



REVIEW

MEMORIAL UNIVERSITY PUBLICATIONS

The Department of Folklore at Memorial University, founded in 1968, has begun to issue the first volumes of a continuing "Bibliographic and Special Series". Three volumes have recently arrived: *A Regional Discography of Newfoundland and Labrador 1904-1972* (comp., intro., Michael Taft, 1975. No. 1: xxx + 102pp.), *Newfoundland Songs and Ballads in Print 1842-1974* (comp., intro., Paul Mercer & editorial assistance of Pamela J. Gray, 1979. No. 6: xv + 343pp.) and *Songs Sung By French Newfoundlanders* (comp., intro., Gerald Thomas, 1978. No. 4: ix + 93pp.).

The discography is in two sections. The first attempts to cite every record

made by a native Newfoundlander, whether commercial or private. The second section, a checklist rather than a definitive discography, is of Newfoundland songs recorded by non-Newfoundlanders. These two sections are accompanied by a nineteen-page introduction and "brief listing of Newfoundlanders on records", which includes thumb-nail sketches of some of the earlier recording artists of Newfoundland.

As Herbert Halpert points out in his preface, the discography brings together the materials necessary for any ongoing theoretical work in the popular culture of song on record. The volume includes two indexes, one of song titles and the other of accompanists. The first index reveals a total number of 857 songs—of which 721 (or 84%) have been recorded but once. A further 8% have been recorded twice, and the remainder have been recorded from three to twenty-two times.

The most frequently recorded items appear to be entirely of Newfoundland origin. The top fifteen, a

Newfoundland "hit parade", are as follows: "I'se the B'y" (22), "Squid Jigging Ground" (21), "Jack Was Every Inch a Sailor" (17), "Kelligrews Soiree" (16), "Lukey's Boat" (13), "Cod Liver Oil" (12), "Fellow From Fortune", "Let Me Fish Off Cape St. Mary's" and "She's Like the Swallow" (11 each), "Great Big Sea Hove in Long Beach" (10), "Badger Drive", "Old *Polina*", and "Star of Logy Bay" (9 each) and "Harbour Le Cou" and "Hard, Hard Times" (8 each).

Taft indicates usefully which have been recorded by Newfoundlanders and non-Newfoundlanders. If we look at only those recordings by Newfoundland singers, the "hit parade" above is changed somewhat by the deletion of "Cod Liver Oil" (only recorded thrice by Newfoundlanders), "Star of Logy Bay", "Harbour Le Cou", and "Hard, Hard Times" (this last recorded only by Dick Nolan among Newfoundlanders) and the addition of "Ode to Newfoundland", "Mussels in the Corner" (recorded *only* by Newfoundlanders—perhaps the humour is lost on mainlanders!), "Petty Harbour Bait Skiff" and "The Ryans and the Pitmans".

Taft's discography is cross-referenced to Mercer's *Songs and Ballads in Print*, and 144 (or 17%) of Taft's titles are found in Mercer's index. Of the titles given above, only "Mussels in the Corner" had not seen print in the period (1842-1974) covered, which might explain why it has not been recorded by non-Newfoundlanders. Mercer's book comprises a 56-page introduction, a 29-page annotated list of source books, a 110-page index of song

titles, and a 140-page index of first lines. The earliest song in the index is the 1842 reference of Sir Richard Bonycastle to the St. Stephen's Day song, "The wren, the wren, the king of all birds", and the earliest item, "Wadham's Song", a mnemonic verse used to locate landmarks for sailors off the coast, dates back to 1756. The index contains approximately 1500 title entries, and over a hundred different publications were searched for printed song literature.

The third volume, Gerald Thomas' *Songs Sung By French Newfoundlanders*, is on a much more limited scale. The author notes that "the thorough exploration of the Newfoundland French singing tradition has yet to be made". The index is thus based only on three collections acquired by the Folklore and Language Archive of Memorial University. It lists "180 songs in 283 versions collected on tape recorder between 1970 and March 1978 from twenty-four singers in the Franco-phone communities of Cape St-George and Mainland . . . , two of the French-speaking communities on the Port-au-Port peninsula of Newfoundland's west coast." The author (whose "For a Canadian Folklore Ethic" appeared in the March-April *Bulletin*) provides a six-page introduction, together with short sketches of the twenty-four singers whose songs are listed.

All three volumes are obtainable from the Memorial University of Newfoundland Folklore and Language Archive. No prices are indicated.

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