governed by a dictatorial regime; but through a series of concessions in 1860, 1867 and 1870, it became more liberal. The Second Empire was also a period of increased economic activity overseas. Consulates founded in North America, including the one in St. John's, Newfoundland, served as important instruments of economic policy. The Stations Navales, naval squadrons tasked with looking after national interests abroad and reporting on local politics, patrolled the oceans. And as we see in the writings of naval officers such as the Prince de Joinville, third son of Louis-Philippe, the Station Navale de Terre-Neuve protected the fishery on the French Shore and the American coast. In 1870, Napoléon III declared war on Prussia but was defeated and took exile in England, where he died in 1873. His death marks the end of the monarchist governments and the beginning of the Third Republic with a succession of presidents until 1904, the year of the last agreement between France and Great Britain concerning the Newfoundland fishery. Throughout all these political changes, the French continued to write about Newfoundland. Within such a huge body of literature, let us consider six recurring subjects: natural history, the fishing industry, aboriginal peoples and the French Shore, St. John's, public health and industrial development.

## NATURAL HISTORY

The earliest writers were naturalists and medical practitioners of the Restoration and the July Monarchy influenced by Carl Linnaeus (1707-1778), the Swedish botanist and physician who devised a method of classifying plants and animals and incited his disciples to travel the globe collecting specimens — up to the middle of the nineteenth century, most of them individual naturalists collecting plants and exotic animals. The first to visit Newfoundland was Auguste Bachelot de La Pylaie, who made voyages there in 1816 and 1819. During this time, he collected a large variety of plants but also 24 mammals, 70 birds, 34 fish, 46 mollusks, 60 insects, and many other specimens, including minerals.<sup>3</sup> Without government support, Bachelot de La Pylaie was obliged to limit his research, but he enriched the Muséum d'Histoire Naturelle in Paris with many new specimens, and he is known today for his description of vegetation on the banks of a river flowing into Hare Bay, published in *Mémoires de la Société linnéenne*, as well as for his observations of Bay St. George.

Another category of naturalist was the physician or surgeon associated with the Station Navale. We meet, for example, Jean-Jacques Bergeron, a surgeon interested in the curative properties of local plants who had published from 1817 to 1820, in *Annales maritimes et coloniales*, the nomenclature of specimens found along the coasts of Senegal, Guyana, the West Indies and the United States. *Annales mari-*

*times et coloniales* is especially interesting for students of Newfoundland. Published under the auspices of the Ministère de la Marine, it provided in the first section the laws, regulations and instructions related to maritime administration, as well as the movements of military and civilian personnel. But the second part, which often featured Newfoundland, was a kind of bulletin board where the mariner could find professional information related to the art of navigation, geography, naval hygiene, colonial matters and natural history. We discover here some early natural history in the notes of another Linnean, the surgeon Philippe Michelet, who succeeded Bachelot de La Pylaie in his commentary on curative plants of the west coast. Michelet modestly describes his observations as of “little interest” in comparison with those of his celebrated predecessor.<sup>4</sup> But he was more interested in the curative plants used by aboriginals in Bay St. George, where he says he encountered “an old sailor of Saint-Malo” who had settled there (perhaps a deserter) and shocked him with news of the July Revolution.<sup>5</sup>

The second section of *Annales maritimes et coloniales* also contained travel narratives and voyages of exploration. Here we find accounts of sinkings and shipwrecks like that of the fishing vessel *La Nathalie*, published under the name of her second mate.<sup>6</sup> This mariner survived a sinking in White Bay on 29 May 1826 but was not rescued until 17 June. Thus, his narrative is cast in the tradition of survival literature, a variant of the novel of terror in vogue at the time. The wreck of *La Nathalie* belongs to a set of fictional conventions whereby a group of unfortunates do everything in their power to ensure their survival before being rescued by generous strangers. But this time, the narrator was an actual survivor, and it offered the same appeal as that of individuals abandoned on desert islands, lacking only the preoccupation with philosophy or religion. In the same fashion, readers were moved by accounts of the seal hunt, in which the French were not permitted to participate. To them, it was a brutal ritual: to use an expression of Lieutenant Ernest-Ange Marquer of the Station Navale in 1884, an activity reminiscent of a bogeyman at the threshold of a nursery.<sup>7</sup> Marquer creates with great emotion the spectacle of female seals returning to their nesting places but abandoning them once they find palpitating carcasses.

## THE FISHING INDUSTRY

A second preoccupation, the working conditions of the fishing industry, is given considerable attention because of the increase in fishermen working in the North Atlantic. The Prince de Joinville, who in 1840 commanded the frigate *la Belle-Poule*, despatched to Sainte-Hélène to bring back Napoléon’s ashes, and visited Newfoundland the next year in the same vessel. He was one of the first to raise the need for international control of the fishery, particularly after the advent of parliamentary government in Newfoundland in 1832. He writes, “As soon as an electoral

platform was needed, that platform became the reclaiming of the national soil. It sets fire to the passions and one day will fire the blood.”<sup>8</sup> The writer who treats the fishery most fully, however, is the liberal journalist Henri-Émile Chevalier, exiled for his anti-bonapartist activities but allowed to return after the amnesty granted by Napoléon III in 1860. Arriving in St. John’s in 1853, he is interested not only in the monetary but also the human price paid for a meal of fish: the toll taken by the rough living conditions and rough weather, as well as the physical challenge of the fishing techniques practiced on the high seas.<sup>9</sup>

### ABORIGINAL PEOPLES AND THE FRENCH SHORE

A third subject concerns the customs of aboriginal peoples and the small but growing European population installed on the west coast. François Cornette de Venancourt opens up the subject in *Annales maritimes et coloniales*, where he speculates about the existence of the Beothuk, considered extinct at the time. Eugène Ney, son of Michel Ney, Napoleon’s famous marshal, explores this more deeply after a trip to Newfoundland, describing his meeting with two Indians (one of whom spoke French) sent by William Epps Cormack to find where the Beothuk had gone, how many were left, and whether friendly relations could be established with them. Moreover, he observes how the aboriginal population had been reduced, many of them killed by English settlers. More extensively, Philippe Michelet gives us the first observations of the Micmac at Bay St. George: the excellent state of their teeth, which they retained well into their old age, their very good personal hygiene (despite *un odeur insupportable*), the clothing of their children and their knowledge of curative plants. He is also struck by their devotion to Catholicism.<sup>10</sup> In 1880, Henri Jouan, a retired naval officer, also becomes interested in the survival of the Beothuk and speculates that if there were survivors, they must have fled to Labrador.<sup>11</sup>

As for the Newfoundland settlers who had gradually encroached on the French Shore, Constant Carpon, a surgeon of the merchant marine who practiced during the fishing season for twenty-five years, was probably the most experienced observer of their domestic life, and his *Voyage à Terre-Neuve* (1852) consolidates all the observations of the preceding years. It was Carpon who described in greatest detail the beginnings of civil society among the permanent settlers and the rapport established between French fishing captains and the *gardiens*, Newfoundland inhabitants recruited to protect their fishing establishments over the winter. “When you recognize *gardiens* worthy of your confidence,” he writes, “you leave them, before you go, all kinds of provisions: butter, fat, flour, biscuit, cider, wine, spirits, lines and nets. These provisions, together with their daily hunt, help them get through the winter.”<sup>12</sup> Carpon is also interested in their marriage traditions, as well as other social customs practiced in harbours remote from St. John’s, for in general, the people of west coast would marry each other by swearing on the Bible and then awaiting

the arrival of a priest to confirm it. Fluent in English, he was well-informed about Europeans and aboriginals alike. Thus, his *Voyage à Terre-Neuve*, a collection of what were considered exotic practices and *notions curieuses*, addresses itself to a broad readership. A naval officer influenced by Carpon, N. O'Brig, was the first to mention a separate group he refers to as the *Jacotar*, an offspring of immigrant Acadians and Micmacs. "He speaks a hybrid French hybrid like himself," he writes, "which he emphasizes in stringing out the vowels, and he misuses certain inflections of the voice that seem to have been borrowed from the dialects of northern France."<sup>13</sup>

After Carpon, the fullest study of customs and institutions in Newfoundland was produced by the Comte de Gobineau. A partisan of the Bourbons dethroned in 1830, Gobineau was in 1849 *chef de cabinet* for Alexis de Tocqueville, and in 1859 he spent several months in Newfoundland as a member of an international commission interpreting French fishing rights. His *Voyage à Terre-Neuve* (1861) makes the most insightful and thoughtful observations of all the French visitors of the nineteenth century. Upon his arrival, he observes that the French Shore is no longer French but is populated by around 1,500 inhabitants who have, to use his word, "seized" the place. However, like other French writers, he idealizes this illegal community as an Arcadia, a society of simple customs and a tranquil but humdrum happiness.<sup>14</sup> The only civil authority at this time, he notes, is the commander of the Station Navale, for the settlers themselves live without need of a magistrate or policeman; but according to Gobineau, they are the most honest people in the world. As for the authorities at St. John's, who had adopted a system of responsible government in 1855, he respects their desire for independence and the good relations they maintain with the French. He is also one of the first to point out the significant role of the Roman Catholic Church in political life, especially the power of the Bishop of St. John's, and raises the alarm about a possible union with the other British colonies in North America, for it would change considerably the future of Newfoundland's relations with the French.<sup>15</sup>

In 1867, the same alarm is sounded by another naval officer, Édouard-Polydore Vanéechout of the Station Navale, in an article published under the name Édouard du Hailly. Vanéechout is struck by the condition of the inhabitants he encounters on the west coast, whom he refers to as the "lost children of the Anglo-Saxon race."<sup>16</sup> He is intrigued by the fact that they live a rather primitive existence, without any semblance of authority or civil society, and outlines in some detail the services rendered by chaplains of the French fleet to a population without benefit of clergy. This is made especially clear, he says, after French warships have arrived for several seasons without a chaplain. Everywhere they stop, the next chaplain to arrive is overwhelmed by what he calls a formidable backlog of baptisms and marriages waiting to be done, not necessarily in that order.<sup>17</sup> The perils of impending political change and its possible influence on French rights after Confederation is also raised by Olivier de Carné in an article published under the name Oliver de Ceinmar in *Le Correspondant*. Raising the question of whether the French have the exclusive

right to fish on the French Shore, Carné observes that Newfoundland has not yet decided to enter Confederation but emphasizes the need to resolve the question before it becomes a *fait accompli*, especially because the French fishery, which seemed to be collapsing from the lack of control, was running the risk of abandonment by French outfitters. It would be preferable, he says, to abandon part of the presumed “exclusive” right and reserve certain fishing grounds for French fishermen alone. By this means, the French would lose part of their right but not interfere with Newfoundland’s development as a country.<sup>18</sup>

Perhaps the most aesthetic observer on the French Shore was Lieutenant Louis Koenig, embarked in the *Clorinde* in 1885 and 1886. Koenig left a collection of drawings and watercolours of the harbours he visited and an article published in the journal *Tour du monde* that again takes up the idea of the west coast as an Arcadia. For Koenig, as for the French fishermen, to be a Newfoundlander at this time was to be Irish or *Canadien* (Micmac). He finds in particular that the Irish are a simple people with what he calls a sturdy faith and an extreme conviction often pushed to the level of intolerance.<sup>19</sup>

His shipmate, Julien Thoulet, though a scientist, gives full rein to his romantic temperament in an article published in the *Revue maritime et coloniale*, later developed in a small classic of Newfoundland travel literature, *Un voyage à Terre-Neuve* (1891). Thoulet’s excursion to Bonne Bay is yet another pastoral portrait of an Arcadia, for having met the head of a family living in a cabin in the woods, he turns philosopher and represents him as an example of romantic individualism. He is also captivated, like all the French mariners, by the procession of spring icebergs that charm but terrify at the same time. Thoulet describes these in detail as immense sculptures composed of blue-like strata and punctured with romantic hollows and caverns where the light shapes the shadows with incomparable softness.<sup>20</sup> He also recounts with great humour, drawing on his reading of the classics, the mock-epic battles waged against the formidable mosquito, an irritant that every French writer complained about.<sup>21</sup> And his encounter with the dead in the cemetery at l’Anse-à-Bois gives him an opportunity to reflect upon life and death. On this coast, Thoulet was followed by André Salles, a commissioner of the Navy, who adds his own hymn to the glories of the picturesque in an article published by the Alpine Club in 1890.<sup>22</sup>

## ST. JOHN’S

In the course of the nineteenth century, these writers became more and more engaged with a fourth subject: the city of St. John’s. Eugène Ney describes the city as early as 1828, when there were only 11,000 inhabitants. After Newfoundland had acquired responsible government, it was the seat of an administration at the head of which, according to Ney, the governor made a show of *un grand luxe*, a small ver-



sion of the English court.<sup>23</sup> By the time the writer Bénédict-Henry Révoil arrived in 1849, the city had grown. After a dinner given by another governor, Révoil describes a dance he attended just below Fort Townsend, in a wooden house lit by Chinese lanterns. During each break in the music, he tells us, both men and women went to a corner to quench their thirst with a glass of rum, which the women especially tossed off without batting an eyelash.<sup>24</sup> While he commanded the Station Navale de Terre-Neuve, Baron Clément de La Roncière Le Noury passed through St. John's in 1858. Invited by Governor Alexander Bannerman, he arrived at Government House in full naval regalia, only to find his host drunk. According to the visitor, Bannerman was in the habit of drinking once a day on even days, twice a day on uneven days, and all day long on Sundays in order to sanctify himself "according to the English style."<sup>25</sup>

Of all the travel books describing St. John's in the nineteenth century, the most entertaining is *Terre-Neuve et les Terre-neuviennes* (1886), by the young Henri de La Chaume, son of the French vice-consul. De La Chaume does not simply write about women. He casts an ironic eye over the habits and pretensions of a small colonial society and goes to the very heart of the St. John's frame of mind as he explores the beginnings of a new self-awareness. De La Chaume understands very well the variable climate of Newfoundland but also the way the weather is rationalized by local people. He is also amused by the increase in temperance societies, since everywhere he goes he is offered sherry or port. He presents with a certain condescension the social life and courting practices of the *petite bourgeoisie* of St. John's after having invitations to the homes of young ladies, and with his awareness of the diminished role of the clergy in France during the various changes of government, he is fascinated by the influence of the clergy of all denominations, especially the Catholic bishop, Thomas Joseph Power. Equally, he finds the clergy more tolerant than at home and remarks that they remain on good terms with each other in the midst of a half Catholic, half Protestant population. And he well understands the religious and conservative mentality of the city. The men are rather ignorant, he observes, and have no idea of how to employ their intelligence, whereas the women are more cultivated.<sup>26</sup> He is also interested in the construction of the railroad, symbol of the government's progressive policy of exploiting the forests and mines in the interior.

## PUBLIC HEALTH

As a fifth subject, physicians and surgeons of the Station Navale concentrate on problems of health, especially those brought on by tuberculosis. In a report rendered after the fishing season of 1890, Dr. Aristide Jan declares that he is impressed by the level of hygiene at the hospital in St. John's but is worried about the living conditions of permanent inhabitants on the west coast. Often malnourished and liv-



ing in the noxious atmosphere of overheated houses, women and children were falling victim to various kinds of sickness. What happens next Jan recounts in some detail. Like so many naval physicians and surgeons before him, he had been called upon to care for local women with uterine infections after childbirth. He reports that children being nourished by their mothers stayed anaemic in the earliest years, and many died of malnutrition. In the daily struggle the survivors undergo, they barely reached the normal stage of development. Having had occasion to examine numerous children on the French Shore, Jan also diagnosed many more cases of scrofula than normal. In spite of the existing theory that it was hereditary, he speculates whether their anaemia might be due to deficiencies of diet and the rigours of long winters spent in a confined space — all of this before the understanding of vitamins.<sup>27</sup>

In the late nineteenth century, the prevalence of tuberculosis preoccupied medical commentators. This especially concerned Dr. Georges Martine, the physician in attendance during the season of 1892, who launched in *Archives de médecine navale et coloniale* a formal warning about the risk of an epidemic. For the physicians of the Station Navale, it was the living habits rather than the climate that brought on tuberculosis: the premature weaning of children, bottle feeding, long periods in overheated houses, the lack of fresh air, dietary deficiencies and the lack of outdoor exercise. The same observations would be emphasized by Newfoundland physicians during the next fifty years, during which time tuberculosis became one of the principal causes of mortality. Even before the effects of vitamin deficiencies were known, Martine describes the symptoms associated with it: anaemia accompanied by pallor, dyspepsia, painful menstruation, neuralgia, and so on. “Anemia,” he says, “is the first hidden stage of the long drama leading to tuberculosis and leads to a wasting away of the body and the mind.”<sup>28</sup> For this reason, French physicians considered the Newfoundland climate a menace. Martine recommends that sailors with certain tendencies be prevented from exposure to it and calls for the elimination of any crew member who might present suspicious symptoms. Martine’s intuitions are confirmed several years later by Dr. Henri Gazeau, who describes in the *Revue maritime* other illnesses common to Newfoundland, such as infant mortality, diphtheria, chronic rheumatism, scarlet fever and typhoid.<sup>29</sup>

## INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT

Finally, there is the matter of industrial development. Despite these drawbacks, the signs of industrial progress were too strong to ignore. One such sign was the landing of the transatlantic cable in 1866 and the subsequent telegraph network established between Europe and North America with stations in Newfoundland and St. Pierre. The life of the *câbliste* at St. Pierre is entertainingly sketched by Frédéric Rossel, later a pioneer of the French automobile industry, in *Mémoires de la Société d’émulation de Montbéliard* in 1897, the 400th anniversary of John Cabot’s voy-

age.<sup>30</sup> The Cabot anniversary gave Newfoundlanders an occasion to celebrate, but at the same time, it started a controversy over where Cabot had landed and provided ample subject matter for a spate of articles in the popular and academic press, especially those written by Henry HARRISSE, who has told us much of what we know today about the voyages of John and Sebastian Cabot.<sup>31</sup> Another subject was mining. In 1894, the great French geologist Louis de Launay, who had been involved in the discovery of gold in the Transvaal, commented on mining exploration in Newfoundland.<sup>32</sup> At that time, the island was producing copper, but it had just begun to extract pyrite and slight quantities of lead and nickel. There were also traces of gold, antimony and iron, as well as coal and asbestos.

Mining exploration gave a new complexion to Anglo-French negotiations according to Wilfrid de Fonvielle, a leftist who had participated in the Revolution of 1848 and who had been deported to Algeria after the *coup d'état*. Fonvielle notes in 1900 that a new railway system had been constructed across the interior to facilitate the mining and paper industries, not to transport the population. He is especially interested in the potential for pulp and paper. "The public taste for pulp literature, exploited in the newspapers, is so developed," he writes, "that the publishers are threatened by a shortage of paper."<sup>33</sup> According to Fonvielle, Newfoundland was experiencing a *grande révolution industrielle* just at the time when North America was being attached to Europe by telegraph communications. The mining industry was just getting under way, but already exports had begun. He takes the liberty of predicting that the island might contain deposits of oil and gas and regrets that the Treaty of Utrecht had long ago given control of these resources to Britain.

In 1890, the anarchist Élisée Reclus, exiled after the *coup d'état* of 1851, again brings up the refusal of Newfoundland to enter Confederation; however, according to him, the question was being kept open, and people never stop talking about it. More important, he picks up signs of the new Newfoundland nationalism: the export of species other than cod, the passing of the Bait Act in 1888 (which prohibited the export of bait to St. Pierre and Miquelon so as to offset the premiums paid to fishermen by the French government) and the growth of new towns outside St. John's. He also notes the beginnings of mining on the shores of Notre Dame Bay, especially the extraction of copper.<sup>34</sup> The officers of the Station Navale tell us also of the commercial whaling industry at St. Lawrence and the cod farming undertaken at Dildo.<sup>35</sup>

The writer who most optimistically describes the new industrial development in Newfoundland is Robert de Caix, the celebrated columnist of the *Journal des débats* who, in 1904, was sent on a mission of enquiry into the *entente cordiale* by which France had abandoned the fishing rights acquired with the Treaty of Utrecht. He writes, "Here, everything breathes confidence, the certainty of a wider future. Taking into account the resources of this country, one could say that Newfoundland has been benefiting for several years from what they call on this side of the Atlantic 'un boom'."<sup>36</sup> The cod fishery, as well as the seal and whale fisheries, were flourish-

ing. Scientific advances had made it possible for cold storage facilities to be built. Newfoundland had become interested in its interior, constructing a railway to stimulate the wood and mining industries. Such is the feeling of confidence, he asserts, that Newfoundlanders are not interested in finding a place within Confederation. They are pursuing their national destiny on their own terms.<sup>37</sup>

Finally, let us consider the geographer Robert Perret, who arrived in 1907 to conduct research for his doctoral thesis at the Sorbonne. Perret's travel journal, published in *Le Correspondant*, deals with the social, political and commercial life of Newfoundland, in particular the Avalon Peninsula. Like his forerunner, Henri de La Chaume, he is astonished by the lack of overt class divisions and impressed by the spirit of cooperation. "That," he says, "is the strength of Anglo-Saxon countries."<sup>38</sup> Thus, he discovers in St. John's that a conservative has written the union statutes and that Catholic girls sometimes sing the service at the Anglican church. Here, ideological differences which would have divided the French are less important than private opinions, he observes, and ideas less important than people. And he asks a difficult question still asked today: "What is the difference in Newfoundland between the terms *liberal* and *tory*?"<sup>39</sup>

Perret's subsequent book *La Géographie de Terre-Neuve* is the most thorough French study of Newfoundland at this time, for Perret was the first of the French writers to examine closely the identity of Newfoundlanders and their self-awareness as a people. Although they are distinguished from each other by their beliefs, he finds them unified by their common pursuit of the fishing industry, except at St. John's, which has now reached a population of 30,000. He is also struck by differences of idiomatic expression, by the variety accents, and by the English and Irish folkloric traditions that have survived. Even if Newfoundland is not yet a state, he reports, St. John's has given up its European frame of mind: these dwellings shelter attitudes shaped in "the American mould."<sup>40</sup> And he is aware of another new phenomenon: a diaspora of Newfoundlanders living in the United States. These expatriates remain in touch with their families and will return, he predicts, once they have made their fortunes.

It is impossible to summarize here all the elements of French writing in the nineteenth century. However, for anyone interested in Newfoundland as a place, this body of literature presents us with a portrait of a country full of buoyance and promise prior to the devastation of the Great War, the ensuing economic disasters of the 1920s and the onset of commission of government in 1933. Moreover, it represents a body of writing by French visitors with no territorial claim and differs both culturally and discursively from that of their British imperialist counterparts.

Notes

- <sup>1</sup>Edward W. Said, *Orientalism*, 19-20.
- <sup>2</sup>Hayden White, *Tropics of Discourse*, 121-22.
- <sup>3</sup>See Auguste-Jean-Marie Bachelot de La Pylaie, "Notice sur l'île de Terre-Neuve et quelques îles voisines." *Mémoires de la Société linnéenne*, 2 (1825): 417-547.
- <sup>4</sup>Philippe Michelet, "Notes recueillies dans un voyage à l'île de Terre-Neuve," 74.
- <sup>5</sup>Michelet, 70.
- <sup>6</sup>See Gaud Houiste, *Naufrage du navire La Nathalie*, 1827.
- <sup>7</sup>Ernest-Ange Marquer, "Conférence sur l'île de Terre-Neuve," 31.
- <sup>8</sup>Prince de Joinville. *Vieux souvenirs, 1818-1848*, 239.
- <sup>9</sup>H. Émile Chevalier, "Terre-Neuve: souvenirs de voyage," 610-26.
- <sup>10</sup>Michelet, 68-74.
- <sup>11</sup>H. Jouan, "Terre-Neuve," 432.
- <sup>12</sup>C.-J.-A. Carpon, *Voyage à Terre-Neuve*, 122.
- <sup>13</sup>N. O'Brig, "Terre-Neuve," 218.
- <sup>14</sup>Joseph Arthur de Gobineau, *Voyage à Terre-Neuve*, 165.
- <sup>15</sup>Gobineau, 250-55.
- <sup>16</sup>Edouard du Hailly, "Six mois à Terre-Neuve," 954.
- <sup>17</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>18</sup>Olivier de Ceinmar, "Les nouveaux états britanniques et les pêcheries françaises dans l'Amérique du Nord," 542-43.
- <sup>19</sup>L. Koenig, "Le 'French Shore' (souvenirs de campagne à Terre-Neuve)," 386.
- <sup>20</sup>Julien-Olivier Thoulet, *Un Voyage à Terre-Neuve*, 83.
- <sup>21</sup>Thoulet, 95-97.
- <sup>22</sup>See A. Salles, A., "Autour de Terre-Neuve," *Annuaire du Club alpin français*, 17 (1890): 379-91.
- <sup>23</sup>Eugène Ney, "Voyage à Terre-Neuve," 365.
- <sup>24</sup>Bénédict-Henry Révoil, *La grande pêche aux États-Unis*, 150-51.
- <sup>25</sup>Clément de La. Roncière Le Noury, *Correspondance intime de l'amiral de la Roncière Le Noury avec sa femme et sa fille (1855-1871)*, 1, 141-42.
- <sup>26</sup>Henri de La Chaume, *Terre-Neuve et les Terre-Neuviennes*, 51-62.
- <sup>27</sup>Aristide-Pierre-Marie Jan, "La division navale de Terre-Neuve pendant l'année 1890," 132-34.
- <sup>28</sup>Georges-Benjamin-Edouard Martine, "La tuberculose à Terre-Neuve," 373.
- <sup>29</sup>Paul Gazeau, "Terre-Neuve : la pêche et les pêcheurs," 442-47.
- <sup>30</sup>See Frédéric Rossel, "Un mois à Saint-Pierre de Terre-Neuve," 467-97.
- <sup>31</sup>See, for example, Henry HARRISSE, *L'atterrage de Jean Cabot au continent américain en 1498* (1897).
- <sup>32</sup>See L. de Launay, "Les richesses minérales de Terre-Neuve." *Annales des mines*, 9<sup>e</sup> série, bulletin n° 5 (1894): 395-400.
- <sup>33</sup>W. de Fonvielle, "La France à Terre-Neuve," 776.
- <sup>34</sup>Élisée Reclus, "Terre-Neuve (Newfoundland) et ses bancs," 653-63.
- <sup>35</sup>See Jean Lucas, "Une baleinerie de Terre-Neuve à Saint-Laurent (côtes sud)," *Revue maritime*, 165 (1905): 147-57.

<sup>36</sup>Robert de Caix, *Terre-Neuve, Saint-Pierre et le French Shore: la question des pêcheries et le traité du 8 avril 1904*, 9.

<sup>37</sup>De Caix, 17-18.

<sup>38</sup>Robert Perret, "Journal de voyage à Terre-Neuve," 1289.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid.

<sup>40</sup>Robert Perret, *La géographie de Terre-Neuve*, 317.

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