

"A Word in Your Ear": An Appreciation of G.M. Story (1927-94) - Friend, Scholar, Newfoundlander

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“A Word in Your Ear”¹: An Appreciation of G.M. Story (1927-94) – Friend, Scholar, Newfoundlander

ROBERT PAINE

1

YOU LISTENING, GEORGE?

You recall your address to the 1987 Newfoundland Heritage Conference? There especially, I think, you reveal much about yourself and what Newfoundland means to you. You open with personal recall tied to Newfoundland: “When I first came home to teach in Newfoundland — that was in 1950, and home for good three or four years later — what we now call heritage work was barely begun.” But enterprises *were* afoot. You said:

I suppose, looking back on it all, that one of the things behind it was a consciousness that we were living at something like the end of an age in Newfoundland, and that change was in the air, a sharper than usual sense of ‘time present and time past’, and the real possibility of an irreparable breach between them (Story 1987a:1).

Actually, I’ve asked several people in what century they’d place you; although it would sound phoney, at best, if asked of just about anybody else, nobody seemed at all surprised at the question. One person said, “Victorian nineteenth century of books and Empire,” another “the eighteenth century of intellectual elegance,” and another “a Renaissance man,” and so on. For me, “Elizabethan” is the imagery (more even than “Renaissance”) that ties together your intellectual quests with your bonding to Newfoundland. Imagine, then, my delight, when reading the Heritage address, to find “a modest parallel” drawn with sixteenth century England. This is how you put it:

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It has often occurred to me as I've lectured on the literature and society of Elizabethan England that [the] real precursors of that English movement were scholars, antiquaries, collectors, local historians, rescuers of old documents ... so that it can almost be said that the most brilliant discovery of a brilliant age was the discovery of the English past by English men and women (Story 1987a:2).

And this is how I see you in this: as the early Tudors put together a nation out of their past and those who followed circumnavigated and explored (and plundered) the world as Englishmen, so you, fired already, as a boy, by fellow-Newfoundlander P.K. Devine, an early "Tudor,"² explored the world of Newfoundland. Whatever other enterprises you had on hand, that "world" was never out of sight, its circumnavigation and annotation never ceased. Everything in it was of intrinsic interest: there was always a story to unravel, to record, and to tell.

So you have been a man with a profound sense of place, and this depended, you knew, on there being no breach between time present and time past. As a scholar, one sees this place-and-time in your early pieces (while at Oxford and with Helen Gardner) on 16th century poets and clerics — notably Lancelot Andrewes, "most learned and austere of Jacobean bishops" (Story 1984:20); then Raleigh and Erasmus; and with your return to your birthplace,³ the gradual (towards total) absorption in Newfoundland time and place.

Befitting the Elizabethan, you were always looking for opportunities (and many came your way) of extending your interdisciplinary range. For you who would explain "a world," interdisciplinary study was *sine qua non*. As early as 1957⁴ and in collaboration with a university chemist, you signalled what you saw as the "distressing, even dangerous" implications of the "divorce between the humanities and the sciences" and of "the overspecialization and fragmentation of knowledge" (Forbes & Story 1957:594,597). And of course, there were coterie of colleagues and collaborators from near and afar: I dare not begin to name them back to you, for they were legion.

For you, access to the time and place that is Newfoundland is through the spoken (or remembered) *words*. Further into your Heritage address, you tell us:

One of my occupational disorders is the odd habit of collecting and scribbling lists of words on every conceivable occasion, and seeing what they mean, or how they change, and branch out in all sorts of often surprising ways (Story 1987a:5).

Indeed, as T.S. Eliot wrote of Lancelot Andrewes, you too

take a word and derive the world from it; squeezing and squeezing the word until it yields a full juice of meaning which we would never have supposed any word to possess (cited in Story 1967: xxxi).

I'd say that in your hands (and those of your colleagues), words are the sap — the vital juices — of Newfoundland coves and closets. But you are also keenly aware how the juices — these words — have been distilled through exigencies of history, so at an early date, you grounded yourself in the history of the Island.

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In two pioneering essays, amply supported by nineteenth century sources, you sketched the evolution or the changes in Newfoundland fisheries through the centuries. Cod may be the staple, but you showed how there have been quite different ways of pursuing and harvesting it, each with its own set of ecologic, economic and political consequences. You wrote of “the tenacious life of the harassed communities” (Story 1968:15). It's a story of “deliberately retarded colonization”: the “villages, such as they were, grew surreptitiously under the shadow of official British disapproval and even harassment as much by fellow-Englishmen as by foreign foe” (Story 1969:12). But settlement persisted, and, as you recognized from the beginning of your studies, this “island-arrested society” became “a rich repository of European customs and folkways on the very threshold of the New World” (Story 1969:12).

You told about the early “primacy of the ‘dry’ fishery” (Story 1968:15); the shift from “the great English ship-fishery” to “increased independence of the resident fishery” (Story 1968:23) and, also in the nineteenth century, the rise of the seal and Labrador fisheries — the seal fishery “actually placed cash in the hands of a people normally paid ‘in kind’” (Story 1968:27); the invention of the cod trap towards the end of that same century; and then, of still greater social consequence (Story 1968:21), the rise of the fresh-fish industry in the late 1940s.

However, by 1966, 40 per cent of the fish-landings in Newfoundland were made by deep-sea trawlers and you don't falter when it comes to the likely consequence: “the continued survival of the small-boat fishery and its dependent communities must therefore remain in question ... Once again, these settlements are ‘odd men out’; at odds with outside economic forces which, this time, seem likely to prove more decisive” (Story 1969:32-33). And you didn't just sit still on the issue: with the economic historian, the late David Alexander, you produced an important (but unduly neglected) Report critical of fishery licensing policy (Alexander & Story 1974).

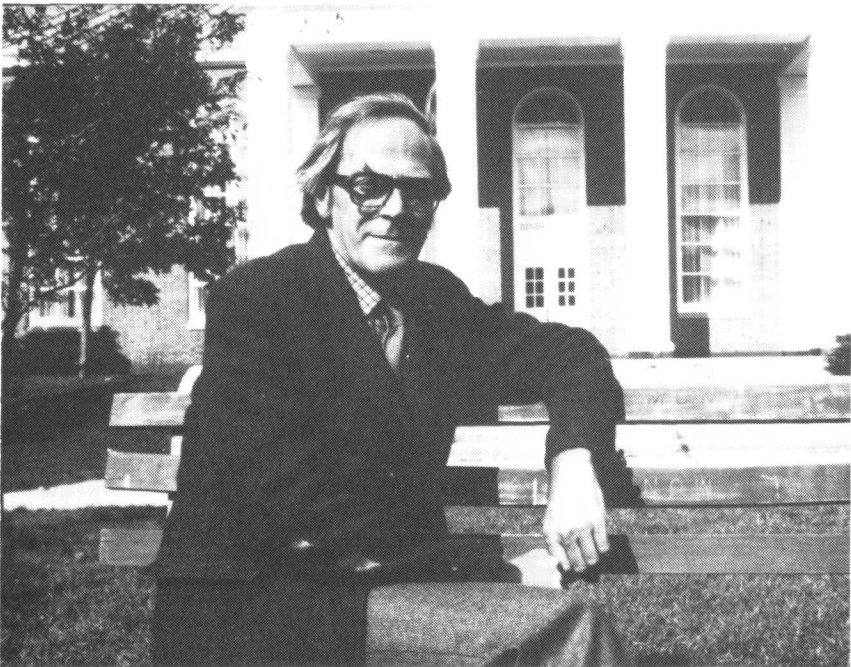
Some see romanticism overhanging your celebration of Newfoundland culture, especially of its outports. More to the point, I think you recognized the extent of *illusion* in what we call “culture” and, furthermore, that Newfoundland village life is remarkable for the illusion of *richness* under such harsh and sparse conditions. I don't know whether you'd go as far as W.I. Smith who wrote of the “touch of the absurd” about what has become the epic voyage of Sir Humphrey Gilbert in

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1583 (in Bower 1979:iii); but the irony in the event, at any rate, you acknowledged.⁵ Again, rather than follow earlier Newfoundland writers (including Devine, Prowse, Anspach) in accepting that Sir Francis Bacon compared the fisheries of Newfoundland and the gold mines of Mexico and Peru, you, “with a grim determination,” subjected the matter to scholarly scrutiny. You concluded that not only did Bacon not make the comparison but “I could not even find a single reference to Newfoundland” in his writings (Story 1966:17,18).

All this is not by way of saying you don’t see romance in time’s footprints. Of course you do, and nearer home it is the better, e.g. “The Battle Behind Story’s Barn In The Fight For St. John’s, 1695” (Story n.d.). But you don’t fudge the record to make things bolder and grander than they actually were. You’ve been no more a romanticist, I’d say, than is a naturalist who marvels at the rich diversity of life which he or she attempts to record.

Newfoundland may be the oldest settled part of English-speaking Canada, but you don’t let us forget that through centuries it was but a “twilight world, half-way, metaphorically, between Europe and the New World,” and so the word *Newfoundlander* would denote “a West Country fishing vessel ... a migratory fisherman ... a dog; but not until the late eighteenth century was it applied to a native of the island” (Story 1972b:167).



G.M. Story

For a couple of centuries, then, the words that were to start the making of a Newfoundland lexicon didn't take to the land but — with exceptions — stayed out on the water, out at sea. Indeed,

The view from the sea is the only view we catch of Newfoundland in the sixteenth century, and indeed much later than that... Until the very end of the nineteenth century there was scarcely a town or village in Newfoundland out of sight or smell of the sea (Story 1987b:43,46).

The Basilica in St. John's and many a parish church and country graveyard are where they are for "the view from the sea." What, then, you asked yourself — as lexicographer-cum-ethnographer — has the *sea* meant to those who worked on it and lived by it?

Your labours with this enterprise, you tell us, began "when the late E.R. Seary and I ... spent long afternoons, armed with a powerful hand-lens, extracting place-names from the sixteenth-century maps of the Island" (Story 1987b:42). Ironically, some of the early maps depicted the Island as part of the mainland! This is because those who journeyed there came not to explore the coastline and settle and colonize but simply to fish and to return whence they came, loaded up to the gunwales. And the "place-names" were those of the sea and, not least, its bottom.

But back to the *sea* among those who *did* settle and became Newfoundlanders. You reveal another irony:

That word [*sea*] is itself, in Newfoundland, together with *ocean*, rather literary, except in its numerous frozen proverbial uses and its combinations: it is something far off, distant, beyond the immediate experience of men in small boats. *Sea* in Newfoundland, in one of those common nautical understatements, is commonly used of a sudden, lumpy and bloody-minded wave which may overturn a boat or drench its occupants. The common terms are *salt water* or simply *water*. To be a fisherman is to be *on the water*, and the more specific terms are those that designate different bodies of water: *bay, cove, reach, run, tickle*, and so on (Story 1987b:50).

You call attention to the importance of underwater features to the inshore fishermen. From Portugal Cove, Conception Bay, for example: *Where the Man Fell Over, Roof of the House, No Man's Land, Brock's Head, Horse Shoe, The Chair, Cook Room, Hanging Cliff, The Gulch Where the Vessel was Lost, Stem and Stern* (Story 1987b:52; Story 1957:4). You instruct us how the suggestions of anecdote and accident about these names can mislead us as to their true importance. Their identification speaks to "hundreds of years of experience in actually locating concentrations of fish in specific, local inshore waters"; it draws upon knowledge of "water depths, composition of the bottom, season and fish species" (Story

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1987b:52-53). Then — the crucial operation — the precise location of the “unseen” underwater feature is fixed by triangulation with landmarks viewed from the water. Thus:

Holes, depth 16 feet, 100 feet from shore: marks — Bull’s head with saddle on Ferryland Head and Jimmy Mundy’s house with Trace’s Head (Story 1987b:53; see Small 1981).

Our colleagues, I’ve noticed, are particularly fond of “Notes from a Berry Patch,” your 1972 address to the Royal Society of Canada. ’Tis not hard to see why. Politely, as befitting the occasion, you say that you are putting “berry patch” into service as a metaphor to convey “the creativity of the traditional popular culture of Newfoundland” (Story 1972b:164). In fact, you blow a raspberry at the *Literary History of Canada* and its Upper Canada view of Newfoundlanders as “isolat[ed] ... from all humanizing influences except those that they could engender for themselves” (Bailey 1965:56; cited in Story 1972b:164). Worse still, such self-engendering quite escapes the literary historians for they confine themselves to the world of printed sources which at best offer but “an imperfect and fragmentary index of the *experience of life*” (Story 1972b:167; my emphasis). So (adapting Dr. Johnson) you tell the assembled academicians that cultural forms must be sought where they are used: among, for example, the “several hundred individual local Newfoundland poets who are known by name [but] whose work is familiar only to the immediate community or bay” (Story 1972b:170-71). You remind them that

[i]t is precisely this use of language on the lips of often unlettered Newfoundlanders — singing, story-telling, talking, or even swearing — which brings the linguist into direct contact with speech as art, and the student of our literary culture with what is, so far in Newfoundland, his primary material (Story 1972b:171-72).

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But your body and soul engaged with more than “outport Newfoundland.” You lived on Southside — “neither an outport nor St. John’s” (Story 1984:15). Prior to the harbour modernization programme of the 1950s, the Southside community included “fishermen, coopers, seal-skinners and other waterfront workers ... the unmarked grave of Shawnadithit, the last of the Beothuck people, lies near here too” (Story 1975a:42). It was there, you tell us, your maternal great-grandfather, Capt. the Hon. Edward White, sealing captain and shipbuilder, built his first house (it still stands, numbered as 313/315 Southside); a second and larger house (his sons, also sea captains, were raising large families) followed in the 1870s slightly to the west — today’s 335/337 Southside (Story 1975a:42-43).

Edward White, born at Tickle Cove, Bonavista Bay, came from three generations of fishermen, hailing “in the beginning” from Devon. It makes Judge Prowse — I’ll get to him in a minute — much of a Johnny-come-lately Newfoundlander. “We’re three generations off the flakes,” Janet Story chuckles. Labrador has a place, too. Richard White, fur-trader in Nain (around whom, you tell me, Harold Horwood modelled “The White Eskimo”) and a grandson of Edward White, especially fired the imagination — you made it quite clear — of the young George Story.⁶ I heard less about your paternal side. Grandfather George Philliskirk Story hailed from Yorkshire; he came out to St. John’s as a teacher, then became a Wesleyan Methodist with a congregation at the George Street church.⁷ He died early, leaving his widow, Elizabeth Steer, with young children to bring up.

St. John’s was dear to you. But there was ambivalence which I suspect you’d say was quite appropriate for a Southsider. As scholar *and* Southsider you could affect a pretty jaundiced view of “the curious little mercantile and colonial world of St. John’s”; still, there was Margaret Duley (1894-1968) with her “deadly ... eye for its unimaginative orthodoxies” (Story 1975b:16).⁸

As a Southside citizen, your caring for the city of St. John’s was, for the most part, demonstrated in determined battles with City Hall. For over four years you led the Southside Citizens Committee fight against the Arterial Road and, also in the 1970s, you presented the critical report of the Newfoundland Historic Trust concerning the city’s *Plan 91*: “the plan needs to be drastically amended” and “vigorously re-enforced” (Story 1972a:1-2).

Beyond St. John’s there was “Canada.” “So we survive,” you grudgingly conceded (Story 1978a:5). Your lack of enthusiasm, as a Newfoundlander, arose from a perception that “In Confederation we are not even in the position of a kept woman, which might have its own lugubrious pleasure; we are the poor cousin seated below the salt, occasionally encouraged to perform our ethnic make-work act” (Story 1978a:5-6). On balance, though, “it is better for us to be in Confederation than out of it if the country can realize itself as an ecology of cultures” (Story 1978a:6).

5

You brought speaking and writing together. You were not just the University Orator from 1960 on — you were a notable one.

[T]he orator speaks not primarily for himself but for his institution: his duty is to present, persuade, and celebrate, though it is permissible on occasion to reveal in a candidate grave flaws, such as a dislike of cats (Story 1984:vi).

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You remarked that this “minor genre within the field of rhetoric,” needs to be enlivened with an “element of play.” And play there was! As likely as not, you’d open by flinging a puzzle or riddle at Convocation:

Find Sir Alan Bullock in Wagner’s *Die Gotterdammerung!* Billy Browne, P.C., Q.C. in Bellini’s *I Puritani!* Or Anne Stine Ingstad in Window H. in Great Malvern Priory Church! (Paine 1985:44 from Story 1984:70,30, 40).

It wasn’t all high-brow. Your many orations, to local persons especially, demonstrate amply how your oratory owed as much to your earthly appreciation of your fellows as to your erudition and elegance.

But to return to Lancelot Andrewes for a moment. In *Editing Seventeenth Century Prose* you state your interest in Andrewes as “the investigation of textual transmission in the seventeenth century” (Story 1973a:17). Quite so. Yet my interest in your “Biographical Sketch” of the bishop is for its (in places) uncanny reflection of yourself. Make the appropriate substitutions (and enjoy them) and, here *you* are:

the most notable prose stylist among the scholars and divines appointed to produce the Authorized Version of the Bible, [for] twenty years he was at the very centre of affairs, in a powerful position to ‘mix influences of religion with designs of state.’ ... [A] career as Court preacher ... provided him with a milieu for the wit, intellectual brilliance, and high art of his sermons (Story 1967:xviii,xxi,xxv).

The Newfoundlander whom you seemed to admire above all others is Judge Prowse (Story 1971; Story 1972c).⁹ For all his crotchiness, he’s almost your personal hero — I think that’s the right word. And as with the bishop, so with the judge: much of what you write about him evokes (for me) images of yourself: fly fisherman, hunter of partridge and snipe in woods and marshes; droll humour; absence of flummery. I suppose that, in some ways, he was for you an enviably fearless and larger than life figure (though he appears not to have had your strain of deep generosity). Most important of all, there was a scholarly affinity tinged with ideology between you and him. In the first rank of Prowse’s own heroes were Raleigh and Bacon. And, most tellingly:

He [Prowse] looked in vain in the pages of Froude, Green and the other historians of Tudor and Stuart England for awareness of the immense importance of the Newfoundland colonial projects and, above all, the West Country-Newfoundland fishery, in the expansion of England...Hence his delighted emphasis [in his *A History of Newfoundland*] on the unromantic codfish, on salt and fishing-gear and boots and rum (Story 1971:22).

So it is no surprise that in your delightful article, "Guides to Newfoundland," the focus is not on the toffs from England who came over with gun and fishing-rod, but on their guides. Men such as Joseph Sylvester, the Micmac guide of W.E. Cormack¹⁰; Robert Saunders, of Glovertown, the guide of both F.C. Selous and J.G. Millais; and Robert Porter, the only "St. John's-man — or rather Southsider — to rank among the great names" (of the guides): Porter guided cricketer H. Hesketh Prichard and author G.M. Gathorne-Hardy (1980:19).

Again, for you, this was all part of the work of recording what you saw — and claimed — as your heritage. And of reclaiming it from the "below the salt" position where others would place it: "It sets my teeth on edge," you remonstrated, "that in the *Literary History of Canada*, [Johnny] Burke doesn't even get so much as a line. How do you study a literature seriously if you don't recognize its popular, regional figures?" (Anon 1979:6). More grievous still, Newfoundlanders themselves have been "hell bent on throwing the whole of our heritage out the window" and Outport students have had to learn "to speak 'Etobicoke' English" (Anon 1979:6).

6

And so we come to the *Dictionary of Newfoundland English* (DNE) as the *summum bonum*, bringing together the scholar, the patriot, the aesthete. You worked towards the DNE in the belief that about every word there is a story to tell, and that together, the words are trails to just about everything else. Hence the innumerable notes, essays, papers, addresses and reports with the DNE as the great "putting together" (with team work) of much of it. I have endeavoured to trace something of your progress with this enterprise.

April 1956 (an address to the St. John's branch of the Humanities Association of Canada): you speak of the dictionary as a "dialect dictionary," but already you are uncomfortable with the designation "dialect" and warn "against the popular view that a dialect is the curious and quaint word-lore of remote and isolated areas." What you hope the dictionary will show is "the ingenuity and humour in the national temperament" and you think it advisable "to illustrate meanings by the use of quotations. But there is an urgency: "this is the last chance we have to record Newfoundland dialect before it disappears" (Story 1956:3, 6,13).

The principal task on hand at that stage was deciding what words the dictionary should include and you listed the most important classes with examples of each.

June 1957 (address to the Canadian Linguistic Association in Ottawa): you don't see (as others likely did) the dictionary work as specialized. Far from it! The challenge is to draw together "such studies as cartography, geography, history, social anthropology and folklore...There is nothing for it but that the investigator shall compile his own miniature dictionary of Newfoundland biography, searching

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through the lives and journals of early explorers, missionaries and traders" (Story 1957:1,3).

Noting the way local speech "gives the experience of life on the Island ... frequently in lapidary words and phrases," you issued this warning:

Caution might be exercised by visiting sociologists and psychiatrists and educators, who attempt to make an equation of conceptual thinking and intelligence. Certainly the preference for the concrete and practical has not meant any lack of imaginative fancy, even beauty, in Newfoundland speech. And if anyone believes that a Newfoundlander without formal schooling lacks an adequate vocabulary, he should consider the ways in which the islander might call him a weak-minded fool (Story 1957:7).

It was a full presentation, generously garnished with Newfoundland words, though at that early date you had to "dwell more on what needs to be done rather than on what has actually been accomplished" (Story 1957:1). You were still without research funding.

August 1978 (progress report in *Regional Language Studies*):

At the end of October, 1977, W.J. Kirwin and I completed with the assistance of our colleagues the first, and major, round of editing out materials for the DNE. Experimental editing had been done in 1969-70 on small blocks of material (entries for K,Q,U,V and some others) even during our concentrated collecting period; but systematic writing of the entries began in 1973. We thought then that the work might possibly be completed within two or three years ... but, like many dictionary-makers before us, we found the work growing under our hands, fitted in, as it had to be, between the usual activities of academic careers. Yet the October 1977 date was notable for us because it meant that the whole work was before us in a cleanly-typed first draft on 4 1/2 x 8-inch slips, and we could proceed to 'perfect' our copy (Story 1978b:28).

December 1980 (progress report in *Regional Language Studies*):

According to present plans, the DNE will be a single volume of slightly under one thousand double-column pages, measuring 6 3/4 by 9 3/4 inches (Story & Kirwin 1980:22).

The DNE appeared in 1982, fulfilling twenty-eight years of collegial labour. "I don't think it could have been done before we started and not much later either," you told a reporter: an earlier start would have been sorely hampered by lack of easy access to outlying communities; a later start would have meant the loss of a generation of oldtimers' voices. "The dictionary," you explained, "will contain hundreds of items that Newfoundlanders under 35 will never have heard but which decades ago were still remembered and used" (Winter 1982:21). As it was, the

collection and preliminary classifications of the DNE material was done “manually” and the computer age arrived in time for the final stages — “so at both ends of the work we got it right,” you told me.¹¹

Then the laudatory reviews began to flow. For you who treasured Sir James Frazer’s classic work, and frequently drew on it for imagery in your university orations, fellow-Newfoundlander Sandra Gwyn’s avowal that “the *Dictionary of Newfoundland English* will be our *Golden Bough*” must have given you rare pleasure. Gwyn also wrote that the DNE “combine[s] consummate scholarship with a rare sense of fun and with emotional commitment” (Gwyn 1982:62), something that could never be said of the *Golden Bough*!

7

Knowing you has been one of the landmarks in my life. There has been a flow of time, no breach, between our first meetings and those in your last weeks twenty-nine years later: at 337 Southside in 1965 with Les Harris and Hugh Lilly, poring over a seachart marking the shipwrecks around the Avalon; at 335 Southside in 1994 in your book-lined study discussing *Shipping News* with Rex Murphy.

I remember For instance, when you were working on “The View from the Sea.” You quizzed me on what the anthropologists have written on the topic. I showed you some Brazilian research: it put a new twist on your Newfoundland material, you said. Or when I was in doubt over my parading the Saami lexicon on reindeer in a piece that I was writing. Your method of reassuring me was to put into the campus mail a long list of “finely discriminated terms” from the Newfoundland lexicon on seals along with a note: “Discount some of my comment as an enthusiast for lexicography — but don’t discount it too much.” You added the suggestion that I “look again” at C.M. Doughty’s *Travels in Arabia Deserta*: “Of course the old man was up to all sorts of things in his book, but I have a memory of his great skill in the ways in which, quite unmechanically, he handles this same problem” (letter 14 July 90). Which reminds me, we had planned, you and I, to team teach a cross-disciplinary course on “the old man.”

Lists! When W.H. Auden remarked that a delight in cataloguing things is one of the signs of a true poet, he could have been speaking of you. It meant you were always on the move, between the spoken and the written, between one item and another, one topic and the next.

Committees! I never properly registered the multiplicity of your institutional engagements within the university, provincially, nationally, and internationally. You were continually sought after and always available with help and advice. But you were not to be captured by any long-term executive office. Remember when David Alexander and I sat you down in that pub in Churchill Square and more or

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less demanded that you let your name be put forward as MUN president? You wouldn't hear of it.

You should know that people already speak of you as “legendary” — indeed that sobriquet has been attached to your name for some time. And as a Newfoundland legend (let me shuffle the centuries together here), you cut a quite unexpected figure with your sixteenth century mind, eighteenth century elegance and Edwardian *hauteur*! I never ceased to be amazed over how — whether people knew you or not — the presence you carried never made for distance. It simply charmed. Though (a cruel irony) I knew a couple of Newfoundland-born Memorial students who, so “charmed” were they, wouldn't credit that you were a Newfoundlander! You *had to be* an Englishman. Speaking of which, there was a blimpishness to you as well — the Falkland Islands (mis)adventure thrilled you: you wrote me about the re-kindling of the Dunkirk spirit!

Perhaps what matters most about all this is that you cherished adventure as well as reflection and urged both upon the rest of us.

It is strange indeed to be writing about you for others to read. Even to talk about you instead of *with* you is unsettling. Walking these days in the deciduous woods of Upper Canada — a landscape so very different from the Avalon (and we talked about that too) — I still find myself calling you up: “Must ask George about that!” “Wonder what George would think of this?” I imagine many of us will be doing so, on and off, for the remainder of our lives.

Notes

¹These are the words George Story inscribed in the copy of the *Dictionary of Newfoundland English* he gave me. For many of us, George will always be more than memory, so I write this *in memoriam* piece as though I'm speaking with George, friend to friend, about what I learned from him about himself and about Newfoundland — the two are not readily separable.

In one of his university orations for a candidate *honoris causa*, he asked “What needs to be said, that is not known to all of us?” (Story 1984:32). For the orator, this was but a rhetorical question; in composing this essay, however, it's been a nagging one for which, I now suppose, there is no one answer.

Perhaps it is not known to all of us that G.M. Story, D.Phil., was a Member of the Order of Canada, Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada, Fellow of the Royal Historical Society, and Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries; a recipient of the Molson Prize; member of the international editorial boards overseeing the publication of the Erasmus and Raleigh papers, and the New Oxford English Dictionary; member of the National Library Advisory Board and the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada; and at different times Chairman of the Newfoundland Arts Council, President of the Newfoundland Heritage Trust, and President of the Newfoundland Historical Society.

At Memorial University, he taught in the English Department since the early '50s and was appointed Henrietta Harvey Professor of English in 1979; University Orator from 1960; Secretary of Senate for many years; Chair of a dozen key university committees; author of

as many university reports; and a long-standing member of the Executive Committee of the Institute of Social and Economic Research and of its Editorial Advisory Committee.

At home on Southside, George was cherished by his mother (died 1972), his sister Janet, and Alice his wife. Alice — mother of their three children: Kate, Lachlan and Simon — herself a writer, was also his helpmate in his writing.

²“It is the traditions of a people that preserve the spirit of nationality” (Devine 1937:79)

³“Where talk is paramount, and everyday life is calamitously beautiful” (Story 1985:iii, citing his friend, the novelist Paul West, who lived in St. John’s for a while).

⁴Thus preceding, incidentally, C.P. Snow’s Rede Lecture, “The Two Cultures,” by two years. In 1973, Memorial University awarded Snow an honorary doctorate (Story gave the oration).

⁵Sailing into St. John’s harbour to proclaim English sovereignty, Gilbert found himself surrounded by men of fishing fleets, English and foreign, that had been coming there for generations (sounds familiar, doesn’t it?). To add to the irony: Gilbert, possessed by the enterprise of establishing an English settlement along the coast of North America, did not, in fact, have Newfoundland in mind, but a delayed departure from Plymouth in June caused him to abandon the more southerly crossing. And on the homeward crossing, in August, Gilbert was lost at sea along with most of the crew of his tiny flagship, the *Delight* (Bower 1979).

⁶And perhaps led to his interest in “the remarkable figure of George Cartwright [and] the Labrador setting of his enterprises in the second half of the eighteenth century” (Story 1981:23)?

⁷Of which his grandson, George Story, duly wrote the history (Story 1973b).

⁸Charmed by Duley, the young Story would watch her “dazzle and delight (and perhaps half-frighten) a room full of her contemporaries” (Story 1975b:16). For Duley herself, though, the colouring of these occasions was apparently rather different: “St. John’s?! As usual they sneered at me/ Thought me pretentious” (Buchanan n.d.:4).

⁹Prowse (1834-1914) was a first-generation Newfoundlander; his father was born in Torquay, Devon, and came out to St. John’s as a boy of ten, his mother’s family also hailed from Devon (Story 1971:17).

¹⁰In 1822 Cormack became the first European to walk across the interior of the Island; Story comments: “I like to think of [him] as the earliest Newfoundland pedestrian” (Story 1987b:47)!

¹¹For a further account, see my interview with Story and Kirwin (Paine 1982).

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