

Chapter 2

The Slender Thread Cast Off Migration and Reception in Newfoundland



When Michael and Mary Ryan were coming from County Wexford Ireland to Nfld. their first child was Born at sea. It was the year 1826. The boy was named Thomas Ryan... Michael Ryan... was drowned near Petty Harbour Motion, in the year 1830 on a sealing voyage. His wife Mary Ryan was left with 3 young children, Thomas who was born at sea, Michael and Timothy Ryan. After some years Mary Ryan Married again. Edward Coady also a native of County Wexford. They had a family of 2 sons and 1 daughter... They have many decedents at Cape Broyle, many places in Canada and also in the United States. Audio Sample



These homespun words, transcribed from the oral tradition by an elderly community historian in 1971, provide a skeletal story of an Irish woman who came to Cape Broyle on the southern Avalon in the early nineteenth century.¹ It is a sparse and plainspoken chronicle of her life, but Mary Ryan's story could be the stuff of movie directors' dreams. A young Irish woman leaves her home in Wexford to accompany her husband on a perilous journey that will bring her to a landscape quite different from the green farmlands of her home country. There has been some urgency in their leaving, for Mary is well into her pregnancy upon departure, and the transatlantic crossing, difficult at best, will be a dangerous venture for a woman about to give birth. Perhaps they are responding to economic recession or land shortage. Almost certainly, they have heard of the potential for earning a livelihood in the Newfoundland fishery. And so they leave, despite Mary's condition, and somewhere on the heaving mass of the North Atlantic, she gives birth to a boy named Thomas. Despite the primitive conditions on board the passenger vessel, she and her newborn son both survive the journey. The Ryans begin to carve out a living in Newfoundland, supplementing their fishing livelihood with subsistence farming—all that is possible in the short growing season and the rock-strewn soil of the southern Avalon. Michael also finds winter employment in Newfoundland's second industry, the seal fishery. Then, tragically, he dies on a sealing voyage, leaving Mary with three young boys to raise on her own. Still, she remains in her new home and eventually remarries.

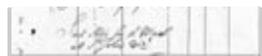
Mary and her new husband, Edward Coady, another native of Wexford, go forth and populate the new world... *Fade to black.*

The narrative of Mary Ryan's journey to the southern Avalon can easily be burnished with dramatic guilt. But how much of the story is representative of the experiences of other Irish immigrants to that shore? Certainly, when Michael and Mary Ryan left County Wexford in 1826 to come to the southern Avalon, they were not venturing into the great unknown. Ireland–Newfoundland trade connections had been forged long before, and news of living conditions and employment opportunities in Newfoundland would surely have permeated all but the most hidden villages of southeast Ireland. Indeed, it is not only possible but likely that Michael had already been out to the southern Avalon; the Pole Papers list a Michael Ryan as a *dieter* with Richard Down in Cape Broyle in the winter of 1799–1800 and a fishing *servant* of John Mackey in Brigus South the following summer.² Perhaps Michael had participated in the Newfoundland fishery from his teenage years and was now a man in his forties, emigrating to Newfoundland with his younger bride (a common marriage pattern along the southern Avalon in the period). Or perhaps he was a son or other relative of an earlier Michael Ryan who had been involved in the fishery. More assuredly, the Ryans were part of a larger swell of Irish immigrants who came to Newfoundland in the period 1825–33. And this movement was, in turn, part of an extended period of Irish migration to Newfoundland dating back to at least the late seventeenth century.

Early Migration

Early nominal census material, haphazardly recorded in the crabbed hands of British naval officers stationed at Newfoundland, indicates a strong presence of English planter families on the southern Avalon by the late seventeenth century, the demographic outgrowth of a West of England–Newfoundland fishery that was almost two centuries old.³ But the naval officers also enumerated servants working for the planters, and although ethnicity was not revealed in the records, there is no question that an Irish element had crept into this migration stream—an element that included Irish women, for as early as 1681, Capt. James Story made the following marginal note in his accounting of the fisheries and inhabitants in Newfoundland:

The trade of Irish to Newfoundland is all sorts of frises, linen cloath, candles, cloath Hatts, shooes, stockens, beefe, porke, bread, butter, cheeze & all sorts of small merch^tdise, there returnes for it are fish, they like wise bring over a



great many women
 passeng[ers] w^{ch} they sell
 for Serv^s & a little after their coming they marry
 among the fisherman[men] that live with the
 Planters...⁴

But while there were some Irish vessels trading at Newfoundland,⁵ initially the primary carriers of Irish *passengers* to the island were vessels from the West of England (Web Link). Certainly by the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, fishing ships from north Devon ports (Bideford and Barnstaple especially, but also Appledore and Northam) were regularly stopping at southeast Irish ports for cheap salted provisions and labor for the Newfoundland fishery. In 1720, British naval authorities on the island noted the "great numbers of Irish roman Catholick servants, who all settle to the southward [of St. John's]."⁶ At this time, however, the migration to Newfoundland was largely temporary, for, while the fishery at Newfoundland had both a migratory and a resident component, the majority of fishing servants, regardless of which branch they served, returned home after the period of time contracted by their *shipping papers*—usually a summer, or two summers and a winter (a *Newfoundland summer*).⁷ Even many planters (still a predominantly English group in the early eighteenth century) would eventually return to their home country to pursue other work or retire.



But wartime conditions wreaked havoc on the West of England–Newfoundland trade, particularly the migratory sector, and wartime conditions were almost continuous for Britain in the latter half of the eighteenth century. North Devon's traffic collapsed during the Seven Years' War, but its role in the Irish passenger and provisions trade was assumed by ports in south Devon and Poole, in Dorset. At the same time, the Irish migration stream swelled as increasing numbers of Irish fishing servants filled the void left by English servants who had either been pressed into naval service or had moved inland to avoid roving press gangs. After the war, some merchants in southeast Irish ports—especially Waterford, but also New Ross and Youghal—developed an independent trade with the southern Avalon and Burin, and these ports and their hinterlands would become a major source area for Irish emigrants to the study area (and to Newfoundland in general). Other southern Avalon Irish initially entered through the port of St. John's, attracted by its increasing commercial activity and potential for employment, ultimately wending their way southwards from the town (mirroring a similar diaspora northwards into Conception Bay).

A "Notoriously Disaffected" and "Wicked & Idle" People: Early Reception

Meanwhile, as the eighteenth century unfolded, British authorities in Newfoundland watched the growing numbers of Irish migrants with levels of concern ranging from wariness to near-hysteria. In March of 1702, in the midst of Anglo-French hostilities which had manifested themselves in local confrontations between the French at Placentia and the English along the *English Shore*, local English authorities charged that several French and Irish Catholics at St. John's were "spyes, corupting & debauching his Maj^{ties} Servants, and other his subjects to desert their Service and bring in a French power."⁸ That autumn, the principal inhabitants of the town requested that the naval commodore ban the hiring or entertaining of "any foreigner or Roman Chatholick" without the permission of the commanding officer at Fort William.⁹ In 1705, the naval officer at St. John's articulated a theme that would echo throughout the eighteenth century and into the next:

That Care may be taken of the Irish residing in the Country, for they by our daily Experience have proved very detrimental to the Governm^t. hereof, for when the Enemy makes any Incursion upon us they doe take up armes and informe our Enemy and prove very treacherous and our greatest Enemy.¹⁰

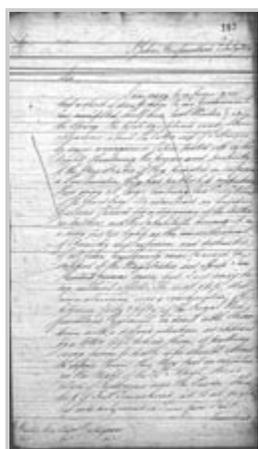
In 1738, naval governor Capt. Philip Van Brugh (Web Link) fired a similar volley, suggesting that Irish migration to Newfoundland be stemmed:

The most material and universal complaints are against the great numbers of Irish Roman Catholics yearly brought into Newfoundland, and remain the winter season, to the very great prejudice of His Majesty's Protestant subjects, who dread the consequence that may attend them in case of war; and humbly beg their case may be laid before your lordship that a method may be found to prevent such imbarcation in Ireland.¹¹

But there was a tension in official attitudes towards Irish servants, for although they were seen as undesirables, they were becoming increasingly essential to the operation of the fishery on the island. So the numbers of Irish arriving in Newfoundland grew, but so too did concerns about their loyalty to the Crown. In 1749, Governor George Rodney warned the Colonial Office that the Irish Roman Catholics in Newfoundland were not to be trusted.¹² The following year, Governor Francis Drake (Web Link) wrote in a similar vein that the Irish "are notoriously disaffected to the government, all of them refusing to take the oath of allegiance when tendered to them."¹³ The southern Avalon, with its growing numbers of Irish wintering over, was seen as one of several potential breeding grounds of Irish treachery.¹⁴ Drake, for example, specifically drew the Colonial Secretary's attention to the fact that "the majority of inhabitants to the Southward of St.

John's are Papists."¹⁵

During the American Revolutionary War, a petition to Governor John Montagu (Web Link) from the merchants and principal inhabitants of Renew, all of English ethnicity, stated that, despite depredations committed by American vessels along that shore, "we are more in danger from some of them [Irish inhabitants], than from the Americans, as they are determined to plunder the Stores & turn Rebels."¹⁶ That same year, Montagu issued a general admonition to the people of Ferryland district for their refusal to assist in defending the interests of the Crown from enemy vessels along that coast.¹⁷ In 1800, when the failed United Irish rebellion of 1798 sparked a mutiny among Irish troops in the Newfoundland Regiment at St. John's (Web Link), concerns were again expressed about the disaffection of the Irish population, hundreds of whom were thought to be involved in a larger plot to murder British authorities, merchants, and their supporters on the island. Particular concern was expressed about the southern Avalon. Debriefing Governor William Waldegrave on the episode, Surrogate and Deputy Naval Officer (later, Chief Justice) John Ogden reported:



...we knew not who we could depend upon for support in case of resistance, having every reason to believe the defection was very extensive not only through the Regiment, but through the Inhabitants of this and all the *Out Harbours*, particularly to the Southward almost to a Man have taken the United Oaths... it would be absurd to suppose it might not take place again... the security of Trade and Fishery, nay the security and salvation of this Island itself will entirely depend upon a proper Military Force [of 800-1,000 men] at this place, with sufficient strength to afford small detachments to some of the Out Harbours to the Southward to watch their motions, and assist the Magistrates when necessary.¹⁸

Traditional fears that England's difficulty would prove Ireland's opportunity had clearly been carried over from the Old World to the New.

Official discourse also equated the Irish with vagrancy, drunkenness, and disorder. Concern was frequently expressed, for example, about the idle and unruly conduct of Irish men and women left to winter over in Newfoundland without employment. Lord Vere Beauclerk, a naval commodore stationed at Newfoundland, articulated such fears in 1728, as did naval governors George

Clinton (in 1731), Thomas Cadre Smith (in 1742), and John Byng (in 1743).¹⁹ On 22 September 1755, Governor Richard Dorrill (Web Link) ordered that all masters of ships bringing passengers to Newfoundland must return them home after the fishing season unless special permission was granted otherwise. The measure dealt with fishing servants in general, but it was particularly aimed at reducing the Irish element of the population, as revealed by the wording of the preamble:

Whereas a great Number of Irish Roman Catholicks are Annually brought over here, a great part of which have but small wages, so that after paying their Passages to this Place, and the charges of Clothing & during the fishing season, their whole wages are spent & they have not wherewith either to Pay their Passages home, or to Purchase Provisions for the Winter, by which means they not only become chargable to this Place but many Robberys and Felonys &c are committed, by them to the great Loss and Terror of His Majesty's Liege Subjects in this Island...²⁰



Two years later, Governor Richard Edwards complained to the Board of Trade in a similar vein that too many Irish servants were being abandoned by fishing masters during the winter, often without their summer wages, and left at large "to the great terror and distress of the Inhabitants."²¹

Three important contextual elements must be noted in relation to the attitude of British authorities towards the Irish Catholic population of Newfoundland. First, their opinions reflected contemporary English perceptions of difference between the Anglo-Saxon and Gaelic-Irish "races."²² Second, their actions were justified by law, for Newfoundland Catholics (a predominantly Irish group) were subject to a punitive legal regime up to the early nineteenth century that drew from the Penal Laws that existed in Great Britain and Ireland at the time.²³ For example, Catholics in Newfoundland could not hold office within the rudimentary system of governance on the island because of the requirement to swear an oath repudiating transubstantiation. They were not permitted to bear firearms, hold property, or run public houses. A special tax was imposed on Catholics involved in trade on the island.²⁴ Catholics were not permitted to exercise their faith openly until Governor Jonathon Campbell (Web Link) issued a Declaration of Liberty of Conscience in 1784. Before this edict, a handful of priests operated underground (and often without official church sanction), traveling incognito to various harbors

to serve the growing Catholic population. The oral tradition of the southern Avalon, for example, tells of a priest who escaped authorities at Witless Bay disguised as a fisherman, and of another priest who had to hide in a cellar in Toad's Cove (now Tors Cove) to avoid detection. It also tells of midnight meetings at the *Mass Rock* in Renew's to say the Mass, the rosary, and other prayers.²⁵ The potential consequences for those who harbored priests or permitted the Mass to be said in their homes were heavy fines, house burnings, and deportation.²⁶ Granted, this regime was enforced with varying degrees of rigor, depending on the individual attitudes of governors and surrogates of the day; but certainly, the intensity of enforcement increased in proportion to the numbers of Irish arriving in Newfoundland from the mid-eighteenth century onwards.



Finally, it is also important to view many of these regulations within the context of a struggle on the part of British authorities to promote the migratory fishery at the expense of a resident fishery in order to preserve the hub of the industry in the West of England and to maintain Britain's nursery for seamen. Throughout the latter seventeenth century, the English government had tried to discourage settlement altogether; but by the turn of the next century, after several successful incursions by the French into the English Shore (inroads later reversed by treaty), Britain was beginning to see the wisdom of maintaining a year-round presence in Newfoundland. Still, the migratory fishery retained its priority in official policy as the British endeavored to limit settlement, especially by limiting the degree of government instituted in Newfoundland. While some elements of rudimentary governance had to be established throughout the eighteenth century in order to maintain a semblance of order on the island,²⁷ various governors in Newfoundland upheld the privileges of the ship fishery that had been introduced by Western Charters in the previous century and legislated by the *Act 10 and 11 Wm. III, Cap. 25* (the *Newfoundland Act of 1699*).²⁸

One of the strongest advocates of the ship fishery in the eighteenth century was Hugh Palliser (Web Link). While governor of Newfoundland during the summers of 1764 through 1768,²⁹ he unleashed a battery of orders and proclamations to prohibit the enclosure of lands suitable for the ship fishery and to remove any buildings, gardens, or other encroachments thereon.³⁰ He also enforced strict adherence to the law that fishing servants who had not been contracted for winter work were to be returned to their native countries at the end of each fishing season, and he ordered that sufficient money be held back from their wages to pay their passages home. Like Dorrill and Edwards before him, he noted that thousands of servants were left behind each winter in "misery, distress and hardships," with no money and no employment to provide for themselves, and

thus became a burden on the community.³¹

But while Palliser expressed concern about fishing servants in general, his regulations, like those of Dorrill and Edwards, targeted Irish servants in particular. Palliser wildly overestimated the proportion of Roman Catholics (and hence Irish) in the population at three-quarters of the total, reflecting a commonly held attitude that the Irish were profligate in their family sizes.³² He



spoke generally of the inhabitants of Newfoundland in disparaging terms, arguing that for a full six months, "they are perfectly Idle, abandon'd to every sort of Debauchery and Wickedness, become perfect Savages, are Strangers to all good Order, Government and Religion by habitual Idleness and Debauchery's." They would never become industrious fishermen or seamen, he continued, and would always pose a security risk, "for they always did and always will join an Invading Enemy and full 3/4 of them are Roman Catholics."³³

On 31 October 1764, Palliser issued the following regulations for the upcoming winter:



For better preserving the Peace preventing Roberies, Tumultuous Assembly's, and other disorders of Wicked & Idle People remaining in the Country during the Winter

Order'd -

That no Papist Servant man or Woman shall remain at any Place where they did not Fish or serve during the Sumer Preceeding.-

That not more than two Papist men shall dwell in one House during the Winter, except such as have Protestant Masters.-

That no Papist shall keep a Publick House or Vend Liquor by Retail.-

That no Person keep Dyeters during the Winter.-

That all Idle disorderly, useless men & Women be Punish'd according to Law and sent out of the Country.³⁴

The order clearly conflated "Wicked & Idle People" with "Papists," and the Papists in Newfoundland at the time were virtually all Irish. The majority of dieters in Newfoundland were also Irish by this period, so the order was specifically aimed

at reducing the numbers of "disorderly, useless" Irish on the island after the fishing season. Even Palliser's efforts to remove encroachments from fishing *rooms* targeted Irish inhabitants. A large number of Irish Catholics were erecting huts, he observed, in which they entertained "Rogues and Vagabonds" and encouraged them to remain on the island "to the great disturbance of the Peace, and danger of His Majesty's Subjects Lives, and to the exceeding great prejudice of the Fishing Trade." The magistrates were to tear down the offending buildings immediately and not permit any similar encroachments in the future.³⁵ The Irish were a "problem" that must be controlled.

While Palliser was one of the most virulent of Newfoundland's governors in his mistrust and even dislike of the Irish, the spirit and intent of his regulations were carried out by succeeding governors up to the turn of the nineteenth century.



Regulations concerning the removal of fishing servants over the winter were re-issued by governors Jonathon Byron, Molynoux Shuldham, Robert Duff, John Montagu, Mark Milbanke, Richard King, William Waldegrave, and John Gambier.³⁶ (Web Link) Until the late 1770s, they appeared overtly in conjunction with the anti-Papist regulations initiated by Palliser. Indeed, Byron's 1770 order respecting over-wintering Catholics included the additional provision that "the Children of Roman Catholic's born in this Country be Baptized according to Law [that is, according to the precepts of the Church of England]."³⁷

In the last two decades of the eighteenth century, the explicitly punitive tone of the regulations disappeared, but its spirit could still be felt in the enforcement of the regulations respecting the largely Irish Catholic dieter population. When Catholic Prefect-Apostolic James O Donel requested permission from Governor Milbanke (Web Link) to build a chapel at Ferryland, for example, Milbanke dictated the following response on board the vessel that was returning him to Britain for the winter:

The Governor acquaints M^r. O'Donell that so far from feeling disposed to allow of an increase of places of Religious Worship to the Roman Catholics of this Island, he very seriously intends next year to lay those already established under particular restrictions. M^r. O'Donnell must be sensible that it is not the Interest of Great Britain to encourage people to winter in Newfoundland, and he cannot be ignorant that many of the lower Order of those who now stay, would if it were not for the Convenience with which they obtain absolution here,



██████████ go home for it at least once in two or three years; And the Governor has been misinformed if M^r. O'Donell instead of advising their return to Ireland does not rather encourage them to winter in this Country.³⁸

Orders prohibiting the enclosure of lands also continued to be anti-Irish-Catholic in tenor after Palliser's term. In 1771, for example, Governor Byron ordered the justice of the peace at Bonavista to remove some marking posts which an "Irish Papist" had put up on a vacant fishing room "with an Intent to Build a *stage & Flakes* thereof, & Possess the same as his Right & Property," contrary to the *Newfoundland Act* of 1699, and to warn him and all other Papists from marking vacant fishing rooms as property.³⁹ Gubernatorial ire was not limited to cases of Irish encroachments on shore space that should have been reserved for the fishery. Irish servants who were squatting inland in Ferryland district, particularly Renewse, provoked the following directive by Governor Montagu in July 1777:

Whereas information has been made to me that there are a great number of Irish Servants belonging to *Boatkeepers* in the District of Ferryland and particularly in the Harbour of Renewse who have inclosed Lands and built Hutts, at half a mile Distance at the Back of their Fishing rooms, without any permission for so doing which is not only a great Violation of the Law, but will be the means, if not timely prevented, of contention and strife.



These are therefore to require & direct all people who may have fenced in any Lands and built Houses thereon, without my Permission immediately to cause all such Fences to be pulled down, and that they do not presume to build any Hutts, Stages, or *Cookrooms*, or to inclose any Lands at the back thereof, otherwise than for the service of the Fishery without my Permission for so doing, upon paid of Forfeiture of Five Pounds for every such offence, to be stopped out of their Wages if Servants and have no other Effects. And I do hereby require and direct all His Majesty's Justices of the Peace within the said District to see this My Order is strictly obeyed.⁴⁰

The proclamation was accompanied by a letter to local justice of the peace Robert Carter advising that if the fences were not taken down voluntarily and expeditiously, Carter was to make arrangements to have them removed by force.⁴¹

British authorities stationed at Newfoundland were not bending the rules to harass the growing Irish population on the island. All these orders and regulations were in keeping with the laws that governed Newfoundland in the eighteenth century. Furthermore, it was not unusual for local officials in colonial contexts to be concerned about large numbers of unemployed, unsettled people within their jurisdiction, even if they were often unreflective about the underlying causes of the undesirable behavior they were trying to curtail. The focus of these official efforts in Newfoundland, however, was decidedly anti-Irish-Catholic in nature, aimed at reducing the numbers of Irish remaining on the island; there were no corresponding proclamations respecting English Protestant inhabitants, for example, who were also enclosing land and building houses without formal permission.⁴² And throughout this official discourse ran a construction of "Irishness" as inherently feckless, intemperate, and treacherous; the Irish were a problem group that required constant regulation and surveillance.

Part of this discourse focused particularly on an image of the Irish woman immigrant as vagrant and whore. Again, this must be seen within the broader context, in which British authorities had discouraged the presence of all women in Newfoundland. Amidst the debates leading up to the revision of the Western Charter of 1671 (the most oppressive revision in terms of settlement⁴³), the specter arose of the inherently immoral woman, a threat to the orderly operation of the fishery. West Country merchants involved in the Newfoundland trade, not yet convinced that settlement was to their advantage, claimed that planters used their womenfolk to "debauch ignorant mariners."⁴⁴ The "respectable" inhabitants of St. John's at the turn of the eighteenth century requested special monitoring of single servants (male and female), but especially those "scandalous & prostitute Women" who remained after the fishing season, to the "great prejudice & ill Example to y^e. sev^l. Harbours."⁴⁵ This was a construction of womanhood that British authorities did nothing to discourage in relation to Newfoundland, for, ironically, the very characteristics touted by British colonial policy in encouraging women to participate in colonizing ventures on the North American mainland—their stabilizing effect on community formation, their essential role in permanent settlement—were perceived as threats to British enterprise in Newfoundland, where a resident fishery would weaken the migratory sector (and, hence, Britain's training ground for seamen).⁴⁶ As Capt. Francis Wheler, a naval officer stationed at Newfoundland, reported to the home government in 1684: "Soe longe as there comes noe women they are not fixed."⁴⁷

The policy of discouraging women migrants to Newfoundland persisted well into the eighteenth century, and local authorities found occasion to remark particularly about the undesirability and unsuitability of Irish women in the population. When Captain Story had commented in 1681 on the Irish women servants who came

out as servants and married fishermen, he had added:



... & a little after their coming they marry among the fisherman[men] that live with the Planters, & being Extreamly poor, contract such Debts as they are not able to pay so yt if course be not speedily taken for the preservation of such passengers coming over the Countrey they will be

ruined.⁴⁸

In particular, the construction of the undesirable woman took on ethnic undertones as the numbers of Irish increased after the mid-eighteenth century.⁴⁹ In 1764, for example, Governor Palliser linked Irish women servants with poverty, improvidence, and disorder when he issued the following notice:

Whereas great Numbers of Poor Women are frequently brought into this Country, and Particularly into this Port by Vessels arriving from Ireland who become ditress'd and a Charge to the Inhabitants, and likewise Occasion much disorder and Disturbance against the Peace of our Sovereign Lord the King.-

Notice is hereby given to all masters of Vessels arriving in this Country that from the First day of April next no Women are to be Landed without Security being first given for their good behavior and that they shall not become Chargable to the Inhabitants.⁵⁰



Although Palliser was generally wary of the increasing numbers of Irish arriving in Newfoundland (often through the administrative center of St. John's, and hence right under the governor's nose), it was significant that with this—the very first of his anti-Irish-Catholic proclamations—the governor homed in on the perceived threat of the unattached Irish woman. Two years later, the alleged sexual immorality of just such a woman provoked another strong reaction from Palliser and the magistrates in St. John's. In the case of *Pendergrass v. Blakener*, fishing servant Thomas Pendergrass sued for wages denied him by his master, John Blakener, because Pendergrass had been having sexual relations with Blakener's Irish female servant. Pendergrass recovered his wages "without any Deduction on acc^t. of his Intercourse with [the] Woman Servant to the said Blakener," but the magistrates were instructed "to Order the Woman who occasion'd this disturbance, to leave the Country, & oblige the master of the Ship who brought

her, to carry her away."⁵¹ Both the 1764 proclamation and the 1766 deportation order reflected a fear of the single Irish woman, whose sexual autonomy and social and economic independence from father or husband cast her, in the eyes of colonial authorities, as deviant—a danger to the social and moral order of the island.

The discursive construction of Irish women servants as immoral, unproductive, and menacing was reiterated in Governor Montagu's proclamation of 1777, which expressed particular concern about their arriving in Newfoundland pregnant and becoming a drain on the populace:



Whereas it has been represented to me that the Ships and Vessels that come from Ireland frequently bring unmarried Women, and Young [Girls], who are destitute of Friends and come over with no other View but to be hired as Indentured Servants, that on their arrival and having hired themselves to Masters, have proved to be with Child, which is attended with Difficulties to the Masters, and is the cause of bringing many Incumbrances upon the Inhabitants of this Island and of this Place in particular.

These are therefore to forbid all Masters of Vessels from bringing any Women as Servants from Ireland, on pain of Forfeiting Ten Pounds for every Person so found on board, or that can be proved by Information to have been brought over by them.

And I do further Declare if any such Women be hired to a Master on Shore and she proves to be with Child at the time she was so hired, the Master [of the vessel] shall not be paid for her passage.

But in the Case he shall be paid for such passage before the Person so brought over is Discovered to be with Child, He [the master of the vessel] shall be obliged to refund whatever Sum he received.⁵²

This order fashioned an image of the Irish woman servant as promiscuous and conniving. It implied that large numbers of such dissolute women (or at least sufficient numbers to warrant an official proclamation) became pregnant outside of wedlock, either in the home country or on board vessels bringing them to Newfoundland, where they entrapped unwary employers by contracting their services without revealing their condition. Ultimately (and here was the oft-repeated theme on the "feckless" Irish), they would become a charge on the more "respectable" inhabitants of the island.

In 1805, Governor Erasmus Gower observed that "a considerable number of unmarried women" were arriving on the island "without having any relatives or Friends residing here." Having "reason to fear" that many of them were "persons of bad character," he resurrected Palliser's regulations of 2 July 1764, and ordered that the masters of vessels bringing passengers to the island be advised that they would be held accountable for the financial security and moral behavior of female passengers.⁵³ Although Gower did not specify ethnicity in his order, there can be little doubt that the target group was Irish, given their predominance in the passenger traffic at that period. The same regulations were re-invoked by Governor John Holloway three years later.⁵⁴

The Irish woman immigrant, then, was a particular "problem" for local authorities, requiring special regulation of her own. In particular, the single Irish female servant required monitoring, for her independence from a patriarchal family context and her potential sexual agency contravened hegemonic feminine ideals that embodied domesticity, dependence, fragility, and sexual passivity. Yet all Irish women immigrants were pariahs, for implied (though not directly stated) in this discourse was the fear that once these women were permitted to remain, the equation for reproducing this undesirable ethnic group on the island would be complete.

The linkage of degeneracy and Irish womanhood was further reinforced when an Irish convict ship put ashore 114 Irish convicts—including twelve women—at Bay Bulls and Petty Harbour in late August of 1789.⁵⁵ After using up the provisions that had been left them, the convicts dispersed to communities in the area and, according to reports, "committed various depredations upon the Fishermen and Inhabitants."⁵⁶ A large group moved on to St. John's, where sixty-three of the male convicts were rounded up and confined in a former hospital located on the barrens about a mile inland from the town. While inhabitants of the area feverishly made plans to have this menace removed from the island, steps were taken to protect the town from those convicts who were still at large. Even so, particular concern was expressed about the twelve women convicts who remained at liberty:

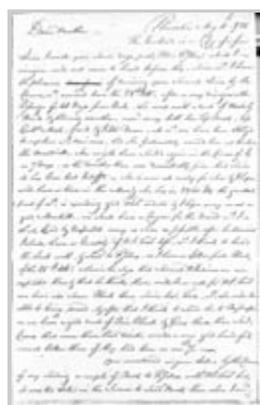
... the most effectual step that has been taken is the appointment of a Patrol of six to Eight men, a Constable and a reputable Housekeeper at their head properly Armed who Walk the paths from ten in the Evening till Gun Firing in the Morning... *this even may be insufficient to keep Good order while twelve women Convicts (more abandon'd*



than you can conceive of) are suffer'd to remain at Large...⁵⁷

As women convicts would not likely have posed more of a threat to life and property than male convicts, the perceived danger of leaving these women at large must have been the threat they represented to the moral order and masculine self-control. The extra attention and concern they attracted arose from the perception of these women as social pollutants.⁵⁸

Yet despite official discourses that equated Irishness with rebellion and disorder, and Irish womanhood in particular with vagrancy and immorality, Irish servants—men and women—continued to be hired for service in the fishery and domestic work, particularly in Conception Bay, St. John's, and along the southern Avalon. Poole merchants defended their use of Irish servants to the Commissioners for Trade in 1752, arguing, in response to concerns that Irish Catholics bred in prodigious numbers, that they increased "in no greater proportion than protestants" and that "their behavior has given no cause to apprehend any dangers to the well being affected to His Majesty's person."⁵⁹ Indeed, regardless of the unavailability of English servants in wartime, some employers preferred Irish servants to English. For example, Saunders and Sweetman—a mercantile firm operating at Placentia, St. Mary's Bay, and Trepassey—sent at least one vessel, and in some years two, to Waterford to pick up Irish passengers for the fishery. As Pierce Sweetman noted in 1788:



We have been very lucky in having no runaways, this Spring we have lost but 2 men & an Eng^h. Boy, I would advise you never to send out more Eng^h. young^{rs}. [*youngsters*] than will just clear the Vessels, the most of all that ran away from this [firm's service] the Winter before this were Eng^h. Boys & young^{rs}. they never any of them stick to the place or have any attachment to it, & for hard labour one Irish young^r. is worth a Dozⁿ. of them...⁶⁰

Sweetman's attitude may have been shared by other employers along the shore; certainly, the Pole Papers (1799-1800) indicate an overwhelming majority of Irish among the fishing servants in Ferryland district at the turn of the nineteenth century. In addition, court records for the study area are peppered with cases involving Irish Newfoundland women who were contracted servants or were providing other services (washing, sewing, nursing, hospitality trade) particularly

for the single male fishing population and a small number of middle-class customers.

Furthermore, regardless of official regulations aimed at preventing Irish settlement, the predominantly temporary nature of the Irish migration stream was assuming more permanence, as the migratory fishery, plagued by almost continuous years of warfare, declined and the resident fishery grew in both absolute and proportionate terms, especially from the American Revolutionary War period onwards. And while large numbers of migrant servants were still hired for the fishery—whether in the migratory or the resident sector—there was an increasing tendency for these servants to stay in Newfoundland beyond their contracted period of service. The letterbook of Saunders and Sweetman for 1788-1804 indicates a general reluctance of servants to return to Ireland, especially from 1789 onwards,⁶¹ and the Pole Papers indicate that, while large numbers of servants were still being hired in the fishery in Ferryland district in 1800, many had "died" during the winter of 1799-1800. Furthermore, a number of these male servants had wives and children living with them in the summer of 1800. And a number of Irish masters were hiring servants of their own for the fishery. Along the southern Avalon, removed from the watchful eyes of visiting governors, an Irish planter society was taking root in most harbors and would be reinforced through increasing Irish migration, both temporary and permanent, through the close of the eighteenth century and into the middle of the nineteenth century. Irish women like Mary Ryan were an integral part of that migration in terms of community formation, economic production, and community power dynamics; they would also play an essential role in establishing an essentially Irish society on what had once been part of an English planter shore.



But before examining the role of Irish women in early settlement on the southern Avalon, let us first board them on passenger vessels of the day and try to understand their experiences of leaving home and crossing the North Atlantic to a new world.

"...there is not a saint in the calendar that was not invoked...": Passages

Mary Ryan did not keep a journal of her 1826 passage from Wexford to Cape Broyle. Indeed, there are no surviving written accounts by women passengers from Ireland to the southern Avalon from the period of this study. Most of these women would have had neither the luxuries of time, paper, and ink, nor the level of literacy required to maintain records of their journeys. But several accounts of the Atlantic crossing by Irish women who arrived in St. John's have survived from the period; these were letters written by Presentation nuns to their home convent in Galway shortly after they came out to Newfoundland in 1833 (Web Link). Although the sisters did not initially settle on the southern Avalon, one of them,

Mother Mary Bernard Kirwan, would later establish the first convent school in the area in 1853 at Admiral's Cove, Fermeuse (now named Port Kirwan in her honor⁶²). But even without this connection to the southern Avalon, as Irish women travelers of the day, their writings can help us gain some insight into the experience of leaving home and starting a new life in an unfamiliar land.

My ever dear Revd. Mother,

I am sure you will be delighted to hear we are at last arrived at St. John's after a most unpleasant voyage of 25 days... We were only a few hours on board when we all got sick and were obliged to go to our berths. We were almost insensible. Any expressions I can make use of could give you but a faint idea of Dr. Fleming's kindness and attention. Nothing was left undone which could in any way contribute to our comfort. He was like tender parent, physician and priest... We had one consolation...that was he would allow no passenger on board so that we had the vessel to ourselves and when we were a little recovered we went occasionally on deck. These arrangements must have been very expensive..., but it was a great comfort to us.

On the third day after we left Ireland we had a storm. One of the masts was broken and some others damaged. It lasted for three days but we were not much frightened because we were almost regardless of what was going on we were so deadly sick, but we soon had another storm to encounter which was most awful. It was on the 10th. It lasted 36 hours. The sails were torn in pieces, it came on so suddenly, the waves were monstrous high and used to wash over the deck in so terrific a manner that you would suppose every moment was your last. We were obliged to stay in bed because the vessel heaved so much that we could not stand for a minute. You may be sure there is not a saint in the calendar that was not invoked during this violent storm... [As we came in view of land, we] were in great spirits thinking we could go on shore in a short time, but we met another disappointment: heavy fogs and contrary winds prevented us from landing and we were for three days tossed about within a few miles of St. John's...

At length the joyful day arrived. We entered the harbour on the 21st, St. Matthew's day... [Sister Magdalene O'Shaughnessey]⁶³

We crossed the harbour in a small boat and when we came near the shore there were crowds of small boats full of people, the banks and hills were crowded and as soon as the boat that the Bishop and we were

in arrived there was nothing to be heard but shouts of joy and acclamations... Protestants, Orangemen and all kinds of people came to welcome us and you may guess how we felt when we found ourselves in the midst of such a concourse of people and received in the most flattering manner... As soon as we arrived, they had a carriage ready to receive us...

We are as happy as can be, separated from our dear Sisters. Tell each and every one of them that I can never forget them and that no distance or length of time shall ever alter my love, affection or gratitude for my dearest Community... [Sister Mary Xavier Lynch]⁶⁴

I almost despaired of ever writing to you again. I was so ill for ten days I was almost insensible to everything. The Sisters thought I would never reach St. John's... I would be happy if I could forget all those I parted with that were so dear to me. I can never think of them without regret. This day six weeks we left Galway. I can scarcely think it possible, dear Rev. Mother, that I am never again to see you and all my dear Sisters for whom I every day feel a greater affection but we will I hope yet be united... [Mother Mary Bernard Kirwan]⁶⁵

We are just beginning to feel the severity of the weather... You may imagine what the cold is when in our bedrooms we cannot leave a drop of water in the basins or jugs. We must wait ever so long before we can get it to melt. As for our towels you might as well have a sheet of paste board for after using them and putting them to dry they are frozen quite hard and stiff. I washed my stockings and put them to dry. What was my amazement when going to mend them to see them stiff as a board and icicles hanging from them. Water freezes in a room even with a fire and the water which is left on the altar for the priest is in ice before he uses it, though only left a little before he comes. As for the milk for breakfast it is like lump sugar and we are obliged to cut it with a knife... When we are out walking our breath freezes on our cloaks... As for the clothes, when they are put in to steep they become a complete mass of ice; and the meat is obliged to be sawn. I suppose, dear Ann, you think all this incredible for we thought so ourselves until we began to experience it...

Once more give my love a thousand times to all my dear Sisters... It is often I think of you all. I must do violence now and stop for if I were to indulge myself much longer my tears would flow... [Sister Mary Xavier Lynch]⁶⁶

We had ice-cream for weather to-day... [Sister
Magdalene O'Shaughnessey]⁶⁷

Of course, the nuns' experience in many ways provides a study in contrast with that of most Irish women who immigrated to Newfoundland during the study period. The sisters' passage was not typical in terms of either accommodations or reception. They were well-educated, middle-class women, traveling as the invited guests of Newfoundland's Roman Catholic bishop Michael Anthony Fleming on a ship purposely hired to bring them to the island as safely and comfortably as possible. Indeed, Bishop Fleming had rejected the first ship that had been provided for their passage, judging it "rather small to make comfortable accommodation for the ladies," and had gone in search of a better vessel at Liverpool, where he had considered several ships before finally settling on the *Ariel*.⁶⁸ Certainly, then, the sisters' accommodations were as comfortable and commodious as the bishop could provide; their diet, although uninspired, was adequate; they were not crowded into the bowels of a passenger vessel with hundreds of other emigrants, fighting for scarce provisions and sleeping space; and their privacy was assured. They did not have families to tend to, nor did they have the additional stress of being pregnant on the journey—a condition that was not uncommon for Irish women passengers, judging from Mary Ryan's experience and the rationale for Governor Montagu's 1777 edict. Neither did they have to ward off the unwanted advances of the ship's crew or male passengers, as was likely the case of other single women traveling without family.⁶⁹ Furthermore, they crossed the ocean in the gentler weather of September, while most Irish passengers came out to the island before the fishing season, in the spring, when cold weather, frost, snow, sleet, and coastal ice added to the discomfort and anxiety of the journey.

Consider, by contrast, the experience of John and Nellie (Lyons) Welsh, who left Wexford for the southern Avalon in 1784; their ship was driven into Petty Harbour by heavy ice, and John had to tow Nellie and their belongings over the icepack to safety (they arrived in Cape Broyle the following year with an infant son named Michael).⁷⁰ Or consider the ordeal of emigrants on board an 1817 Irish passenger ship that could not enter Renews harbor because of coastal ice the passengers



had to leave the ship and crawl ashore on their hands and knees.⁷¹ Furthermore, while the nuns were destined to hard work in difficult conditions, they did not have the immediate concerns of finding work, shelter, and food upon arrival. And the welcoming "shouts of joy" they received from people of all classes and religious persuasions were far different from the condemnations of the Irish immigrant woman "problem" by local authorities. Still, there were elements of their experience that would have been shared with other travelers of the day, both male and female: sorrow and

misgivings about leaving home, fear of the Atlantic crossing, a sense of adventure and new beginnings, and the process of adjusting to a new environment until one could finally shrug aside the task of sawing frozen milk and meat to observe, "We had ice-cream for weather to-day."

Other written accounts of passages from Ireland to Newfoundland, while less personal in tone and content, do exist. They survive in governors' correspondence, business records, and newspapers of the period, and several are outlined below. Most deal with vessels that arrived in St. John's. However, they still provide insight into the experiences of migrants to the southern Avalon, for sometimes vessels that cleared customs at St. John's moved on to the study area; and, as noted earlier, St. John's was also a stop-off and dispersal point for many passengers who ultimately made their way to the southern Avalon, particularly that section from Bay Bulls to Trepassey. It is important to note in relation to these accounts that much of Newfoundland's passenger traffic from Ireland was excluded from British passenger legislation of the early decades of the nineteenth century. The British government passed a series of passenger acts, beginning in 1803, which sought to increase the safety and comfort of emigrants by restricting the ratio of passengers to vessel tonnage and requiring certain minimal amenities on board. In 1804, however, the legislation was rescinded in relation to fishing vessels carrying *shipped* servants for the Newfoundland fishery. Furthermore, because of insufficient supervision, owners and masters of passenger vessels that were covered by the legislation could easily circumvent the regulations, transporting people (whether shipped or not) under the fiction that all had employment and thus avoiding the niceties of sufficient space and provisions for their complements.

By 1815, the governor and the local Board of Trade were calling for a more stringent regulation of passenger traffic, and their suggestions were incorporated into the British *Passenger Act, 56 Geo. 3 Cap. 83*, passed in 1816.⁷² Local authorities carefully monitored the arrival of passenger vessels thereafter; even the slightest infraction was reported to the governor and attracted a fine for the master and/or the owner.⁷³ However, large numbers of Irish migrants continued to arrive in St. John's (the major port of disembarkation) without employment prospects. They came, one magistrate observed, "in consequence of the most flattering and fallacious prospects of advantage" offered by unprincipled vessel owners "merely from the mercenary motive of procuring additional freights for their Vessels bound from [Ireland] for Newfoundland." As soon as they arrived in St. John's, the magistrate continued, "these unfortunate poor wretches were all turned on shore to shift for themselves without any possible means of Subsistence, or of getting employment."⁷⁴ Despite local protestations, in 1825,



restrictions on the Newfoundland passenger trade were lifted altogether, possibly triggering, or certainly



facilitating, another major wave of Irish migration to the island and provoking concern among local authorities and merchants.⁷⁵ Not surprisingly, then, most of the following accounts deal with voyages ending in tragedy, and feature prominently in materials dealing with the peak periods of Irish immigration (1811-16 and 1825-33).

In 1811, for example, Governor John Duckworth reported to the Colonial Office on the trial of James Lannon, master of the schooner *Fanny* out of Waterford, who was charged and convicted of a "misdemeanor" under the *Passenger Act*. The vessel had carried a passenger complement of 184 men, women, and children: a full seventy passengers over the number permitted by the ship's tonnage. Depositions of various survivors of the voyage—testimony that was remarkably consistent in its details—revealed a serious lack of water and provisions on board the vessel. For the first three days, the passengers had received no water or food.



For the remainder of the first week, adults had received one quart of water per day, an allowance that had dwindled to one-half pint by the third week (children's allowances had been one-half the adult amounts). The only provisions that had been made available were sporadic rations of bread.⁷⁶ One passenger stated that he had been in such distress from lack of water that he had preserved his own urine and drunk it. In all, thirty-two passengers died on the voyage, and several others expired after landing in St. John's.⁷⁷ Roughly twenty women and ten children survived the trip; how many women and children had originally left Ireland is not known.⁷⁸

Negligence and tragedy in the passenger trade from Ireland continued as ever increasing numbers of Irish sought passage to Newfoundland over the following years. In 1815 alone, eleven overcrowded and under-provisioned passenger vessels from Ireland (seven from Waterford, three from New Ross, and one from Youghal) arrived at St. John's, carrying 2,232 passengers, including 172 female immigrants.⁷⁹ One of the vessels was the brig *Grace*, which had cleared Waterford for Newfoundland with 150 male and twenty female passengers. The water allowance on board was only one quart per person per day, and provisions were vastly inadequate: seventy bags of bread, and twenty-eight barrels of spoiled pork, a portion of which was so inedible that the passengers threw it overboard. Ultimately, the passengers were forced to break open the foodstuffs in the cargo to stave off starvation. Governor Richard Keats was appalled at the poor conditions on board all the vessels and complained to the Colonial Office about "the Loss of Life and Misery which has been sometimes produced by the manner in some instances (shocking to humanity) Passengers have been brought from Ireland." He argued that the rescinding of the provisions of the *Passenger*

Act in relation to the Newfoundland fishery had given too much leeway to vessel masters and owners, and urged "some legislative Regulation" of the passenger trade involving fishing servants.⁸⁰

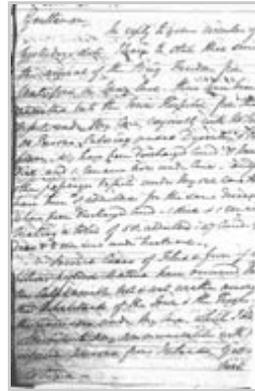
We do not know the name of the vessel that Michael and Mary Ryan sailed on, but several accounts from that period exist. The year 1825 marked the beginning of another major influx of Irish to Newfoundland, and by 1 May, eight passenger vessels had arrived from Ireland, all of which failed to comply with the provisions of the *Passenger Act*. The masters or owners, however, advised local authorities that a recent British Treasury order had dispensed with the provisions of the legislation regarding the Newfoundland passenger trade and "that therefore they might bring as many as they could stow whether shipped servants or not." In addition to cramming passengers atop cargo, many vessel owners had also initiated a system of having passengers provide their own food and water, and many passengers—ill-informed about the length of the passage and unable to afford the fare,⁸¹ let alone provisions—found themselves without food or water early in the voyage.⁸²

Lack of proper regulation continued to plague the Ireland-Newfoundland passenger trade.⁸³ In 1827, for example, the *Freedom* arrived from Ireland with its passengers in deplorable condition, a number either dead or dying of dysentery. Local authorities determined that had the *Passenger Act* still been in effect in relation to Newfoundland, the vessel could have been charged with carrying twice the number of passengers permitted by its tonnage and, indeed, because of insufficient space between the deck and cargo hold, would actually have been disqualified from carrying passengers altogether. In fact, the vessel had only one deck, and the passengers had literally been stowed on top of the cargo of salt within a space that measured no more than three feet in height. Furthermore, no distinct supply of provisions had been issued to the passengers. The vessel itself was filthy and had not been ventilated throughout the month's voyage, causing "an intolerable stench" in the passengers' hold. Authorities estimated that total infractions of the former legislation would have incurred penalties in the amount of £8,220.⁸⁴ John Moore, the Surveyor of Navigation who inspected the vessel at St. John's, observed that while he had had occasion in the past to fine masters severely for breaches of the "late Act," he had never seen "an Instance that would have called for more Severity, than that of this Vessel."⁸⁵ A further case of abuse presented itself on 26 August 1831, when the *Nelson*, sailing out of Killala en route to Quebec, arrived in St. John's with its passengers in a high degree of distress owing to severe overcrowding and a lack of proper provisions and water. The vessel had cleared Killala claiming 183 passengers, but had actually carried somewhere between three and four hundred on the ten-week voyage. In this case, however, as the passengers were not intended for the

Newfoundland fishery, the master was charged under the *Passenger Act* and fined £350. The owner, merchant Charles McCallagher of Balina, Mayo, pleaded for leniency, stating that the master had taken on additional passengers without his permission, that poor weather had stretched the voyage beyond the capacity of the provisions, and that only a few aged, infirm, and sickly young children had died on the voyage. Generally, he blamed the tragedy on his own inexperience, but whether or not he was successful in mitigating his responsibility is not stated in the record.⁸⁶

The specter of sick and starving passengers staggering from the holds of passenger vessels added a new component to the construction of Irishness in Newfoundland in the period after 1815: the image of contagion and disease. Vessels arriving in port with sick or dead passengers and crew were inspected by local medical officers, who came back ashore with warnings of flux, bilious and putrid fevers, and other dire offerings from the medical lexicon of the early nineteenth century. There was a constant fear of contamination spreading to the inhabitants, especially in the main port of St. John's, where many of the vessels initially landed and where a rising population and cramped quarters increased the danger of epidemics. As the influx of Irish immigrants increased from 1815 through the 1820s and early 1830s, images of filth, pollution, and disease became firmly linked with Irish passenger vessels and the Irish "lower orders" living in the town in general. In reporting on the possible connection between the arrival of the *Freedom* and the presence of typhus and other fevers in St. John's, for example, surgeon William Warner explained to local magistrates:

The great want of attention to accomodation & cleanliness is the source whence it emanates—This disease I presume might with more propriety be called Putrid Fever, It is generated by whatever lessens the Nervous power—as bad diet, fatigue, foul atmosphere, or want of Ventilation & Cleanliness. A crowded Vessel at



sea—where moisture is combined with heat and the putrid Efflu[v]i[u]m arising from the Excremeatitious Matter of living bodies, pent up below for many days as was the Case in the *Freedom*—cannot fail to produce such diseases as Fluxes & Putrid fever and become the source of infection of others. I therefore consider that had not the passenger Vessels brought so many infected persons among us, that the town might have been but little diseased from the mere influence of season & the habits of the people.

Still, Warner went on to state, sanitation in the town left much to be desired, and while the seeds of the disease may have been carried in passenger vessels from Ireland, they found fertile ground in the "the present filthy state of the streets, Cook rooms, and dwellings of the lower orders."⁸⁷

Five other doctors had been consulted on the matter, and four reached similar conclusions (the fifth declined to comment): that the current round of typhus and other fevers had spread from passengers of the *Freedom* and found a welcome breeding ground amidst "the poverty, filth & manner of living of the lower orders here."⁸⁸ One embellished this more conventional epidemiology with additional moralistic comment, stating that "the disease lay lurking [within the passengers] appearing some days after their landing with violence from the drinking of bad Spirits and too great excess."⁸⁹ Surgeon Edward Kielley agreed with his colleagues that the disease was "generally confined to the hovels of the poor," which were "absolutely reservoirs for filth and evident contagion." He found himself, however, in the awkward position of having treated some cases in "respectable families"; obviously these, he noted, had been "communicated by the imported contagion" rather than poor sanitary conditions.⁹⁰ Meanwhile, the principal inhabitants of St. John's had called a town meeting and formed a special committee to check epidemics. They sent a deputation to the governor to express



their concern that "the Extremely dirty state of the Streets and Lanes of the town [had] contributed materially to augment disease," but attributed the primary cause to the poor condition of newly arriving passengers and requested that the governor use his influence to prevent future "introduction of diseased persons in Crowded Vessels," which had "in a great degree led to the present Calamity."⁹¹ Thus as the numbers of Irish arriving in Newfoundland increased within the context of declining standards in the passenger trade, "imported contagion" became one more facet of the perception of Irishness held by "respectable" inhabitants of the island.

It is difficult to determine how typical or exceptional the above passages were in terms of the Irish passenger trade to Newfoundland at the time. Certainly, newspaper reports and governors' correspondence of the day were more likely to deal with the exceptional than the routine (although this does not rule out the possibility of frequent abuse). A different perspective on some less eventful passages can be gained by reviewing the letterbook of Edward Kough, a merchant of New Ross who was involved in the provisions and passenger trade with ports in Newfoundland (including, over time, St. John's, Ferryland, and Placentia).

Details about the 1825 voyage of the passenger vessel *Concord*, bound for St. John's, are particularly enlightening.⁹² Recruitment of passengers had begun by



February, and demand for passages to Newfoundland was brisk. Potential employment in the Newfoundland fishery was the largest drawing card: "the success of these passengers in procuring employment will influence many more in emigrating from this country," Kough informed an associate, "and if you can procure orders for the shipping of youngsters, they can be got here to any number required." Women were charged a different fare than men: "for men I obtain £6.10.0 British on bail but have taken two for £10.10.0 [£5.5.0 each] Irish cash. Women £7.10.0 British on Bail four of which I have taken for £24.18.6 [£6.4.7½ each] cash."⁹³ Fear of the Atlantic crossing obviously played on potential passengers' minds, for a number were dismayed by the *Concord's* small size and poor appearance (a situation that Kough sought to remedy with a coat of paint). Ultimately, however, finances dictated the fate of many emigrants, who opted for cheaper passage (as low as £4) on board vessels from Waterford, regardless of traveling conditions.⁹⁴



The *Concord* finally sailed with seventy-nine passengers (although Kough had hoped for over one hundred). The average fare was £6.15.0 (this suggests that most passengers traveled on bail). Provisions were generous, compared with the other accounts above, and consisted of the following: 14 *pipes* of water "in addition to the casks belonging to the vessel"; 31 cwt. of bread; 10 cwt. of oatmeal; 420 stones of potatoes; 89 lb. of butter; 1 tierce of beer; 213 lb. of beef; and 1,116 lb. of pork.⁹⁵ Every two passengers were permitted to bring on board one chest containing personal effects,⁹⁶ and while the voyage out was lengthier than usual owing to contrary winds and weather,⁹⁷ no passengers complained during the voyage (according to Kough) of inconvenience or lack of room between the cargo hold and the deck. Although not all the passengers had arranged employment before leaving Ireland, Kough was certain that their purpose in going to Newfoundland was to find work in the fishery: "I am warranted in saying they went for no other purpose, as they would all have preferred shipping here for it to running the risk of obtaining Masters when they got out."

Kough and his St. John's partner, John Boyd, appear to have been more scrupulous operators than many, and the passengers of the *Concord* seem to have had a less traumatic crossing than some Irish migrants bound for the Newfoundland fishery. Still, a footnote must be added to this account, for a report received at the Colonial Office regarding this same passage indicates that the sixty male and twenty-five female passengers on board (evidently, the complement had increased slightly from Kough's initial reporting) "were literally stowed in bulk, and but for the shortness of the passage which had been pretty

general this spring, many of them must have been in a distressing condition."⁹⁸ Kough and Boyd, then, were also susceptible to bringing out "as many as they could stow whether shipped servants or not."

The above accounts of the passage from Ireland to Newfoundland provide insight into a range of emigrant experiences, from the relative comfort of the Presentation sisters, traveling on the *Ariel*, to the distress and debilitation suffered by the passengers of vessels such as the *Fanny* or the unfortunately named *Freedom*. In the middle of the spectrum, there was the more benign crossing provided by Edward Kough on his vessel, *Concord*. The nuns' experience was surely atypical. But just as surely, there must have been other more responsible operators like Kough, who had recruited fishing servants for specific employers on the island and wished to deliver their passengers in fit condition to work at the fishery. By contrast, there were also those carriers who merely wanted to maximize profits by cramming their vessels for the crossing, with few scruples about sufficient provisions of food and water. We can only speculate about how representative these passage experiences were. In terms of women



passengers, given the lack of personal accounts, we must also deploy our imaginations to recreate their fears and reservations, expectations of future prospects, and the tremendous effort to care for families in often primitive conditions—confined to close living quarters for a month and sometimes even two, maneuvering for cooking space on the *cabouse* or a sawed-off puncheon tub with a fire laid on sand and rocks for insulation, jostling for scarce provisions—on board ships that they hoped would transport them to better lives.

Still, despite difficult passages and an often inauspicious welcome (in terms of both physical environment and official attitudes), Irish women came to the southern Avalon in increasing numbers after the middle of the eighteenth century, and they would be integral to community formation and survival.

Notes:

Note 1: James Joseph O'Brien, "Cape Broyle," unpublished chronicle of the old families of Cape Broyle, 1971, copy in possession of author. "Jim Joe" was a repository of the oral tradition and the acknowledged community historian of Cape Broyle during his long lifetime. In his later years, he began to transcribe much of the information he had accumulated about the community and individual families who had settled there. His writings, when compared with more traditional historical sources, such as nominal census material at the Provincial Archives of Newfoundland and Labrador (PANL), are amazingly accurate. His reporting of Michael Ryan's death corresponds with reports of the loss of the sealing schooner *Confidence* off Petty Harbour Motion in 1830; see Shannon Ryan, *The Ice Hunters: A History of Newfoundland Sealing to 1914* (St. John's: Breakwater, 1994), 285-86. Similar information about the Ryan family also appears in the Ferryland Museum Database (FMDB), except that Mary's name appears as Margaret and the date of her remarriage to Edward Coady is given as 1832; see FMDB, file 02B (Morry and Carter Families), notes on the Coady family tree. The FMDB file also notes that the Ryans and Edward Coady had initially emigrated together from Wexford. Regardless of some minor

discrepancies, however, the essence of the Ryans' experience remains the same in both retellings. back

Note 2: Vice-Admiral Charles M. Pole (Web Link) was governor of Newfoundland in 1800 and 1801. He commissioned local magistrate Robert Carter to take a nominal census of Ferryland district, which detailed the names of families, fishing employers, fishing servants, and dieters who were resident in the district in the winter of 1799-1800 and the following summer. back

Note 3: See, for example: MHA, Keith Matthews Collection, 16-C-2-035, Sir John Berry, "A list of ye Planters Names with an acct. of their Concerns from Cape de Race to Cape Bonavista," 12 September 1675 (from CO 1, vol. 35 [17ii], fols. 149v-156); PANL, GN 2/39/A, Berry Census, 1675 and 1677 (from CO 1); and MHA, R 95/20, "List of Inhabitants' Names, the No. of Their Families, 1708" (from CO 194, vol. 4, fols. 253-56). back

Note 4: MHA, Matthews Collection, 16-D-1-006, Story, "An account of what fishing ships, Sack Ships, Planters & boat keepers from Trepasse to Bonavist & from thence to faire Island the Northward part of Newfoundland," 1 September 1681 (from CO 1, vol. 47 [52i], fols. 113-121v). back

Note 5: In 1679, two years previous to Story's account, for example, five sack ships from Ireland (three from Waterford, one from Youghal, and one from Dublin) had been reported in Newfoundland. In 1715, twenty vessels from Ireland were reported by local naval officers. See C. Grant Head, *Eighteenth Century Newfoundland* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, in association with the Institute of Canadian Studies, Carleton University, 1976), 86. back

Note 6: Head, *Eighteenth Century Newfoundland*, 89 (quoting Calendar of State Papers, Colonial, 1720, 178). back

Note 7: The traditional ship fishery at Newfoundland consisted of large vessels that transported smaller boats and large crews to Newfoundland each spring to fish for cod, returning to home ports at the close of the season in late October. A sedentary or resident fishery was also carried out by inhabitants who remained on the island in the wake of official colonization attempts and fishing personnel who opted to stay in Newfoundland for the longer term. By the middle of the seventeenth century, the bye-boat fishery had also developed; bye-boatkeepers kept their fishing shallops in Newfoundland, while they and their small crews traveled to and from Newfoundland each season as passengers on the larger fishing ships. There were variations in pattern as well as interchanges of personnel between the ship, bye-boat, and sedentary fisheries. All three sectors fished inshore in the seventeenth century. A bank, or offshore, fishery did not develop until the early eighteenth century. See: Keith Matthews, "A History of the West of England-Newfoundland Fishery," D.Phil. diss., Oxford University, 1968); and Head, *Eighteenth Century Newfoundland*. back

Note 8: MHA, MF-105, Letterbook of Capt. Michael Richards (Commander at Fort William, 1700-03), 134-55, Hearings at Fort William, 9-12 March 1702. back

Note 9: MHA, MF-105, Richards Letterbook, 215-17, "Request to y^e. Commodore Leake," 20 September 1702. back

Note 10: CO 194, vol. 3, fols. 424-25, particularly fol. 425, Remarks of Naval Officer Cummins in relation to Newfoundland, [1705?-received at the Colonial Office via the House of Commons 25 February 1706]. back

Note 11: MHA, Matthews Collection, 04/058, coll. 24, box 9, sub-series 04-056/01, file 25-B-2-1, Van Brugh to Commissioners for Trade, 6 November 1738 (from CO 194, vol. 10, fol. 93). back

Note 12: Raymond J. Lahey, James Louis O'Donel in *Newfoundland, 1784-1807: The Establishment of the Roman Catholic Church*, ed. Shannon Ryan and G. M. Story (St. John's: Newfoundland Historical Society, pamphlet 8, 1984), 5. back

Note 13: CO 194, vol. 25, fols. 107-11, particularly fol. 110, Drake, "Answers to the Queries Contained in His Majesty's Instructions," 22 November 1751. back

Note 14: Other areas of particular concern, because of their significant Irish populations, were Conception Bay and St. John's. back

Note 15: CO 194, vol. 25, fol. 110, Drake, "Answers." back

Note 16: PANL, GN 2/1/A, vol. 7 (reverse end), 96-98, Petition from the merchants and principal inhabitants of Renew's to Montagu, 29 July 1778. back

Note 17: PANL, GN 2/1/A, vol. 7 (reverse end), 159-60, Montagu to Robert Carter, Magistrate, October 1778. back

Note 18: CO 194, vol. 42, fols. 167-69, Ogden to Waldegrave, 2 July 1800. back

Note 19: See: Michael McCarthy, *The Irish in Newfoundland, 1600-1900: Their Trials, Tribulations, and Triumphs* (St. John's: Creative Publishers, 1999), 8-9; and MHA, Matthews Collection, 04/058, coll. 24, box 9, sub-series 04-057/02, file 25-A-27-56, Cadre Smith to Commissioners for Trade, 1742, and Byng to Commissioners for Trade, 1743 (from CO 194, vol. 11, fol. 41). back

Note 20: PANL, GN 2/1/A, vol. 2, 236, Proclamation, Dorrill, 22 September 1755. back

Note 21: Harold A. Innis, *The Cod Fisheries: The Study of an International Economy*, rev. ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1954), 153, n. 32. back

Note 22: While theories of race propagated by British anthropologists and phrenologists of the Victorian age lent "scientific" validity to Anglo-Saxon claims to superiority, English perceptions of Irish difference—of racial and cultural inferiority—long pre-date the period of this study. back

Note 23: The *Penal Laws* or *Popery Laws* were statutes legislated in both England (later, Britain) and Ireland to restrict the civil rights of Roman Catholics and, to a lesser extent, Protestant Dissenters. The English laws grew out of the English Reformation, and various acts were passed over the next two centuries that limited the rights of Catholics and Dissenters to hold office, vote, own or inherit property, bear arms, operate their own schools, and (in the case of Catholics) practice their faith fully and openly. In Ireland, Penal Laws of a similar nature were passed by an Irish Protestant parliament from the 1690s, after William of Orange defeated the Catholic-supported Jacobite cause in Ireland, through the first half of the eighteenth century. By the late eighteenth century, these disabilities were gradually being lifted in Britain and Ireland, but Catholics could still not sit in parliament or hold certain high offices until Catholic Emancipation was achieved in 1829. Some recent scholars have questioned the effectiveness of the Penal Laws, arguing that they were piecemeal and unevenly enforced, and suggesting that they could be readily circumvented by conversion to the Church of England/Ireland. But this only qualifies the effectiveness of the regime. While some were not consistently enforced, others (such as the right to vote, sit in parliament, or hold office) were strictly applied. Furthermore, regardless of the degree of enforcement, the fact that these laws existed at all must have had a debilitating effect on those they targeted. The laws may not have been *systematic*, but they created systemic discrimination in both Britain and Ireland that took generations to correct. And in Ireland, where Catholics were overwhelmingly in the majority, they also created a sense of grievance and mistrust of Irish Protestants and the British government that lasted long after the formal Penal Laws had been repealed.

In the Newfoundland context, there were no specific directions given to governors about enforcing Penal Laws, other than the "except Papists" clause that appeared in governors' instructions up to 1779 and permitted liberty of conscience to all Christian faiths other than Catholicism in Newfoundland. (The same clause appeared in instructions to governors of many British colonies until 1779-82.) In practical terms, this left the application of the remaining laws somewhat to gubernatorial discretion, and there was some variation of the level of enforcement from governor to governor. Still, the governors would have been expected to uphold the laws of the mother country, and certain key Penal Laws, such as those mentioned here in the text, were more consistently applied than others. For a discussion of the "except Papists" clause in colonial instructions, see Hans Rollmann, "Religious Enfranchisement and Roman Catholics in Eighteenth-Century Newfoundland," in *Religion and Identity: The Experience of Irish and Scottish Catholics in Atlantic Canada*, ed. Terrence Murphy and Cyril J. Byrne (St. John's: Jespersion Press, 1987), 34-52. back

Note 24: In 1762, a governor ordered local magistrates "to Continue in due force the Tax levied on the Roman Catholicks p[er] late Governor [James] Webb"; PANL, GN 2/1/A vol. 3, 149-50, Order from Governor Thomas Graves to JPs of St. John's, 29 October 1762. The reference here is obscure, but Howley explains that this was a tax on Catholic and Irish traders, which had apparently lapsed due to irregular collection during the latter stages of the Seven Years' War; Rev. Michael F. Howley, *Ecclesiastical History of Newfoundland* (Boston: Doyle and Whittle, 1888; reprint, Belleville, ON: Mika, 1971), 178. back

Note 25: Similar anecdotes also appear in: Howley, *Ecclesiastical History*, 181; Frank Galgay, Michael McCarthy, Sr. Teresina Bruce, and Sr. Magdalen O'Brien, *A Pilgrimage of Faith: A History of the Southern Shore from Bay Bulls to St. Shott's* (St. John's: Harry Cuff, 1983), 27 and 65; and RCAASJ, Michael A. Fleming Papers, 103/32, Dean Patrick Cleary, "A note of church history," 4 and 6-7. (Cleary was a Catholic parish priest at Witless Bay and kept a rough scrapbook of local events and Catholic Church history on the island that covered the period 1784-1850. It is more commonly known as "Dean Cleary's Notebook.") Visual displays of these episodes also appear in the Capt. William Jackman Museum at Renew's. back

Note 26: Precisely these measures were taken in 1755 by Governor Dorrill and his Surrogate, Thomas Burnett, against Catholics who were caught flying the Irish colors, harboring a priest, and celebrating Mass in the Harbour Grace area. Fines were imposed, houses burned, and deportations ordered in Harbour Grace, Carbonear, Harbour Main, Crockers Cove, and Mosquito Cove from 15 August to the end of September 1755. See various orders in PANL, GN 2/1/A, vol. 2, 202 and 251-64, August-September 1755. back

Note 27: For example, the appointment of the first naval governor in 1729, with power to appoint justices of the peace, and the establishment of a customs house after the Seven Years' War. For a discussion of the evolution of the legal system in Newfoundland, see Chapter 6, n. 4. back

Note 28: In response to large-scale organized colonization attempts in Newfoundland in the early seventeenth century, West of England stakeholders in the Newfoundland trade became concerned that resident fishermen would have an advantage over migratory fishermen. They requested and were granted a Western Charter in 1634 that established the priority of the migratory fishery at Newfoundland and acknowledged the customary rights of a "free" fishery. As the ship fishery went into a decline at mid-century, primarily due to wars and market conditions, fishing ship interests found scapegoats in the bye-boat and resident fisheries, and effectively lobbied to have their concerns addressed in revised Charters in 1660/1 and 1670/1. However, they began to abandon their anti-settlement lobbying by the end of the seventeenth century, once they realized that their trade would only be enhanced by a resident fishery and that the various sectors of the industry—ship, bye-boat, and resident—were complementary in nature. Still, they agreed with the policy to limit local government, which would have reduced their powers as established by the Western Charters and the later *Newfoundland Act* of 1699, and lobbied against the various embryonic measures of governance introduced in the eighteenth century. See Matthews, "West of England-Newfoundland Fishery." back

Note 29: Palliser's term at Newfoundland was unusually long. One should also note that at this point, naval governors only served at Newfoundland during the fishing season. Not until the winter of 1817-18 were governors instructed to spend the winter in Newfoundland. The incumbent at that time, Governor Francis Pickmore, succumbed that same winter to the stresses of office and the harsh physical climate, an inauspicious beginning to year-long governorship of the island. back

Note 30: PANL, GN 2/1/A, vol. 4: 2-3, "Order rel[ative] to the property of Land & cutting grass in this Country," Palliser, 31 July 1766; 9, Order, Palliser, 16 August 1766; and 19, Order, Palliser, 15 September 1766. back

Note 31: PANL, GN 2/1/A, vol. 4, 41-44, Order, Palliser, 2 June 1767. Palliser's regulations would provide the backbone of the *Act 15 Geo. III, Cap. 31*, which was the British government's final major effort to bolster the ship fishery at Newfoundland. It was passed in 1776, after Palliser's term as governor had come to an end, but became known locally as *Palliser's Act* because he had formulated its spirit and intent. back

Note 32: CO 194, vol.16, fol. 188, "Annual Return on the Fisheries and Inhabitants, etc., at Newfoundland for the year 1765." Throughout the second half of the eighteenth century, Catholics formed roughly half of the island's population. Palliser's overestimate

was handily bested by Governor Waldegrave, at the time of the United Irish scare, when he warned that nearly nine-tenths of the inhabitants of Newfoundland were natives of Ireland or their descendants. See CO 194, vol. 40, fols. 93-95, Waldegrave to Colonial Office, 19 June 1798. However, the perceptions of both governors were likely skewed by the increasing predominance of Irish Catholics in the administrative center of St. John's in the latter decades of the eighteenth century. back

Note 33: CO 194, vol.16, fol. 188, Annual Return, 1765. back

Note 34: PANL, GN 2/1/A, vol. 3, 272-73, Order, Palliser, 31 October 1764. back

Note 35: PANL, GN 2/1/A, vol. 4, 79, Order, Palliser, 23 October 1767. back

Note 36: PANL, GN 2/1/A: vol. 4, 201, Order, Byron, 29 September 1769; vol. 4, 285, Order, Byron, 31 October 1770; vol. 5, 60, Order, Shuldham, 24 June 1772; vol. 5, 102, Order, Shuldham, 13 July 1772; vol. 5, 143, Order, Shuldham, 12 October 1773; vol. 6, 17, Order, Duff, 12 July 1775; vol. 6, 100-101, Orders (2), Duff, 16 October 1775; vol. 7, 33-35, Circular Letter, Montagu to the Magistrates of the various districts in Newfoundland, 6 October 1777; vol. 7, 70, Order, Montagu, 3 October 1778; vol. 12, 38-41, Proclamation and Public Notice, Milbanke, 13 October 1789; vol. 12, 157, Public Notice, King, 19 September 1792; vol. 14, 282-87, Proclamation, Waldegrave, and covering correspondence to the Magistrates of Newfoundland, 27 September 1798; and vol. 16, 282-87, Proclamations (2), Gambier, 18 September 1802. After Waldegrave's 1798 proclamation, the magistrates of St. John's convinced him that dieters had become essential to the island's economy, particularly in terms of the *Western* (or bank) fishery, which began earlier than the regular fishing season, and the seal fishery, which was carried out completely in the off-season. Waldegrave modified his regulations to permit a limited number of fishing servants to remain over the winter, provided that their names, intended residences, and previous and potential employers were registered. See PANL, GN 2/1/A, vol. 14: 403-8, Magistrates at St. John's to Waldegrave, 16 October 1798; and 409-14, Waldegrave to Magistrates at St. John's, 17 October 1798. Nonetheless, Gambier's 1802 proclamation reiterated earlier warnings that houses that kept dieters during the winter would be torn down. back

Note 37: PANL, GN 2/1/A, vol. 4, 285, Order, Byron, 31 October 1770. This provision was not repeated in the orders of succeeding governors. back

Note 38: PANL, GN 2/1/A, vol. 2, 102-3, Milbanke to "M^r O Donnell, R. C. Priest" [note the refusal to acknowledge O Donel's ecclesiastical rank], 2 November 1790, while on board the *Salisbury*. To a large extent, Milbanke was reacting to a recent large-scale Irish factional fight that had occurred in Ferryland. His decision was influenced by the surrogate who heard the ensuing cases, Captain Edward Pellew. Pellew felt that Catholic priests should be removed from the island altogether (see Chapter 5). back

Note 39: PANL, GN 2/1/A, vol. 5, 23, Byron to William Keen, JP, Bonavista, 14 October 1771. back

Note 40: PANL, GN 2/1/A, vol. 7 (reverse end), 12-13, Proclamation, Montagu, 7 July 1777. back

Note 41: PANL, GN 2/1/A, vol. 7 (reverse end), 13-14, Montagu to Carter, July 1777. back

Note 42: No orders specifically directed at English Protestants during the period appear in either of the two main series in which governors would have recorded them: CO 194 and PANL, GN 2/1/A. back

Note 43: The 1671 Charter banned habitation within six miles of the shore and prohibited the transportation of any passengers to Newfoundland whatsoever. It was followed by an order-in-council in 1675 stipulating that all plantation at Newfoundland be discouraged and any inhabitants encouraged to remove themselves to New England or back to their home country. Another order in 1676 directed that the inhabitants be forcibly removed. After pro-settlement reports by naval commodores Berry and Russell, as well as an effective petition campaign led by planter John Downey, these orders were rescinded. back

Note 44: W. Gordon Handcock, *Soe longe as there comes noe women: Origins of English Settlement in Newfoundland* (St. John's: Breakwater Books, 1989), 31-2 (citing CO 195, vol. 1, fol. 41). back

Note 45: MHA, MF-105, Richards Letterbook, 215-17, "Request to y^e. Commodore Leake," 20 September 1702; see also 129-30, "Instructions for y^e. Harbour Guard relating to y^e. Inhabitants," [February 1702?]. back

Note 46: The Newfoundland situation also contrasts with that of New South Wales, where women were recruited as settlers, after an initial perception of women who ventured into the bush as whores was quickly over-written by images of women as civilizers and moral guardians who would help to regulate men's behavior and establish stable family life in frontier settlements. See Malcolm Campbell, *Kingdom of the Ryans: The Irish in Southwest New South Wales, 1816-1890* (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 1997), 118-20. back

Note 47: Handcock, *Soe longe*, 32 (citing CO 1, vol. 5, fol. 241). back

Note 48: MHA, Matthews Collection, 16-D-1-006, Story, "An Account," 1681. back

Note 49: Cullum and Baird provide a discussion of various efforts to discourage women settlers in Newfoundland in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, but they do not examine these actions in terms of ethnicity. See Linda Cullum and Maeve Baird, "A Woman's Lot': Women and Law in Newfoundland from Early Settlement to the Twentieth Century," in *Pursuing Equality: Historical Perspectives on Women in Newfoundland and Labrador*, ed. Linda Kealey, Social and Economic Papers, no. 20 (St. John's: ISER, 1993), 68-75. back

Note 50: PANL, GN 2/1/A, vol. 3, 232, Order, Palliser, 2 July 1764. back

Note 51: PANL, GN 2/1/A, vol. 4, 23, Order, Palliser, 2 October 1766, in the matter of *Thomas Pendergrass v. Jonathan Blakener*. back

Note 52: PANL, GN 2/1/A, vol. 7, 35-36, Order, Montagu, 20 October 1777. back

Note 53: PANL, GN 2/1/A, vol. 18, 307-8, Gower to the Magistrates of St. John's, 18 September 1805. back

Note 54: PANL, GN 2/1/A, vol. 20, 47, Holloway to the Magistrates of St. John's, 29 August 1808. back

Note 55: See CO 194, vol. 38, fols. 86-101, 110-18, 180-82, and 282-83. And see PANL, GN 2/1/A: vol. 11, 458-60; and vol. 12, 8-13, 30-31, 48, and 54-55. See also Bob Reece, "'Such a Banditti': Irish Convicts in Newfoundland, 1789—Part 1," *Newfoundland Studies* 13, no. 1 (spring 1997): 1-29. A listing at CO 194, vol. 38, fols. 94-96, provides details such as name, age, birthplace, crime, and sentence for the male convicts detained in St. John's, but contains no information on any female convicts. A further, partial listing at CO 194, fol. 38, fol. 112, does provide the names of the seventy-four male and six female convicts who were removed to Spithead on board the brig *Elizabeth and Clare*, but no details on those who remained in Newfoundland. The number of female convicts who actually arrived in St. John's is unclear, but likely included the six who sailed on the *Elizabeth and Clare* as well as one other who was deported shortly thereafter for prostitution. This leaves the possibility that all or some of the remaining five women from the original twelve, as well as a number of their male cohorts, remained on the southern Avalon where they had originally landed and where they may have melted into the predominantly Irish population. back

Note 56: CO 194, vol. 38, fols. 86-87, Governor Milbanke to Grenville, 20 September 1789. back

Note 57: CO 194, vol. 38, fols. 282-83, "Extract of a Letter from Newfoundland," 21 August 1789; italics added. back

Note 58: Although this episode was an isolated one in Newfoundland, it can be contextualized by the larger-scale transportation of female convicts to Australia from

1788 to the mid-nineteenth century. There, too, the presence of such women provoked profound anxieties in local authorities, for the women's visibility in public spaces and their sexual assertiveness were seen as polluting and contaminating—a source of social chaos. See: Joy Damousi, *Depraved and Disorderly: Female Convicts, Sexuality, and Gender in Colonial Australia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); and Babette Smith, *A Cargo of Women: Susannah Watson and the Convicts of the "Princess Royal"* (Kensington: New South Wales University Press, 1988). back

Note 59: MHA, Matthews Collection, 04/048, coll. 24, box 9, sub-series 04-057/05, file 25-A-27-57, Petition of Poole merchants to Commissioners for Trade, 8 November 1752 (from CO 194, vol. 13, fol. 34). back

Note 60: PANL, MG 49, Sweetman Collection, box 5, Saunders and Sweetman Letterbook, 1788-93 and 1802-04, Pierce Sweetman at Placentia to "Dear Brother," 11 May 1788. back

Note 61: Saunders and Sweetman provided transportation back to Waterford each fall for their fishing servants, keeping only a winter crew to cut ships' timber and carry out other preparations and repairs for the next year's fishing season. By 1789 and 1790, however, Pierce Sweetman, who was running the Placentia branch of the business (with dealers in St. Mary's Bay and Trepassey), was observing the growing numbers of "unshipped" men who were staying through the winter and anticipating that many of the bills drawn for servants' wages would likely be returned to the local store for provisions by servants who had no work. See Letterbook, box 5, "PS" to "Dear Sirs" [likely, principals], 3 November 1789; "PS" to John Blackney, November 1789; and "PS" to John Blackney, 1 November 1790. Similarly, in 1802, he reported low numbers of servants wanting to return to Ireland and wondered whether he should cancel the return voyage to Waterford altogether, although he finally sent the vessel, feeling that it would not be prudent to allow too many unemployed servants to remain over the winter. See Letterbook: Pierce Sweetman in Placentia to [Francis Eamond ?], 9 October 1802; and "PS" to "My D^r. Saunders," 21 October 1802. back

Note 62: Fishing admirals had the first choice of fishing rooms in harbors for any given season, and certain coves were repeatedly selected because they were well situated in terms of shore facilities and proximity to fishing grounds. Thus, the name "Admiral's Cove" became quite common along the English Shore—a situation that caused increasing confusion as postal operations and other government services increased and centralized. On the *Southern Shore*, there was an Admiral's Cove in Fermeuse harbor and another in Cape Broyle harbor. The Newfoundland government changed a number of community names in the twentieth century—some for practical reasons, others simply to prettify or sanitize the name. In the process, Admiral's Cove, Fermeuse, became Port Kirwan, while Admiral's Cove, Cape Broyle, maintained its original name. back

Note 63: PCA, Sister Magdalene O'Shaughnessey to Rev. Mother, Presentation Convent in Galway, 22 September 1833. back

Note 64: PCA, Sister Mary Xavier Lynch to Rev. Mother, Presentation Convent in Galway, 22 September 1833. back

Note 65: PCA, Mother Mary Bernard Kirwan to Rev. Mother, Presentation Convent in Galway, [1833]. back

Note 66: PCA, Sister Mary Xavier Lynch to "My dearest Ann," 6 January 1834. back

Note 67: PCA, Sister O'Shaughnessey to "My ever dearest Sister M. Augustine," 21 November 1833. back

Note 68: Bishop Fleming to Mother Superior of Galway convent, 17 July 1833, and 5 August 1833, in Howley, *Ecclesiastical History*, 281-82 and 284-86. back

Note 69: In 1773, for example, Governor Shuldham instructed the vice-admiralty court at St. John's to look into the complaint of Bridget Kent in relation to the "inhuman and Barbarous treatment she received on Board the Brig ----- Charles Durell Master, in the course of her passage from Waterford to Harbour Grace last Spring, and as those Acts of Violence said to have been committed upon her, were done upon the High Seas,... to bring all and every the Offenders to Justice." See PANL, GN 2/1/A, vol. 5 (reverse end),

74, Shuldham to Edward White, Judge of the Vice Admiralty Court, St. John's, July 1773. [back](#)

Note 70: James Joseph O'Brien, "Cape Broyle, 1959-60," unpublished community history, [1960?], copy in possession of author, 1; and O'Brien, *Cape Broyle* (1971), 8. [back](#)

Note 71: Daniel W. Prowse, *A History of Newfoundland from the English, Colonial, and Foreign Records* (London: Macmillan, 1895; reprint, Belleville, ON: Mika Studio, 1972), 406. This information is also on display at the Capt. William Jackman Museum. [back](#)

Note 72: Various correspondence involving the Colonial Office, the governor and other local authorities, and merchants of both St. John's and Waterford appears at PANL, GN 2/1/A, vol. 27, 16-24, 33-46, 117-22, and 205. [back](#)

Note 73: See, for example, correspondence and documents at PANL, GN 2/1/A: vol. 27, 408-11; vol. 28, 362-64, 409-15, 433-34, 446, and 482; vol. 30, 139-40, 166-67, and 192; and vol. 31, 423-25, 473, and 490-92. Even masters and owners who had followed the spirit, if not the exact letter, of the law (e.g., provided adequate provisions and space, but failed to produce a satisfactory passenger list) were subject to fines, although some penalties were eventually mitigated. Local and Irish customs officers were also occasionally brought to task for paying insufficient attention to enforcing the regulations. [back](#)

Note 74: PANL, GN 2/1/A, vol. 27, 408-10, Thomas Coote, Chief Magistrate at St. John's, to Governor Pickmore, 28 April 1817. [back](#)

Note 75: See, for example, correspondence at PANL, GN 2/1/A, vol. 35, 288-90, 329-30, and 339-41. [back](#)

Note 76: Compare this food and water allowance with that of the Irish convicts who had been returned from Newfoundland to Spithead in 1789: 3½ lb. of bread, 2 lb. of flour, 3 lb. of pork, 3 pt. of peas, ½ lb. of butter, and 7 gal. of water *each* per week. See CO 194, vol. 38, fols. 86-101, particularly fol. 101, Advertisement for a vessel to transport the Irish convicts to Spithead, dated 17 September 1789, enclosure in Governor Milbanke to Colonial Office, 20 September 1789. In addition, Milbanke had arranged for the convicts to be supplied with forty beds, bolsters, blankets, and coverlets, and each was issued "navy slops," consisting of shirt, frock, trousers, shoes, and stockings. See CO 194, vol. 38, fols. 180-82, particularly fol. 182, "An Account of the Expense of Maintaining and Sending to England in the Brig *Elizabeth and Clare* a Number of Irish Convicts, who were landed upon the Island of Newfoundland in the Year 1789," enclosure in Milbanke to Colonial Office, 8 December 1789. [back](#)

Note 77: CO 194, vol. 51, fols. 17-23, Governor Duckworth to Colonial Office, November 1811. See also CO 194, vol. 56, fols. 63-70, particularly fol. 66, "A List of Vessels that have arrived at St. Johns Newfoundland from Ireland with Passengers," enclosure in Governor Richard Keats to Colonial Office, 1 October 1815. This correspondence with attachments also appears in PANL, GN 2/1/A, vol. 27, 16-18. See also Cyril Byrne, "The Case of the Schooner *Fanny* from Waterford to St. John's, 1811," *An Nasc* 3, no. 1 (spring/summer 1990): 19-22. [back](#)

Note 78: An abstract of Irish passengers on various vessels arriving at St. John's in 1811 indicated that 125 men, twenty women, and ten children disembarked at St. John's from the *Fanny*; however, these must have been approximations because, allowing for thirty-two deaths en route, this would have brought the total passenger complement to 187, not 184. See PANL, GN 2/1/A, vol. 22, 24, "N^o. of Passengers arrived from Ireland 1811." Still, these estimates are closer than that of the original list of survivors forwarded to the Colonial Office, which contained only the names of one hundred men. See CO 194, vol. 51, fols. 17-23. [back](#)

Note 79: This proportion of male to female passengers is high, but representative of the Napoleonic War period, when there was an employment boom for male servants in the Newfoundland fishery. Total numbers of Irish passengers arriving at St. John's are available for the following years:

<u>Men</u>	<u>Women</u>	<u>Children</u>	<u>Total</u>
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1807	614 (91.6%)	56 (8.4%)		670
1811	1,026 (84.6%)	128 (10.6%)	59 (4.9%)	1,213
1812	1,541 (92.2%)	116 (6.9%)	14 (0.8%)	1,671
1815*	2,060 (92.3%)	172 (7.7%)		2,232

* Passengers were reported as "male" or "female"; whether these numbers included children is not clear.

Still, some individual vessels carried proportionally larger complements of women passengers: e.g., the *Harmony* out of Cork brought twenty-five men and ten women to Newfoundland in 1807; and in 1811, the *Joyce* arrived in August with twenty-four men, eighteen women, and thirteen children, while the *Jenny* came in October with three men, eleven women, and eight children (given the late arrivals, these two vessels were obviously not carrying servants shipped for the current fishing season). Indeed, the *Joyce*, a vessel out of New Ross, usually carried a significant number of women passengers even when it came out in the spring (thirty-six in 1812, and thirty-five in 1815). See abstracts of passenger lists at PANL, GN 2/1/A: vol. 19, 103; and vol. 22, 24 and 297. And see CO 194, vol. 56, fols. 63-70, Governor Keats to Colonial Office, 1 October 1815.

Unfortunately, there are no other abstracts of passenger lists available for the period of this study, and thus it is impossible to estimate the overall proportion of women passengers to men outside the boom period of the Napoleonic Wars. However, it is safe to assume that passenger complements were predominantly male, although not always as heavily weighted as in the above years. In 1825, for example, women made up 30 percent of the passengers on board Edward Kough's vessel *Concord* (see below). back

Note 80: CO 194, vol. 56, fols. 63-70, Keats to Colonial Office, 1 October 1815. Keats noted that the same problems did not exist on ships from England and Jersey, and that, at any rate, the volume of traffic from these countries was not comparable to that from Ireland. back

Note 81: Many Irish passengers to Newfoundland traveled *on bond* or *on bail*. They promised to pay their fares upon arrival, and provided the names of bondsmen in both Ireland and Newfoundland who would be held responsible for their fares in default of payment. Often, the security in Newfoundland was given by fishing employers in partial fulfillment of the terms of shipping papers. back

Note 82: CO 194, vol. 71, fols. 313-15, Report of A. Hogsett, Naval Officer at St. John's, 1 May 1825. The practice of having passengers provision themselves was a great cost-cutting measure, but sometimes vessel owners or masters felt a backlash. In this same report, Hogsett tells of the *Ceres*, recently arrived from Cork, which "had not been at sea more than ten days, by the Masters [Bowman] own confession, when the Passengers were quite out of Provisions and he further states that he was obliged to walk the Deck armed until he got supplied from another vessel at Sea." back

Note 83: Repercussions of the slackening of regulations governing the Newfoundland trade were also felt in the broader passenger trade, as some owners and masters of vessels clearing Ireland declared their passengers' destination to be the Newfoundland fishery when, in actuality, they were bound for elsewhere. Such was the case of the brig *Thomas Farrell*, which cleared New Ross in the spring of 1825 with one hundred men and sixty-two women reportedly destined for the Newfoundland fishery. The passengers had actually contracted with the owner for passage to Quebec, but the owner's false declaration enabled him to overcrowd the vessel and to require the passengers to provision themselves. The vessel did make a stop at St. John's as a formality, but the passengers ultimately moved on to Quebec. See Cyril Byrne, "The Brig *Thomas Farrell*," *An Nasc* 4, no. 1 (winter 1991): 6-7 (citing CO 194, vol. 71, fols. 322-23). Another intriguing episode occurred in 1833, when the brig *Good Intent* out of Youghal arrived in St. John's with a passenger list that, according to the inspecting customs officer, "so totally differs both in name and description with the Persons actually on board, that of the whole number containing in that List, not one Individual is to be found which corresponds with the names therein stated." See PANL, GN 2/2, vol. 13, 77-78, Customs Officers, St. John's, to James Crowdy, local Colonial Secretary, 24 May 1833. back

Note 84: See PANL, GN 2/1/A, vol. 36, 180-83: Governor Thomas Cochrane to J. Moore, Surveyor of Navigation for St. John's, 18 May 1827; Chief Magistrate to Cochrane, 17 May 1827; Moore to Cochrane, May 1827; as well as related correspondence and documents at vol. 36, 191, 215, 218, 283-84, 361-74, and 392-93; and vol. 37, 95-101. And see PANL, GN 2/2, vol. 2, 110-21, 132-34, 199-206, 256-76, and 462-68, various correspondence and reports in May, August, and November 1827. [back](#)

Note 85: PANL, GN 2/2, vol. 2, 110-12, Moore to W. A. Clarke, local Colonial Secretary, 17 May 1827. [back](#)

Note 86: See: PANL, GN 2/1/A, vol. 38, 163-64, 174, 177-78, and 196, various correspondence and reports through August and September 1831; PANL, GN 2/2, vol. 13, 199-202, Customs Officer, St. John's, to Colonial Secretary, 25 April 1833, enclosing memorial of Charles McCallagher, 1 January 1833; *Public Ledger*, 26 and 30 August 1831; and *Royal Gazette and Newfoundland Advertiser* [*Royal Gazette*], 31 August 1831. [back](#)

Note 87: PANL, GN 2/2, vol. 2, 258-61, Warner to the District Surgeon and Magistrates at St. John's, 1 August 1827. [back](#)

Note 88: PANL, GN 2/2, vol. 2, 256-76, various medical reports to the Magistrates at St. John's, 1-3 August 1827. Quotation from report of J. Shea, 266-67, 1 August 1827. [back](#)

Note 89: PANL, GN 2/2, vol. 2, 263-64, [?-signature indecipherable] to the Magistrates at St. John's, 1 August 1827. [back](#)

Note 90: PANL, GN 2/2, vol. 2, 268-70, Kielley to the Magistrates at St. John's, 3 August 1827. Not surprisingly, when the brig *James* arrived from Ireland less than two weeks later with several sick passengers and crew members, the alarm was raised by attending doctors and clergy, who urged that immediate measures be taken to prevent any intercourse between people of the town and the vessel's passengers and crew. See PANL, GN 2/2, vol. 2, 306-12, various correspondence and reports, 13 August 1827. See also related correspondence at PANL, GN 2/1/A, vol. 36, 266 and 344-45. [back](#)

Note 91: PANL, GN 2/1/A, vol. 36: 241-42, G. W. Busted, Chairman of the Committee for checking Contagion, to W. A. Clarke, for submission to Governor is , 28 July 1827; and related correspondence at 242, 254-65, and 276. [back](#)

Note 92: The following account of the *Concord's* voyage is taken from various correspondence in the MHA, MF-191, Letterbook of Edward Kough (1818-34), February-September 1825. In particular, see: Kough to James M. Henderson, Liverpool, 21 February 1825; Kough to John Boyd, 25 March and 9 April 1825; and Kough to the Inspector General of Customs for Ireland, 21 September 1825. John Boyd was Kough's associate who coordinated orders for passengers and provisions in the St. John's area. [back](#)

Note 93: The higher fares for women are intriguing. The higher bond rate could be explained by their being deemed a slightly greater risk in terms of being able to find employment and pay their passage once in Newfoundland. However, the cash fare—at least in this example—also appears to have been higher. It is possible that women's fares may have included young children traveling with them. [back](#)

Note 94: A comparison of fares to Irish wages of the period would be useful, but the information is difficult to come by on this side of the Atlantic. The secondary literature does outline some wages earned by Irish agricultural laborers of the period, but even here, the data are not consistent. Cormac O Grada estimates the mean nominal wages of agricultural laborers in 1829 at 61d. per week. See Cormac O Grada, *Ireland: A New Economic History, 1780-1939* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 237. He does not indicate an average or mean number of weeks worked, but even assuming full employment, the maximum annual earnings would have been only £13.4.4, likely a high estimate as this type of employment was rarely continuous. Using evidence presented to the Poor Inquiry Commission of the early 1830s (appointed 1833, reporting 1836), Kenneth Connell estimates that the average daily wage of a laborer was 8½d. with a potential employment period of up to 135 days per year; the maximum average annual earnings would, therefore, have been £4.15.7½. See Connell, *The Population of Ireland, 1750-1845* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1950), 76, n. 2. Both Connell's and O Grada's figures, however, are based on aggregate data for Ireland, and it is difficult to determine how representative they are of the southeast counties from which the Newfoundland Irish

came. Furthermore, neither discusses total family earnings, including women's and children's paid work or earnings from pigs and poultry. A more nuanced set of estimates is provided by Mary Cullen, using the same Poor Inquiry evidence to estimate annual family cash incomes (laborer's wages and income from pigs and fowl) for specific baronies in various counties, several from the southeast, e.g.:

Kilkenny	£7.0.0 (occasional laborer)-£9.0.0 (cottier)
Kerry	£6.10.0-£8.18.0
Limerick	£6.15.0-£9.0.0
Tipperary	£11.6.8
Waterford	£8.0.0-£10.0.0

The mean number of days worked in these specific counties was 200 days per year. Cullen also provides some family budgets (for counties outside the southeast), indicating that all or most of family cash incomes were expended on necessities—such as potatoes, rent, and turf—with small amounts left for clothing, soap, and tobacco. Saving for passages would, therefore, have been difficult. See Cullen, "Breadwinners and Providers: Women in the Household Economy of Labouring Families, 1835-6," in *Women Surviving: Studies in Irish Women's History in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, ed. Maria Luddy and Cliona Murphy (Dublin: Poolbeg Press, 1989), 85-116, particularly 92-103. Cullen's estimates, however, do not include women's and children's earnings from seasonal agricultural work or women's earnings from cottage textiles (particularly, the woolen industry). In a documentary collection, Maria Luddy includes a Poor Inquiry report on women's and children's agricultural wages in the 1830s. Based on an earning group of a wife and four children of working age, reports from Munster indicated potential earnings ranging from lows of £1 per wife plus £1.10.0 per child (£7 total) per year to highs of £20 and £22.10.0 per year. No information was cited for Leinster. The report indicated that women's paid work in both the agricultural and cottage industries sectors was in decline. See "Report from His Majesty's Commissioners for Inquiring into the Condition of the Poorer Classes in Ireland, Appendix D (1836)," in Luddy, *Women in Ireland, 1800-1918: A Documentary History* (Cork: Cork University Press, 1995), doc. 47.3, 166-72.

In general, agricultural wages had been declining and unemployment had been rising between the sailing of the *Concord* in 1825 and the hearings of the Poor Inquiry in the early 1830s. Also, smallholders and artisans who formed part of the emigrant stream to Newfoundland would have earned higher incomes than laborers (but had higher expenditures as well). The overall picture on incomes is therefore murky. But certainly, most emigrants would have been hard pressed to save passage money for transatlantic crossings, and the feat must have been extremely difficult for family groups traveling together. The high incidence of emigrants booking their passage to Newfoundland on bond is therefore hardly surprising, given the far higher earning potential in the fishery (see Table 4.1). [back](#)

Note 95: Kough's average fare was likely higher than that of many vessels out of Waterford because Kough, unlike many others in the trade, was actually provisioning his passengers. In 1831, because of damages to one of his ships and continuing competition from Waterford vessels, he considered having his passengers provision themselves as other carriers were doing. Whether he actually succumbed to this practice is unclear. See MHA, MF-191, Kough Letterbook: Kough to Robert Hutton and Co., 1, 9, 14, and 30 March 1831; Kough to Captain Taylor, 2 March 1831; and Kough to William Kydd, 12 April 1831. [back](#)

Note 96: The Saunders and Sweetman Letterbook at PANL, MG 49, also details arrangements for transporting fishing servants' chests to and from Waterford; these would have contained some clothing, small items of gear, and other necessities for the fishing season. [back](#)

Note 97: Kough did not specify the actual length of the voyage, although he indicated in mid-August that he still had not heard news of the *Concord's* arrival and that relatives and friends of passengers were becoming concerned. See MHA, MF-191, Kough Letterbook, Kough to Boyd, 15 August 1825. Lengths of voyage, when stipulated in the previous accounts, ranged from one month to ten weeks. The diary of Ferryland magistrate Robert Carter mentions the traveling time of several vessels arriving in the district from Ireland, ranging from a very short passage of twelve days, through more

average lengths in the twenties, to a longer passage of forty-nine days. See PANL, MG 920, Robert Carter Diary, 1832-52. The Sweetman Collection contains a notebook detailing the arrival and departure of vessels at Placentia from 1831 to 1835. Lengths of voyages from Waterford ranged from very short passages of fifteen, sixteen, and eighteen days, to exceptionally long passages of fifty, fifty-four, and sixty days. Most voyage lengths, however, fell within the range of twenty-two to thirty-eight days. The average passage time was 31.47 days, and the mean length of passage, 30 days. See PANL, MG 49, Sweetman Collection, box 2, file 12. back

Note 98: Byrne, "Brig *Thomas Farrell*." back
