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# Genetic Phantoms: Geography, History, and Ancestral Inheritance in Kenneth Harvey's *The Town That Forgot How to Breathe* and Michael Crummey's *Galore*

CYNTHIA SUGARS

The man of the past is alive in us today to a degree undreamt of before....  
Carl Jung, "The Concept of the Collective Unconscious" (47)

We want to take some of this with us, wherever it is we're going.  
Michael Crummey, "The Living Haunt the Dead" (319)

## ANCESTRAL DETERMINISM: WHERE GEOGRAPHY AND HISTORY MEET

KEVIN MAJOR'S HISTORY of Newfoundland and Labrador, *As Near to Heaven by Sea*, opens with the author teaching canoeing in Mint Brook in central Newfoundland, one of the childhood homes of Joey Smallwood. Major, imagining himself as a young Smallwood, gazes up into the night sky and ponders "the inestimable vastness of the cosmos and its billions of years of history" (2). "Where," he asks, "does Newfoundland and Labrador fit into this bigger picture... ? How long after the 'big bang' did we take on the shape we have today?" (2). If this sounds a little like Ray Smith proposing that "Cape Breton is the thought-control centre of Canada," there is certainly something intentionally reorienting about the claim that renders Newfoundland and Labrador somehow central to the impetus of the Big Bang. Major's historical alignment also adds sub-

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stantial fodder to the oft-cited claim that Newfoundland is Britain's oldest colony. Given its cosmological origins, this may be true in more ways than had been suspected. However, there is something else here that is worth investigating. What I find interesting in Major's cosmic cartography is the way he fuses a sense of spatiality (geography) and temporality (history) in his eventual pinpointing of Newfoundland centrality. The "vastness of the cosmos" points to the spatial dimension, establishing Newfoundland's natural place in the physical scheme of things. The "billions of years of history" establish a continuum over time, constructing an ancient inheritance for Newfoundland in the present. Major proceeds to outline the tectonic shifts that created present-day Newfoundland, thus rendering a version of geography — and history — in the making.

Yet there is another important element at issue here. What is central in Major's conceptualization of "historical time" is a notion of what I call an historical *unconscious*. Historian Jörn Rüsen defines the temporal orientation of historical consciousness as being what roots one in the present: "historical consciousness ties the past to the present in a manner that bestows on present actuality a future perspective" (67). Because Major begins his story of Newfoundland origins with an "intransitive" beginning (the Big Bang), and because the temporal chain from that moment to the present position of the individual gazing up into the sky is not sutured by any consistent thread, the historical sense that Major evokes exists somewhere in the deeper realms of the Newfoundland psyche: something like a collective unconscious in which primordial and historical origins are intuited. Here, the "orientational element" (67) that Rüsen claims is central to historical consciousness is founded, instead, in its geographical complement. Geography, in tandem with history, achieves a determining power that contributes to a distinct group consciousness in the present day. But this is not possible without some concept of a genetic transmission of experience whereby "the life-experiences of previous generations [are] passed on genetically to subsequent generations" (Csapo 122). This is often referred to as Lamarckism after Jean-Baptiste Lamarck's theory that genetic inheritance could be influenced by the environment (also known as the inheritance of acquired characteristics), a scientifically outmoded concept which nevertheless finds expression in discussions of cultural origins and transmission. It was also claimed by such scientists as Lamarck and Ernst Mayr that the most significant genetic reorganization was evident in very small, isolated populations (as on islands). In this semi-mystical configuration, the suturing chain that threads history and geography along a determining continuum is the material presence of human genetics, a line of inheritance that enables a mediation of the mystical through the material.

Major's anecdote highlights the inextricable (and almost requisite) connections between history and geography in discussions of Newfoundland identity. The vastness of the cosmos goes hand-in-hand with the billions of years of history. History is what occurs within a specified spatial terrain, and that terrain, in turn, affects the

historical and social events that occur within it. What distinguishes this, and other forms of psycho-genetic determinism that inform much of the discourse of regional identities in Canada, is the implicit, semi-mystical link that is established between geography/history and heredity. In this case, the pure antiquity of Newfoundland is somehow seen to inform the genetic makeup of its people *as* a people. More specifically, this antiquity is imagined to be a constituent contributor to the inherited character traits or collective psyche of Newfoundland. Despite the fact that Charles Darwin refuted the notion that “knowledge” and “memory” were inheritable traits, this belief has informed much modern thinking about group identities and, indeed, notions of collective destiny.

This invocation of the mystique of geographical and historical determinism has a long history in discourse about Newfoundland. The idea of place has been considered constitutive in the construction of a unique and identifiable Newfoundland character. The microevolutionary aspect of this discourse assumes that isolation compiled with geo-historical context yields a distinct (and genetically transmitted) population type. Frank Davey defines geographical determinism as “a belief that the landscape has — or should have — effects on the personalities and perspectives of its inhabitants, [and] leads to the assumption that these effects should have greater importance to the individual than do other possible grounds of identity” (5). Implicit in this ideology is a sense of the “inevitability” of certain characteristics arising (in a people or in their literature) combined with a form of “intuition” and “self-recognition” (Davey 2). In other words, this discourse is grounded in a supposedly objective or scientific basis (geography, biology), while it is coupled with a semi-mystical belief in predestination. Daniel Coleman rightly identifies this “environmental Darwinism” as a generalized Canadian myth in which “the rigours of life in a stern, unaccommodating climate demanded strength of body, character, and mind while it winnowed away laziness, overindulgence, and false social niceties” (24). In Newfoundland, this myth achieved an almost Galapagos-like purity as an isolated colony in which the determining effects of landscape on the population took on a clarified form: on the one hand creating a distinctive character, on the other relegating Newfoundlanders as a kind of atavistic throwback providing a glimpse into the settlement past. This is evoked metonymically in Major’s insistence on the primeval nature of the Newfoundland rock (which, by implication, says something about Newfoundland *people*), while it also occurs in the designation of a people somehow locked in time and therefore offering a picturesque window onto the historical past (specifically, the past of European settlement in North America). Not coincidentally, the traditional rhetoric of Newfoundland identity has invoked a seemingly constitutive interconnection between people and land, making the people elementally *of* the land, rather than mere inhabitants upon it. This describes a form of geographical determinism in the construction of a Newfoundland *people* in which the land is imagined to be somehow in the genes. Thus, for example, E.J. Pratt’s 1923 poem “Newfoundland” sug-

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gests that the climatic elements in Newfoundland are of a different order than the mundane variety: the tides run within the bloodstream, the winds “breathe with the lungs of men” (166). In Pratt’s poem, the tides, wind, and crags work together in the creation of a race of people. Throughout these accounts, as in Major’s cosmological meditation on Newfoundland’s place in the universe, there is a recurrent slippage between *place as landscape* and *place as site of history*, although both are identified as (a) transgenerational and (b) deterministic of communal and individual character. Geography thus makes one *of* a place (the landscape is incorporated in the bloodline); history puts one *in* a place (within particular boundaries in a progressive timeline); while both contribute to the creation of a distinct people whose identity is genetically transmitted and authenticated by the antiquity designated by the fusion of these two terms: a single gene pool’s unbroken occupation of a particular locale.

Meditations on this kind of geo-historical determinism are frequent in Newfoundland literature and media. A recent television advertisement for Newfoundland tourism evokes the ghosts of the Vikings at L’Anse aux Meadows. In the video, scenes of a primal landscape (sheer rocks and rolling waves) are juxtaposed with glimpses of the Norse site (historical settlement). Three children are shown wandering in the fields and around the site, only to be startled by an apparent Viking ghost that creates a gust of wind behind them. At the same time, an associative link is made between the children and the Viking settlers, as if to suggest that the former are, in some intangible way, the descendants and inheritors of the latter. Indeed, the ad at first creates intentional ambiguity as to whether the children are in fact Vikings or present-day Newfoundlanders (interestingly, the children are not presented as “tourists,” which is curious given that it is an advertisement for a notable tourist site). Thus the historical settlement becomes merged with the primordial landscape and the two are “passed down” in the blood via an assumption of mystical psychic (and possibly genetic) inheritance.

A similar conflation of geographical and historical determinism occurs in Wayne Johnston’s infamous *The Colony of Unrequited Dreams*. In the opening pages of the novel, framed as a written letter to Joey Smallwood, Sheilagh Fielding insists that “[t]he past is literally another country” and laments the changes that have been wrought on Newfoundland since Confederation (3). And yet Fielding’s lament seems less an expression of grief for an altered geography (though there is an element of nostalgia along those lines), but more identifiably a mourning for a lost history. Ultimately, in Johnston’s novel, Fielding expresses an acute anxiety about a loss of memory, the fear that the people of the past will not be remembered or written into the annals of history. She fears a cultural and communal amnesia, the very curse that haunts the old in every culture: the fear that one’s descendants will not remember *you*. If historical consciousness is noted for its “orientational” capacity, what we find here is a perception of a rift in historical consciousness where that grounding is in danger of being fractured.

There is something worth noting in this mournful condition as the ancestral gaze is directed upon its descendants, particularly when Newfoundland culture tends to be so committed to ideas of family and inheritance (“whom do you belong to?” rather than “where do you come from?”) and, at the same time, to narratives of loss. What Fielding appears most anxious about is that the past will *appear* to be another country — and hence populated by “foreigners” — expressly because its continuity with the present will be forgotten/severed.<sup>1</sup> According to Paul Chafe, many Newfoundland narratives are driven by “the fear of today washing away and leaving no trace” (360), a lament for the loss of familial/cultural memory and with it the disruption of a Newfoundland psycho-genetic inheritance.

As a counter to this fear of anticipated amnesia, many works appeal to what is both a cryptic yet also vaguely scientific conception of a collective unconscious that is both distinctive and inheritable. Indeed, the commitment to geographical and historical determinism in the defining of a people acts as a safeguard against historical memory loss, since the determining contribution of geography and history are posited as somehow genetic predispositions whose acquisition and transmission occurs at an unconscious (even if physiological) level. There is something overtly mystical in these appeals to an unconscious bio-psychic inheritance, which may be why some contemporary texts that utilize this motif make use of magic realist or Gothic genres. By locating these kinds of ancestral transmissions either in the “magical” realm (as we see in a novel such as Michael Crummey’s *Galore*) or in a “supernatural/Gothic” context (as in Kenneth Harvey’s *The Town That Forgot How to Breathe*), authors are able to employ the trope of a primordial and phantasmal Newfoundland identity.

In all of these examples, the link between geography and history is forged through an appeal to ancestors and its accompaniment — some form of belief in genetic inheritance. This focus on ancestry encompasses a notion of geographically determined characteristics that are inherited in the blood, as well as cultural and historical traditions that are passed down through some form of psychic inheritance. A commitment to identifiable ancestral heredity enables a mediation of the role of place in determining Newfoundland character, while also grounding that place within a context of historical continuity. Specifically, the notion of inheritance enables an imagined retreat in diachronic time, thereby allowing an author or character to view historical experience along a genealogical chain of transmission and to chart the mediation and inheritance of historical memory traces. Both geography and history thus achieve their determining power and mystique through a notion of an inheritable collective unconscious. This semi-mystical construction in turn becomes a way of charting of form of destiny.

Two recent Newfoundland novels explore this mediating role of ancestral inheritance, which in turn enables a reinvestment in geo-historical determinism. Both Kenneth Harvey’s *The Town That Forgot How to Breathe* and Michael Crummey’s *Galore* use a version of psycho-biological haunting (or ancestral psy-

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chic inheritance) as a means of fixing this integral link between geographical and historical determinism. In both novels, the idea of an inherited ancestral unconscious provides an invigorating evolutionary haunting that sets Newfoundlanders in place and time. Crummey makes this the defining impetus of his transgenerational historical novel, a book that revels in the idea of psycho-genetics. If this represents what Peter Hodgins has identified as a “nostalgia for memory,” there is certainly a form of wish fulfilment or fantasy that is occurring here. According to Hodgins, the “assumption that we have fallen from an authentic relationship to memory” initiates a “return to roots” (101), which in turn initiates an urgent embrace of a common thread of inheritance. Hodgins’s evocative phrase could well be reformulated as a “nostalgia for *inherited* memory,” evoking a form of “memory” that is at once more tangible and continuous. In his online essay for Random House, Crummey stated that “The people who became Newfoundlanders — the Irish and West Country English, the Jerseyemen, French, Scots and ‘Jackie-tars’ — occupied more than just a physical space here. Their country existed somewhere between the stark landscape and a nether world of lore and superstition and fear and wonder, each as real as the other. It was that country I was trying to recreate in *Galore*.” In other words, their lived reality entailed a constant mediation of multiple places and times. The “magic” of the past that Crummey invokes as an inherent attribute of Newfoundland reality, is none other than a confirmation of inheritance. Jacques Derrida speaks of the need for “learn[ing] to live *with* ghosts” (xviii), not just in the sense of “*being-with*” them but also in the sense of requiring them in order to take up one’s position as a living subject whose existence is predicated upon inheritance (the ghosts, then, are biological ancestors, genetic material, memories, moral justice, history). In Crummey’s and Harvey’s formulation, the descendant in the present must learn to believe in this condition of the past as a precondition for his or her identity. One way of reformulating this might be as a *belief that ancestors lived this way in order to assert an inheritance of their predisposition to believe this way*. In Harvey’s novel, ancestral ghosts must be reinserted back into the current of history so that the present can nostalgically celebrate their determining influence. For Crummey, this endeavour is at once affirming and unsettling, since to conjure the ghost of inheritance is both to fix and “unhinge” the individual’s self-presence as a modern-day Newfoundlander.

That the past was “another country,” infused with the spirits of vitalizing ancestors, becomes a central tenet of both Harvey’s and Crummey’s novels, though with a twist. Both novels seek to assert a belief in inherited memory, which means that the geographical and historical vectors, while seeming to assert difference (“another country”; “the past”), are in fact rendered “familiar.” This formulation fuses two forms of historical difference — a “past condition” (belief in ancestral spirits) and a “condition of the past” (the past can only be “read” by us in terms of its ghostly status as a trace) — both of which are surmounted through an assertion of ancestral continuum which establishes likeness and difference, continuity and

disjunction. Crummey's work engages with both forms of difference through *legends of inheritance*, a conflation that imposes Freud's notion of the unhomely onto the effect of genetic inheritance itself.

Both texts endorse a commitment to geo-historical determinism through the mediating line of psycho-genetic inheritance. Yet there is a different inflection in the way each novel handles this trope. In Harvey's novel, the "past condition" has ceased to be a condition of the living; a belief in ancestral continuity is what the present is in danger of losing. The cohering line of inheritance, as in Fielding's account, is being broken. Here, the failure of a belief in inheritance and determinism operates as a kind of curse. The community is punished for having succumbed to the very state Fielding fears in *The Colony of Unrequited Dreams*. The townsfolk in the title of Harvey's novel have "forgotten how to breathe," literally, because they have succumbed to a form of historical/ancestral amnesia. They no longer believe in the ties that bind them to geography and history. Crummey's characters, by contrast, embody this inheritance whether they like it or not, and, in fact, perform its narration as a line linking past and present. Figures from the past continue to be a lived reality of their world, and contribute to the general "mystique" of Newfoundland identity in the present (since the historical trajectory of the novel takes us into the twentieth century). If the message of both novels is that you can't escape history — in other words, you always have to live with inheritance, even if you disavow its effects — it would seem that there are various ways of responding to this determinism. In both, one can see a romantic belief in "the organic blending ... of landscape with individual and communal lives" (Kertzer 16). The unconscious nature of inheritance means that it is at once profound and imperceptible. If both texts serve as a prod to a *desire* for memory — turning desire into perceived reality — they also perform an act of memorializing the ineffable. As Jonathan Kertzer puts it, people "must continually be reminded ... of what they are supposed to know in their bones" (7).

## GENETIC PHANTOMS; OR, THE RETURN OF THE IRREPRESSIBLE

Both *Galore* and *The Town That Forgot How to Breathe* are informed by a need to assert a people's continuity across time. What appears to be at stake is a belief in the inheritance of a genetic unconscious that contributes to a notion of a Newfoundland *geist* or spirit, while also fixing a distinct lineage linking past and present. Both novels establish genetic inheritance or ancestry as a form of uncanny haunting. One might argue that the genetic ancestor is precisely that which delivers past "reality" in palpable form through the bloodline trace, "both engendering and transcending the relation between materiality and meaning" (Stewart x). In both texts, it is psycho-genetic inheritance that infuses contemporary Newfoundland with both materiality and "soul." For Harvey, there appears to be a moral imperative in

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this, as the novel exhorts people to embrace the determinism of inheritance, imposing upon Newfoundlanders a necessary and authenticating commitment to the past. Without this connection, the novel implies, the people — as a people — will die out. Crummey's novel is less didactic in its approach, though it, too, partakes in the mystique of psycho-genetics. In *Galore*, Crummey takes on a slightly more difficult task, since the novel straddles the line between embracing a wholesale genetic determinism and endorsing a notion of historical contingency. If the mastery of historical contingency is often invoked in the interests of communal self-definition, here that mastery is held in suspension (while still conjured as a possibility). As Crummey puts it in his interview with John Barber for the *Globe and Mail*, "There's something about the way everything in [*Galore*] seems fated, yet at the same time, these characters live their lives as if they have control of what they're doing. And it's not an either/or. Both of those things are true at the same time somehow. That felt like Newfoundland to me" (1). In effect, this balancing act is the very act that magic-realism performs as a genre: the magical element of mysterious or uncanny recurring character traits (a kind of reincarnation) is set alongside a reveling in the contingent ways history plays itself out — as both destiny and accident. Both novels, I argue, offer a distinctive twist on the conventional Gothic notion of the "return of the repressed." What has been repressed in Harvey's novel is the very presence of an inter-linking genetic unconscious. By refusing to believe that they can be fruitfully haunted by ancestral spirits, the people become cursed. What returns, in a sense, is that which has not been repressed at all, precisely because it no longer plays a part in the lived reality of individuals. Crummey's novel, similarly, posits the "return" of ancestral predispositions as a fulfillment of destiny. To be haunted — by geography, by history, by ancestors — is, according to both texts, what defines a true Newfoundlander.

This tug-of-war between destiny and contingency has been a central conundrum in both psychoanalytic and Darwinian discussions of inheritance. Darwinian notions of mutation and natural selection are committed to forces of contingency and predetermination. As many evolutionary biologists have explained, the process is neither progressive (heading towards perfection) nor purely contingent (random); in fact, mutation and natural selection operate together along both poles, working upon the "accidents" in determinable ways. "Evolution," writes Richard Dawkins in *The Selfish Gene*, "is blind to the future" (8), or as he puts it later, "nothing actually 'wants' to evolve" (18). Interestingly, Dawkins makes a link between this misapplication of Darwinian theory and historiography. The vanity of many evolutionary biologists and historians, he argues, is in "seeing the past as aimed at our own time" (*Ancestor's* 1). Dawkins's formulation is illustrative, yet in some of these works the opposite temptation is also evident: a desire to forge links with the past through a retroactive assertion of inheritance. In other words, we see in past generations traits that we imagine are present in us, in part because we want to maintain our own integral significance to the future. The desire for inheritance and

continuity may be motivated less by nostalgia finally, than by a fear of obsolescence.

Similarly, despite the seemingly predetermined nature of his readings of psychic development, Freud remained reluctant to give up the notion of contingency in human experience. Thus, while his concept of infantile development had its basis in evolutionary theory that postulated an inheritance of a kind of biogenetic unconscious, Freud was nevertheless emphatic that he sought to make his theory “independent of the findings of biology” by emphasizing dynamic development and “accidental factors,” granting “more weight ... to ontogenesis than to phylogenesis” (Preface, *Three Essays* 40). Freud’s discomfort with the notion of universal psycho-genetic inheritance is evident in his infamous debate with Carl Jung. Jung maintained that there existed a “collective unconscious [which] does not develop individually but is inherited” (43). As Jung put it, the collective unconscious does not “owe its existence to personal experience ... the contents of the collective unconscious ... owe their existence exclusively to heredity” (42). Jung’s theory anticipates many discussions taking place in the field of evolutionary psychology and cultural evolution today (though its account of such inheritance is admittedly vague). In his account, the mind has inherited contents that link the individual not only with his or her personal past but also with the past of the species. Harvey’s and Crummey’s narratives transpose the supposed universality of the Jungian collective unconscious onto a specifically Newfoundland psyche, making the move from a universal evolutionary inheritance to one tied to a specific bloodline. The continuing power of the (ostensibly outmoded) Jungian model of unconscious inheritance is striking in contemporary discourse.<sup>2</sup> There are two aspects worth noting here: the way experience is established as an inheritable and preordained trait in retrospect, and the way a universal process is described as a specifically *regional* and *familial* one.

The uncanny nature of the ancestral familiar arising within the genes of the “unique” individual is echoed in Crummey’s and Harvey’s novels’ engagement with determinism. If the uncanny double threatens the notion of individual uniqueness, so does the duplication and predeterminism inherent in the idea of genetic transmission. This paradox was picked up by post-Freudian theorists Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok in their *The Shell and the Kernel* (1994). Abraham and Torok outline what they refer to as the “phantom,” a form of transgenerational haunting in which a memory trace of an ancestral presence becomes manifest in the unconscious of a descendant. In Gothic terms, one might speak of the phantom as a version of the living dead that returns as inheritance; in psycho-physiological terms, one might speak of it as a genetically inherited “memory” or “predisposition.” If this represents a psychoanalytic explanation of “Gothic” possession, the concept of an encrypted transgenerational memory trace is also useful for discussions of geo-historical determinism because it enables a way of thinking about the distinctive character traits of a people as they are passed down through the generations.

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I invoke this theoretical context as a way of thinking about the problems that are explored by these two authors. If genealogy affords a way of effecting a mediating link between geographical and historical determinism, it also enables a suspension of the choice between determinism and chance — or, to phrase it differently, of biological destiny and individual accident. In this way, the notion of a genetic continuum is both inherently uncanny (the familiar arising within the different) and inherently enabling (since it contributes to the notion of continuous communal identity across historical time). The psycho-genetic legacy of ancestors thus becomes a kind of haunting, even as both novels, I argue, are in turn haunted by the dependence of Newfoundland writing on notions of regional determinism. How does one write a cross-generational Newfoundland narrative that is not stalked by the legacy of this critical discourse?

Both Harvey and Crummey invoke legendary and ancient symbols as emblems of Newfoundland culture. Harvey's novel is replete with ancient sea creatures and fairies that infuse the world of the outport town of Bareneed. In keeping with this tradition, the novel concludes with an inset legend: a lesson in genealogical determinism and retributive justice that is told by one of the protagonists when she is an old woman. Crummey's novel, likewise, indulges in the seductive allure of myth (witches, whales, warnings). And yet, because Crummey invokes the indeterminism of legends themselves — their precarious founding on historical fact — he spins a tale that achieves a degree of self-reflexivity about the discourse it invokes, entangled as it is with the Gordian knot of predetermination and contingency. Conscious of the self-replicating nature of mystic regional determinism and the long-standing dependence of Newfoundland culture upon the allure of an inheritable antiquity, Crummey is also intent on evoking people's perception of the uncanny presence of inheritance. Legends, in his novel, ward off the inevitability of obsolescence while undergirding an otherwise precarious belief in destiny itself.

### PAST CONDITIONS: KENNETH HARVEY'S THWARTED ANCESTORS

Kenneth Harvey's 2003 novel *The Town That Forgot How to Breathe* depicts a community suffering in the grip of melancholia in the years following the cod moratorium. Harvey sets the idea of a cultural-genealogical memory trace alongside the theme of damnation by treating the demise of the cod fishery in supernatural, Gothic terms. His use of the Gothic is worth noting, however, since the characters are not unsettled by the presence of ghosts, but rather are punished for their failure to believe in their presence. In short, ancestral ghosts are a sign of communal *en*settlement and identity — they link people to the land and their history, and, in the novel's terms, effect an antidote to modern alienation.

Even though Harvey's work has been identified for its fixation on the Gothic underside of Newfoundland communities, *The Town That Forgot How to Breathe* is in fact a novel in which the Gothic has too little influence on people's lives. That is why the Gothic reasserts itself with a vengeance. In other words, the community is denied the healing potential of a post-moratorium mourning: they are not haunted enough. The novel posits the act of memorializing — and a belief in genetic determinism — as a necessity to physical and mental health by having dead ancestors infuse the living with a form of vitalizing energy. As the ghost girl in the novel puts it, "We're just energy waiting to be drawn to someone" (427). The ghosts in this novel, in a kind of thwarted circuit, have been barred from haunting the living in part because the living no longer believe in their necessity. The ghosts, as a result, are haunted by a lack of subjects to haunt.

In this novel, cultural memory becomes aligned with ancestral inheritance, but because Harvey's characters are in the throes of melancholic amnesia, the ancestral ghosts are presented as in need of recuperation. There is more than an anti-modern "quest for the folk" that is going on here, in part because Harvey's novel rehearses the continued need for historical recuperation rather than the accomplished recuperation itself. The novel as a whole (and not its characters) is motivated by a nostalgia for inheritable memory. The book thus performs a pedagogical function, in Homi Bhabha's sense, by which it courts the spectre of historical determinism in the guise of genealogical inheritance.

This novel addresses the sense of disinheritance provoked by the closing of the fishery in a peculiar fashion, for the book exemplifies an anxiety about ancestry that both affirms and critiques Newfoundland's reliance on historical and environmental metaphors to undergird its identity as a long-rooted settler people.<sup>3</sup> While the novel is informed by a perceived crisis of Newfoundland identity, it evinces this dilemma as a form of ancestral anxiety, namely the responsibility of the living in relation to forgotten or rejected settler ancestors. By pairing this concern with the Gothic, Harvey is putting the Gothic to its traditional use. Even though the novel complicates standard Gothic tropes by embedding them within a meta-Gothic commentary and portraying a form of healing through Gothic reinforcement, its use of the past, like many Gothic texts, is invested in the service of a reparative and conservative ethic. Steven Bruhm describes the Gothic as "a barometer of the anxieties plaguing a certain culture at a particular moment in history" (260), and it appears that Harvey's novel fits the bill. As many critics have argued, the Gothic is often used as a working through of contemporary anxieties; social anxieties, in other words, are enabled temporary freeplay in a Gothic setting. By combining these aspects of the Gothic with an appeal to the power of folklore and inherited tradition, Harvey depicts a world where people must mine the past in search of Gothic/spiritual sustenance, possibly even communal self-invention as a distinct and "historical" people. This, I think, connects the novel in illuminating ways with Ian McKay's study of the construction of the peasantry or "Folk" in Nova

Scotia culture. McKay critiques the contemporary mania for “historical reinvention” (xii), which he argues is undertaken as a form of “liberal antimodernism” (xix) that consumes a prepackaged past in a spirit of possession and nostalgia. In these “re-enchanted” histories, he states, viewers can indulge in a “cozy conservatism” (xix, xii). The Gothic genre finds in the past an opposite, yet related, aspect — what one might call a discombobulating carnival — yet it, too, indulges in historical anachronism in the service of societal reparation. In Gothic novels, this reparation often takes the form of an ancestral lineage that is rectified or acknowledged in some way (in other words, a corrected and rightful bloodline is regained from those who have tried to usurp it).<sup>4</sup> Interestingly, this is echoed in McKay’s analysis of the “Folk” whom he argues are constructed as an originary and inheritable source who must be retrieved from the devastating impact of modernity and who, in turn, infuse modern citizens with a core of authenticity (as an uninterrupted genetic and cultural inheritance). Inevitably a moral imperative accompanies these processes. If, in Harvey’s novel, this involves an acknowledgement of a distinct and predetermined Newfoundland bloodline, it also entails what Jodey Castricano speaks of as “the responsibility of an heir” to pay homage to ancestors’ lives (802).

Rather than reviving the ghosts of those who were colonized by waves of settlers, or bringing to light a buried history, Harvey posits two colonized subjects in this novel — settler ancestors and fish — whereby the forgetting of one is inextricably tied to the disappearance of the other. In the book, the bodies of dead colonists and Gothic sea creatures surface in the town’s harbour clamouring to be identified. In this way, ancestral ghosts — and the trauma of the cod moratorium — are used as a way of fixing a people’s genealogical claim to place and history. The novel conjures a series of ghosts and monsters from the deep, which might at first appear to be a radical revisioning of Newfoundland ancestral ghosts through a highly contrived and extravagant Gothic setting. However, Harvey’s veering away from ancestral hauntings (or at least, his characters’ denial of their power) gets reconjured in the form of a more ancient ancestor still: the fish from the depths which act as primeval ancestral subjects for the people. It is, ultimately, the fish that the people owe their living to: not just in the sense of earning a livelihood, but literally in the sense that fish, in a kind of evolutionary allegory, *are* the backbone of the people and vice versa. Absent fish, in the novel, become material stand-ins for a ruptured genealogical chain.

In his critical study of metaphors of origin, Edward Said distinguishes between what he terms transitive and intransitive beginnings. The former he defines as a “problem- or project-directed beginning” (50). The latter, however, refers to a “pure” or “*radical* starting point” (50, 73), which, because it belongs to the realm of myth, “is therefore something of a necessary fiction” (77). The search for an intransitive beginning involves a quest for a kind of transcendental origin outside of the rift of historical time but which sets in motion a sequence of historical

(genealogical) determinism. An “intransitive” beginning (a “pure” point of origin) thus produces a “transitive” one (one which has a teleological momentum). The quest for such origins establishes a form of authenticity and legitimacy because it charts a temporal line backwards in time that is at once determined and determining, comparable to the genealogical ethic that is described in *The Town That Forgot How to Breathe*.

The novel is set in the outport town of Bareneed, a community that has been plunged into economic and psychological depression following the closing of the fishery. As one of the characters in the novel puts it, the town had been “sliding downhill since the elimination of the cod fishery ... a lifestyle had been destroyed for approximately half the community, and the despair was palpable” (140). This spiritual depression is materialized in the form of a strange breathing illness that is slowly killing off the members of the town; the people who are infected with the breathing disease find themselves gasping for breath (effectively drowning in air), much like a fish pulled up from the deep. When the town is struck by the epidemic, it becomes clear that the targets of the disease are fisheries workers who have lost their jobs, specifically those who have succumbed to depression and have turned their back on their cultural-genetic legacy. This loss of a lived connection with the ancestral past is materialized in both the disappearance of the fish stocks and the equally sudden disappearance of “spirits” and “faeries” from the people’s lives, what one might call a depletion in lived folklore. The lifelessness of the contemporary community is thus proportional to its participation in environmental destruction and its distance from its communal past.

At the same time, the bodies of dead “ancestors” are bobbing to the surface in the harbour. As a kind of inverse echo of the absent cod, these bodies are being fished out of the sea and laid out on the filleting tables in the abandoned fish plant (224), waiting to be identified by Eileen Laracy, the only member of the community who can recognize whose genetic line they belong to. The spirits belonging to the bodies are trapped, hovering above the corpses in tatters, unable to visit their living descendants or merge with the ancestral chain. Significantly, these bodies are not just members of local families who died at sea; such figures do appear as well, but they are linked, by association, with ancestral traces reaching back as far as the Renaissance, if not before. Early in the novel, for example, the body of a “sixteenth-century explorer” (122) is fished out of the harbour, one of innumerable human ancestors who emerge from what is posited as a kind of elemental source, alongside other legendary sea creatures such as mermaids and hydras. Through this forging of an “immemorial” lineage, Harvey establishes historical priority via a seemingly primordial historical continuum.

In addition to this, there is a still more ancient ancestry. The encrypted genetic trace posited along *human* lines reaches back into *pre-human* history, thus establishing a longevity for Newfoundlanders which secures their identity in a profoundly telescoping genealogical continuum. This, in some form, echoes Major’s

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looking back to the moment of the Big Bang. By reaching back into pre-human evolutionary origins, the novel posits a phylogenetic continuity between humans and fish which establishes a continuum along three lines: geographical, historical, and genetic.<sup>5</sup> More than an invention of tradition, in the sense that Eric Hobsbawm means it, this foundation constitutes a fantasy of devolution which contributes to a sense of communal identity linked by a common primal ancestor or foundation, and which in turn is effected through a continuum that is at once geographically and historically determined.<sup>6</sup>

This conflation of dead humans with the absent cod occurs throughout the novel. Ghosts of dead ones appear with fish in their mouths, or leave a trail of fish in their wake. Their appearances are accompanied by the smell of rotting fish. Similarly, the people who are struck down with the breathing disorder are effectively turning into fish. The victims gasp for air like fish suffocating on land, returning to an earlier evolutionary form. They flip and contort themselves in their gasping agonies. In the hospital they call for water but refuse to drink it, instead pouring it over their faces. The connection between ancestral progenitors and fish becomes even more evident in the strange fish that are pulled up from the sea. If human bodies are fished up in a weird simulation of the fishing industry, mutated and grotesque fish are observed which highlight an uncanny ancestral connection between the two. On one occasion the appearance of a human corpse is preceded by an enormous dead orange fish: “a gush of mist or fog rising from the water to hover and linger over the object. Then it was suddenly washed aside by the advent of a body surfacing and bobbing thickly” (122). The body turns out to be that of “a sixteenth-century explorer with breaches [sic], vest and leather shoes” (122). That dead fish become aligned with dead ancestors in this strange union enables the author to tie the ancestral chain even further back than the 16th century. The chain of ancestors means that the dead return to a kind of primal energy which is nevertheless genetically categorized, lending the ancestral chain a kind of Wordsworthian divinity which is in turn aligned with Newfoundland heritage.

This linkage becomes even more apparent in the grotesque birthing scenes that imply a primordial tie between fish and human. When two of the characters fish off the dock one morning, they pull up a shockingly red sculpin that enacts “an exile’s desperation” as they pull it out of the sea (65). The fish resembles some Gothic monster, “[b]ig round black eyes pulsing, patchy skin and horns barbed by its gills,” and enacts a tortured death scene flopping “in spasms, as if being electrocuted” (66). The fish’s death throes mimic the symptoms of the humans who are afflicted by the breathing disease; both are out of their element, disconnected from their ancestral habitat. The uncanniness of the scene is heightened, however, when the fish regurgitates an object, simulating a human birth scene: “Flesh-coloured fluid seeped from the sculpin’s wide mouth. A solid object began edging out ... a flesh-coloured sculpted orb, topped with something that resembled hair, matted in mucousy clumps” (66). The object turns out to be the head of a doll, “black eyes

staring up at them in surprise” (66). Similarly, the legendary albino shark that is caught causes a community sensation, and becomes horrific when it vomits up the head of a dead fisherman, again echoing a scene of primordial human birth: “[The policeman] kept his eyes fixed on the pink hollow of the shark’s opened mouth, the muscles of the throat-hole expanding and contracting in an unsettling rhythm.... A mucousy clot of hair jammed in the throat, the wet arc of a skull slowly forcing itself into the air” (136). The elemental connection between fish and human is emphasized overtly in these scenes, for each conjures uncanny images of human evolution and oceanic origins. But the primordially of it is geographically and genetically specific, for these images work to align Newfoundland settler ancestors with a *primaeval* — even “aboriginal” — heritage.

This continuum between fish and human emphasizes people’s ties to the environment from which they have emerged, since the ancestral line acquires an elemental connection with the landscape. The depletion of these human ancestors becomes figured as an ecological catastrophe on par with the extermination of the fish stocks, and both, it emerges, are being destroyed by the advent of technology. Thus the mechanism of geographical determinism itself is being threatened since the environment is being destroyed. The spirits, we learn, are cut to pieces by the magnetic fields in the atmosphere, torn to shreds and plowed under, echoing the devastating effects of ocean trawlers on the offshore seabeds (77). “The behaviour of sea life is constantly affected by the intrusion of environmental factors,” says one of the scientists in the novel, “Sonar, for instance, has been linked to inactivity in whales, a decrease in game playing and whale song” (159). The impact on marine life echoes the effects on the Bareneed inhabitants, who have become listless and apathetic. And as the investigators gradually figure out when researching the Burin tidal wave of 1929, which presages the tidal wave that is about to hit Bareneed, “there was a drastic drop in the volume of marine life offshore” before the tidal wave hit (341). Indigenous Newfoundlanders are thus positioned, like the cod, as being in danger of extinction.

This human-fish homology establishes a genealogical continuum along mythic evolutionary lines, charting a primordial history for contemporary Newfoundlanders. As Tommy Quilty says to one of the dying people in the hospital as part of his “folklore cure,” “Dat whale confessed to knowing me t’rew centuries o’ dust” (361). The fish and the ancestors are one and the same, and in effect, people are being exhorted to recognize their emergence from a common ancestor, even as the novel is committed to genetic family lines. It is no coincidence that the authorities consider the epidemic “A disaster that had taken centuries to evolve” (309), nor that the dislocated spirits gather in a hole at the bottom of the sea, where everything begins and ends. As one of the ghosts explains about the disconnected spirits, “They move toward the place where the centre is. There’s one near every place where people settle, down in the bottom of the sea, a hole where everything came from, where they all came from once. Where water came from too” (365). In

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something of an oxymoron, the spirits are returning to the site of *evolutionary settler origins*. In an echo of the punitive and cleansing impulse of the biblical flood, the evolutionary cycle will begin all over again, “to stop the ones on land who can no longer see themselves” (365).<sup>7</sup> The next generation of Bareneed inhabitants, it appears, will be legitimated through having emerged from the originary oceanic source (the oceanic equivalent of the Big Bang) and having been saved on the basis of their belief in the authenticating nature of this origin. If fish are considered to be an ancestral form for contemporary humans, in the sense that both mammals and fish share a common ancestor (and since mammalian ontogeny duplicates a fish-like stage in embryo), the fish-human continuum in the novel is used to establish a version of historical antiquity for Newfoundlanders, truly fulfilling Benedict Anderson’s notion of a communal identity that reaches back into “an immemorial past” (11).

The killing off of the fish thus becomes equated with a delegitimizing of ancestors, and of the geo-historical determinism that accompanies ancestral belief. On the other hand, the renewal of belief in these ancestors brings with it a form of rebirth as a distinct society. The evangelical and redemptive overtones of this narrative — the people have been transformed from “Fishermen” to “Fishers of Men” (248) — contribute to the proselytizing effect of the novel overall (which is paralleled in the cyclic scourge of the tsunami, like the Biblical flood, that periodically visits Newfoundland communities whenever there has been a lapse in ancestral belief). Contemporary Newfoundlanders, the novel suggests, are waiting to be saved from the condition of modernity through a reinvestment in romantic myths of inheritance, authenticity, and origin. Geographical primordality (and hence legitimacy), in this case, is filtered through the chain of ancestors much like a gene in the cultural DNA. Ancestral inheritance becomes the missing link that connects a people to an immemorial past located in place and time.

The obsessive narration of history and genealogy that this novel posits as a form of spiritual sustenance echoes the well-known tourism slogans for Newfoundland as a place locked in the past. This becomes disturbingly clear at the conclusion of the novel where the narrative is contained by the closing “Epilogue,” identified as the “story” a now elderly survivor recites to her grandchildren. Relaying the tale of the famous Bareneed tidal wave, the parable revels in the return of the traditional Newfoundlander: “In the days to come, many in Bareneed switched off their lights and reverted to lamplight and wood stove. Stories were told of hardships overcome while children sat around and listened in wide-eyed wonder. The residents of Bareneed returned to the sea as the fish were gradually replenished. In time, every last person reverted to lamplight and wood stove, and a special sitting of council was convened to order the removal of the new power lines and poles from the community” (470). The tale, framed as a narrative that is told for generations to come so that people can “recognize who they truly [are]” (471), contains troubling implications. The antidote to modern melancholy, the novel suggests, is an infusion of

ghosts, but on two conditions: there must be a genetic bloodline connecting people and place; and the recipient must profess belief in that genetic-historical continuum.

One might see Harvey's Gothic turn as a way of unsettling conventional Atlantic-Canadian preoccupations. Billed as a magic realist thriller, the novel appears to offer an overturning of stereotypical assumptions about the realist (or regionalist) bent of Atlantic-Canadian writing. Yet there is a sense in the novel that the people are being punished for having taken their genealogical history for granted, for having belittled or forgotten their origins. The nostalgia for inherited memory that is enacted in this text is resolved through an *imperative* to remember. Memory (and, by extension, identity), it suggests, is in the blood, linking one to the land and to the past.

#### THE REINCARNATION OF THINGS PAST: MICHAEL CRUMMEY'S *GALORE*

The genealogical imperative that drives Harvey's novel appears in different form in Michael Crummey's intergenerational narrative *Galore*. Crummey's novel is interwoven with accounts of genetic inheritance, using lineage as a medium for encrypted history and memory. If Harvey uses the idea of a curse to demonstrate a debt of memorialization that one owes to past ancestors, in *Galore* the curse becomes an emblem of unconscious psycho-genetic inheritance. In *Totem and Taboo*, Sigmund Freud invokes a notion of inherited memory in which "the sense of guilt for an action has persisted for many thousands of years and has remained operative in generations which can have had no knowledge of that action" (220). A related process plays itself out in the multigenerational world of Crummey's novel, in which a Widow's curse and a mute orphan's blessing may (or may not) be responsible for the series of transgenerational events (compulsions and tragedies) that follow.

It is obvious from his interviews and commentaries that Crummey is drawn to the allure of a semi-fantastical deterministic element in Newfoundland heritage — in other words, a notion of a distinctive Newfoundland character that has both a geographical and ancestral basis. "Everybody from Newfoundland talks about how it's unique," he stated in a 2009 interview for the *National Post*, "the folklore was kind of like the collective consciousness of the place. It contained everything — from the knowledge of the place, its history, all the lore and superstition.... So it's kind of like the cultural DNA of Newfoundland, and in some ways has shaped everybody there" (2). Crummey frequently invokes the notion of a biologically inherited cultural-historical consciousness ("cultural DNA"). In an interview for the *St. John's Telegram*, he used a distinctly Darwinian genetic terminology to describe Newfoundland's cultural inheritance: "Over hundreds of years ... these things mutated and changed, producing new stories ... that at once reflected the originals, but were

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also new and different. In this way, the communities might collectively be considered the human equivalent of the Galapagos Islands" (1). And yet, it is also apparent that Crummey embraces his own "compulsion for antiquity,"<sup>8</sup> and its accompanying association with some form of psycho-genetic determinism, with scepticism. He is aware of the element of fantasy and potential conservatism that motivates this desire. By locating Newfoundlanders' inherent connection to the "otherworldly" safely in Newfoundland's past, the mystique of geographical or genealogical determinism can itself be identified as constitutive of Newfoundland character, whereby an inheritance of these belief systems as folklore (and not a belief in them per se) becomes self-constituting. Newfoundlanders, in other words, are people who hail from a long line of people who believe in the inherent supernaturalism of Newfoundland identity. This historical transposition enables Crummey to indulge in the supernaturalism of an age gone by, while invoking the "real" — that is, "inherited" — basis of these beliefs as an explanation of their continued power in the present.

This juxtaposition of the real and the supernatural is enabled by the genre of magic realism, with the added twist that here that very conflation is thematized within the storyline in its contemplation on unconscious inheritance (Charles Darwin meets Carl Jung). The material traces of ancestors — on the physical features of descendants, in recognizable character traits, in the repetition of events, in the course of destiny — mystically line up with the deterministic nature of historical precedent. The novel charts a genetic inheritance that forges a link between past and present, yet the success of Crummey's vision rests in its negotiation of processes of contingency and determinism that underlie historical movement. This is especially evident in the way the novel uses the motif of legends to relay both a mystical and historical basis for the past. Wary of endorsing a wholesale regime of genetic and geographical determinism, yet drawn to the magical allure of such belief systems as a defining aspect of the past, Crummey straddles a line between predestination and historical contingency.

There is a temptation to invoke the "mythic" quality of *Galore's* magic-realist tour of the early days of Newfoundland settlement, but this book is less the stuff of myth than of legend. This distinction is important in highlighting the implied concreteness of the connections between history and geography that are evident in any notion of psycho-biological determinism and group identity. In general parlance, a legend is a story that is told as if it has a basis in an historical event and geographical locale. Whether or not the legendary "events" actually did occur is irrelevant; what matters is that the stories are passed down as a tradition as though they had a real foundation in the past (however the facts have been altered in the interim). The transgenerational plotline of *Galore* allows us to witness a legend in the making, which it sets alongside a delineation of genealogical descent. In Freud's account in *An Outline of Psychoanalysis*, individuals are able to tap into an "archaic heritage" or ancestral unconscious, which appears as a form of "phylogenetic material in the

earliest human legends” (399). In *Galore*, we see the catalyzing event (the birth of a man from a whale), we see people’s reactions to it, we watch how it becomes adapted and changed over time, we hear how the story is elaborated upon, how elements are forgotten, how belief wavers, and we see, finally, how it resurges unsummoned in the unconscious of a distant descendant, who has an inkling of the trace of something momentous in his genetic makeup.

Throughout the novel, the “supernatural” is funnelled through the materiality of genetic inheritance. This mixture of magic and realism complements the notion of the historical encryption that is at work in legends as well as in versions of determinism. A buried story that may be beyond recuperation as “fact” is also present as a kind of subconscious “memory” as cultural traditions or stories. Even generations after the main events of the novel, many of the ghosts and stories “occup[y] a dark corner in the dreams of every soul on the shore,” unconscious memories that are as “ancient and abiding as the ocean itself” (114). Encryption also occurs on the level of genealogy. Embedded in the genes is some element of inherited ancestral predisposition that is at once tangible and ineffable, a trace or phantom of an ancestral unconscious. One can liken this to a form of “possession,” in which the ancestral object is encrypted within the mind of a descendant, operating from within, but without the subject’s conscious awareness of it.

Crummey’s novel thus engages with two senses of the past: the past as a more “authentic” time when people lived in a full awareness of genetic and phantasmal determinism (the “Real” of mystical immediacy); and the past as a wholly other place which cannot be witnessed except through a willed act of conjuring through narration. From the perspective of the present, Crummey aims to conjure the former (much as does a legend), while exposing the precariousness of this endeavour as a retrieval of the Real. But narrative is not the only place where these two past conditions are intertwined. The traces of the former are evident in the latter when we witness moments of unanticipated genetic inheritance (a form of biological “narration”). These instances of the familiar surfacing amidst the unfamiliar are uncanny, yet ironically it is these unhomely moments that conjure the deepest sense of Newfoundland’s relation to history: moments when the present is haunted by the *possibility* of determinism.

The Widow Devine may or may not be responsible for the uncanny repetition of genetic/memory traces.<sup>9</sup> The curse she has supposedly laid upon King-me Sellers’s cows reveals itself in genetic transmission — “All his stock descended from that first cow, each one just as unpredictably skittish” (70) — and appears to have been applied to the fate of his children, all of whom die at sea with the exception of Lizzie who is given to the Widow’s son in exchange for her lifting of the curse. Likewise, it may be the Widow’s curse that is responsible for the “apocryphal pathology” (154) that Doctor Newman encounters in the coves and inlets near Paradise Deep: red hair and hemophilia inherited from “a single foxy Irishman” (154), a child with webbed fingers inherited from a merwoman, a family in which all the

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offspring suffer from premature senescence, others who bear signs of genetic holdovers such as cleftlips and birthmarks. "It was a widow's curse according to some" (154), and, as the Doctor concurs, this may be the best attribution possible since the phenomena "defied any medical explanation" (154).

Yet the novel is never clear whether a curse has been laid or not. The Widow herself, cursing King-me in a moment of anger when he propositions her, cannot remember what she said. The curse, indeed, achieves legendary proportions. King-me cites the curse laid upon his cow whenever he wants to align the community against the Widow Devine's family (a Catholic-Protestant war that threads through the two family lines), but generally it evokes ridicule among the people who hear it. In times of tragedy, however, the curse seems to take on a life of its own as the people build upon it: "For the first time in years stories of how Devine's Widow left King-me's employ made the rounds, variations of the curse she was said to have laid upon him discussed and debated. *May the sea take you and all the issue of your loins* was repeated often enough to take on the air of truth...." (99). The status of the Widow's curse is held in suspension, offering a potential mastery of historical contingency. The contingent is thus rendered inevitable, which in turn contributes to a sense of communal definition: a series of interconnected family trees that have become entwined in such a way that the Sellers and Devines are posited as prime ancestors for an inheritable communal unconscious. What becomes inherited, then, is the potential defeat of contingency, the *possibility* of determinism. The novel charts the course of an inheritable psycho-genetics, but in so doing it treads a fine line between chance and destiny. It may be that appeals to a collective unconscious always enable this pairing of the supernatural and the material, magic and genetics. For Jung, the most pervasive manifestations of the collective memory were in the realm of myth. *Galore* is replete with such enigmas, suggesting that perhaps superstition is an encryption of a forgotten (yet unconsciously inherited) historical event. Embodied in the manifestation of curses and phantoms, or linked to a genetic substrate, the glory of inheritance is that it is as evasive as it is factual, at once metaphysical and irrefutably physical.

Alongside Devine's Widow, the central figure in the genealogical trail of the novel is Judah, the mysterious man who at the beginning of the novel is parthogenically "birthed" from the belly of a whale that beaches itself (echoing the uncanny fish-human birth scenes in Harvey's novel). The miraculous nature of Judah's birth, as well as his unknown origins, establish him as a kind of transcendent ancestor for the community, a pure beginning who defies the determinism of genealogical inheritance. It is significant, therefore, that Judah is informally christened the "sea orphan" by the community, thus rendering him the necessary "intransitive" or originary ancestor that Said identifies as central to myths of communal identity. The purity of the prime ancestor inevitably belongs to the realm of myth, yet it is this mythic origin that gives it its power (since it lacks the taint of material specification). Such points of transcendental origin exist outside the rift of

historical time while setting in motion a sequence of historical (genealogical) determinism. In Said's account, the quest for such origins eliminates the apparent accident within historical and genealogical contingency to render a continuous trajectory out of otherwise dissociated people and events, a way of defeating the contingency of history. The fixing of a definable point of origin, writes Said, is an illusion that "compensates us for the tumbling disorder of brute reality" (50). This echoes Crummey's claim that the superstitions of Newfoundland folklore "were adopted to help us feel like we had control over what we in fact had no control over" (Interview with Carswell 1).

Established as a Christ figure from early on, not only through his parthenogenic birth but also through his miraculous ability to feed the community by providing huge hauls of fish, Judah's unknown genetic ancestry renders him a curiosity in a world where the traces of inheritance can be tracked in recognizable family traits (black hair, stuttering, epilepsy, webbed fingers, etc.). On the one hand, Judah appears to carry a genetic mutation for albinism, as he emerges from the whale with hair and eyebrows bleached white. He also suffers from what the Doctor later identifies as "bromhidrosis," an acute body odour that smells like decaying fish. The smell is attributed to Judah's having been trapped inside the whale for so long, but when he fathers a child, we learn that the child, too, inherits the odour, which emerges in times of high stress or anger. Significantly, though, the Doctor determines that Judah is in fact a "faux-albino" (155) because his eyes are blue. This would seem to make the white hair a genetic anomaly, or, more symbolically, an indicator of intense age — or possibly agelessness — in that Judah is established as a Methuselah figure, which explains why he also goes by the name of "Great White." Indeed, the description of Judah as he emerges from the whale establishes him as a corpse who, with Lazarus or Christ-like echoes, is resurrected from death: "A young man's face but the strangeness of the details made it impossible to guess his age. White eyebrows and lashes, a patch of salt-white hair at the crotch. Even the lips were colourless, nipples so pale they were nearly invisible on the chest" (3). It is some years later that his wife, Mary Tryphena, notices that Judah has not aged at all, that he "had barely changed in the years since she'd first seen him naked on the landwash" (183). As she thinks, "something in the man seemed to stand apart from time altogether" (183).

The genealogical enigma posed by Judah's sudden appearance in the community is echoed in the epithet that he gives himself when he is found writing passages from Scripture on the walls of his makeshift prison cell: "God's Nephew" (226). The term establishes a deflection of the God-Christ genealogy, one step further from a line of direct descent, but nevertheless still of the immortal (intransitive) tree. And yet, the metaphysical overtones of Judah's history are here ironized by the man himself, since in order to be God's "nephew" (meaning that God would have had to have a brother or sister), Judah and God both would be rendered less divine. Curious, as well, is the alignment of the Widow Devine and

Judah as ancestorless progenitors (we are told almost nothing of the Widow's family origins, nor of her husband's, Patrick Devine). In being adopted by the Widow (and hence taking her surname) and marrying her only daughter Mary Tryphena, Judah becomes the Widow's symbolic son, which in turn renders her a version of God's sister (which nicely connects to her supernatural powers as a benevolent witch and saviour in the book). The contorted genealogies at the top of the genealogical chart embody the semi-mystical realms of immemorial origins that underpin cohesive communal ancestral mythologies. The line has to begin somewhere. For Harvey's community, it follows a devolving evolutionary line backwards to oceanic origins. In Crummey's novel, the line originates with a kind of spontaneous and divine mover — albeit ironically configured as such — which sets in motion a genealogical chain of inheritable identities.

Indeed, the tracing of genealogical lines is something of an obsession in the community, comparable to the genealogical lists that are so prevalent in the Old Testament. The Trim brothers, for example, regale the American outsider, Dr. Newman, with their "knowledge of the coastline's genealogy" (156): "There was no ... family intimacy from the past century they seemed unacquainted with" (157). Genealogical trees take on the status of diagnostic predictions. Speculations about Eli's "queer" predispositions "eventually ran through his family tree, as if it were a list of symptoms. Devine's Widow begetting Callum who married hag-ridden Lizzie Sellers. Callum and Lizzie begetting Mary Tryphena and peg-leg Lazarus, raised from the dead and father to Jackie-tars on the Labrador. Mary Tryphena wedded to the stench of the Great White, and they two begetting Eli's father, Patrick, who all but drowned himself to bring home a stack of books.... There's no escaping your blood, people said" (242). Genealogical memory becomes a key signifier of membership in the community. To be without it, is to be orphaned. Thus, when Esther gives Abel the "gift" of his narrated inheritance ("Has no one told you a thing about yourself?" [304]), she "navigat[es] the complications of one generation and the next" (304) and fixes him in a chain of genealogical ciphers. The act of genealogical narration gives him back his identity through a gesture to material inheritance, yet this genealogy, in part because it is so far-reaching, also has the status of a legend, which means that for Abel its "truth" is always uncertain.

A version of an inherited collective unconscious is evident in the formulation of particular family lines, in which recognizable elements recur with startling frequency. The novel's drama is staged between two warring families: the Catholic Devines and the Protestant Sellers. The dichotomy is interrupted, however, by the figure of Judah, whose presence secures the intermingling of both lines. Judah is the third term, the missing diverging link. We could think of him as a random mutation, a claim that might be confirmed by his bizarre appearance, though he also represents the inevitable, the divine. He is both man and god; living and dead. If Judah is an incarnation of the lived world of magic (a god made flesh), he is also the genetic trace that appears randomly across the generations, yet also predictably

(in retrospect) once it has appeared. As an ancestor who reaches outside the immediate material genealogical lineage of Paradise Deep, Judah introduces an external (and miraculous/divine) element into the genealogical branches of the community. Hence the line of genetic inheritance that can be traced through Judah's progeny (all originating from the catalytic night of consummated marriage with Mary Tryphena in his prison cell) has the appearance of a mystical line of predetermined lineage.<sup>10</sup> This might seem to echo Harvey's conjuring of ties of Newfoundland ancestry with an ancient fish ancestor (since Judah emerges from a whale's belly), and indeed the establishment of Judah as a transcendental ancestor has an inkling of this. What alters it, however, is the tenuousness of it all. Judah may be Methuselah come to life, and indeed, his human counterpart or twin in the community is the young boy Michael Devine, whom the community nicknames Lazarus in honour of his revival, alongside Judah, after they have been saved by the miracle "rebirthing" cure of Kerrivan's Tree. He may be a reincarnation of Jonah or Jesus, but he may also be Judas, bringing trouble to the family that takes him in.<sup>11</sup> He is both a blessing and a curse. The fish stink saves Abel on the battlefield of France when he is mistaken for a rotting corpse, yet Judah's presence in the Devine household attracts the suspicions of the Sellers clan who ultimately reduce the Devines to near starvation. Judah's presence may be divine intervention, yet he may also be a come-by-chance, a "sea orphan," a genetic mutation who appears to pull destiny in his wake.

The novel plays with the uncanny nature of genetic inheritance in the concluding chapters that focus on Abel. Abel, who has no knowledge of his family ancestry (he is a direct descendant of both Judah and the Widow Devine), appears to be an uncanny reincarnation of his great-grandfather. The literalization of this genetic metaphor is established as soon as we hear that Judah has been missing from his cell since before Abel was born. Whether Judah has escaped from prison or has died is unclear (and in keeping with his "divine" origins), but his resurrection in Abel occurs over the course of years as Abel gradually finds himself duplicating the activities of his ancestor. In the Jungian system the genetic code is postulated as both the encryption of the collective unconscious and of historical events. The inheritance of unconscious memory is the thread that links Abel most profoundly to Judah. They both follow a similar ontogenetic trajectory. Abel, too, is something of an orphan, kept hidden away in the house without any connection to his ancestry. Abel has inherited the fish stink, which makes people express revulsion in his presence. Like Judah, he experiences a series of near-deaths, and also like Judah, he is miraculously brought back to life by being passed through the branches of the ancient apple tree, Kerrivan's Tree, that appears to have magical properties. Abel falls in love with Mary Tryphena's look-alike (Mary is the woman Judah loves, and is Abel's great-grandmother). As he grows to be a teenager, Abel begins copying out verses from Jabez Trim's ancient Bible (a Bible that was itself retrieved from the belly of a fish), imitating the baroque script. This echoes Judah's actions when

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held in prison; the man, thought to be mute and illiterate, covers the walls of his cell with biblical quotations (which, interestingly, are interpreted by Levi Sellers as a continuation of the Widow's curse against the Sellers family line). Abel's script, however, is described as an unconscious act, as though Judah, like the inherited phantom that Torok and Abraham write of, has taken possession of Abel and is "speaking" through him. In hospital in England, Abel writes in the same old-fashioned script used by Judah and unconsciously duplicates the lines from the Song of Solomon that Judah once sent to Mary Tryphena (324).

When Abel accidentally stumbles upon Dr. Newman's photographs of the community members who suffer from genetic abnormalities, he finds a photograph of Judah whom he does not, at the time, know to be his ancestor: "A pale stranger with cloudy eyes and a shock of colourless hair, an expression of startled forbearance. 'You could almost be looking at yourself there,' Esther said" (304). It is the discovery of the photograph that triggers Esther's genealogical narrations, which she speaks in Abel's ear when they are making love. The act of memorialization becomes a simultaneous act of determinism, as Abel grows into his ancestor with each tale that is told. And yet, the narrative leaves the actual basis of the genealogy uncertain, since Abel's Uncle Eli, in order to further his political career, betrays tradition and suggests to Abel that Esther's stories are fabricated (313). The legendary qualities of inheritance are thus rendered both problematic and necessary: problematic in that their basis in historical fact is held up to question; necessary because they fulfill a desired temporal linking of human lives.

If the assertion of geographical determinism has something of a legendary quality to it, so too does the assertion of genealogy. From the outset, Judah's arrival appears both real and impossible, determined and contingent. Over time, the story of Judah's miraculous birth becomes embedded in the folklore of the community, but the facts become lost. Generations after Judah's arrival (which, in turn, may or may not have been "conjured" by Mary Tryphena's desire for a man), people "began downplaying the evidence of their senses, and each season saw Judah's status dwindle slightly in the minds of fishermen who preferred to think their success the result of their own cunning and skill and hard work" (51). After Judah's arrest, however, the legend gets "revived and retold and the growing hagiography travelled on vessels heading north and south" (227).<sup>12</sup>

One of the marvels of the novel is the way it shows event converted into legend, which in turn, as the Widow notes, renders a sense of individuals "being erased from the world one generation at a time" (138). If this is the sense of loss that plagues Fielding in *The Colony of Unrequited Dreams*, it is also part of the poignancy of this novel. And yet, this sense of being erased one generation at a time is coupled with a sense of being etched into each generation, one descendant at a time. This is the sense in which genealogy enables a transposition of chance into destiny. As Dr. Newman puts it when pondering the implications of the Newfoundland expression "now the once," there is a sense "as if time was a single moment endlessly

circling on itself" (326): "Now the once. The present twined with the past to mean soon, a bit later, some unspecified point in the future" (326). This is the complex of temporal connections that genealogy provides. Genetic inheritance offers a compensation for the loss of historical memory, all the more so if it is aligned with some form of genetic memory. This reaches its culmination in Abel's final days in Europe after he has been taken from the battlefield.

Because the stories Esther tells him about his lineage have been called into question, and because they are freighted with the seemingly supernatural, Abel becomes unhomed, and it is this that triggers his decision to enlist in the war. Certain it was all a lie, he feels bereft of "the preposterous little history" that could "make him feel at home in the world" (314). Lineage here is directly aligned with place. The grounding of belonging (place/home) and history within the narrative thread of genealogical inheritance becomes central to this novel's tale of Newfoundland mythologies. That Abel is both compelled to become his progenitor (Judah) and distanced from that ancestry only highlights the power of unconscious inheritance that is posited here as an inheritable trait. The loss of familial memory (Abel, like Judah, has amnesia) is aligned, at the novel's end, with a loss of *place*:

— You don't remember home, do you.

He shook his head....

The [nurse] imagined it must be a ring of Dante's Hell to remember not the barest scrap of the place you came from. As if all you loved, the world itself, had forgotten you existed. (330-31)

It is the power of genetic memory that saves Abel from eternal anonymity since it ensures that he will write himself back into the annals of family legend. As he gazes over the side of the ship steaming its way to Newfoundland, he catches sight of the tail flukes of a humpback whale. The scene positions Abel gazing back upon his ancestral origins, looking back to the fate of the mystical progenitor and forward to the destiny of future descendants of the communal line. Poised to become the intransitive prime mover of another cycle of Newfoundland genealogical folklore, Abel may be setting in motion the next sequence of predestined identity, reaching back into an immemorial past that is sutured to the present by an assumed transmission of inheritable unconscious memory.

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Crummey's and Harvey's novels express a desire for inheritable memory and genealogical immortality as a way of voicing a sense of longstanding Newfoundland identity. This undertaking requires a difficult negotiation of historical nostalgia and essentialist conceptions of predetermination. To do otherwise would be to allow oneself to believe in a form of outright predestination (and, in Harvey's

novel, regression) that carries with it dubious scientific and sociological implications. Channelling these ideas through notions of genealogy allows both authors to establish temporal continuity in their meditations on geographical and historical determinism. In the process, the notion of inheritable memory is grounded in the logic of genetics which enables both authors to plot the transmission of something definitive yet ineffable in the Newfoundland consciousness.

The anti-modern strain of Harvey's story, notwithstanding its obvious mourning for cultural loss, renders its account complicit with the ways Newfoundland has become etched in the public mind as what Smallwood's father in *The Colony of Unrequited Dreams* terms the "Old Lost Land" (480). Crummey's engagement with this problem in *Galore* is tempered by his awareness of historical desire. In *Galore*, the genealogical chain is a site of both duplication and difference, which means that it forges temporal links in the face of, but not through the *effacement* of, change. As he put it in his 2004 interview with Herb Wyile, "people are hyper-aware of the fact that what we were was a particular thing and what we are going to be in the future is something different" (319). And yet Crummey is also committed to the idea that, regardless, "we are still going to be Newfoundlanders." In a sense, *Galore* is trying to reconcile these different options: a claiming of Newfoundland cultural memory and identity (encompassing place, history, and genetics) alongside a recognition of this claim as both transitory and dependent on an unsupportable investment in discourses of determinism. To embrace this discourse too fully is to endorse notions of essentialism and biblical-style predestination. To turn one's back on it is to voice the apathy of Ellen Rose in Crummey's prose poem "Her Mark," recognizing that one will not be remembered and "wast[ing] no part of my life in trying to make it otherwise" (53). Genealogy, when filtered through place and historical occupation, renders a sense of communal identity, and perhaps more importantly, a defeat of obsolescence. Crummey explores the people's need for this belief, even if it remains only on the level of legend, when Callum Devine expresses what it is he most misses about the wayward priest Father Phelan. It is not his religious instruction that he misses, for the priest was relentlessly mercurial, but rather his sense that "the people on the shore were something more than an inconsequential accident in the world" (143). From this perspective, a desire for inherited memory as a means of achieving a kind of immortality (into the past and the future) becomes the central impulse behind the vagaries of genealogical affirmation.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup>The line from Johnston's novel, "the past is literally another country" (3), has its origins in L.P. Hartley's novel *The Go-Between* (1953), in which the opening sentence reads: "The past is a foreign country; they do things differently there."

<sup>2</sup>I say “ostensibly outmoded” since in academic contexts the Jungian collective unconscious is widely regarded as a dated and unscientific model. While it held sway in the disciplines of cultural anthropology and literary studies in the 1970s, today it is generally held up to scorn. Nevertheless, it obliquely crops up (usually with no direct citation of Jung) in community-based theories of geographical and historical determinism.

<sup>3</sup>See Ronald Rompkey’s *Literature and Identity* and the introduction to Paul Chafe’s “Only an Artist Could Measure Up to Such a Place”: *Place and Identity in Newfoundland Literature*, for a discussion of these tropes in Newfoundland fiction. Critics such as Chafe and Herb Wylie argue that much contemporary Newfoundland writing is responding to this alignment of Newfoundland identity with the past by ironizing or subverting it. Novels such as Lisa Moore’s *Alligator*, Edward Riche’s *Rare Birds*, Michael Winter’s *This All Happened*, and indeed Kenneth Harvey’s *Inside* fall into this category. *The Town That Forgot How to Breathe* at first appears to be doing this representationally subversive work through its contemporary setting and modern Gothic horror effects. However, the novel’s positing of an essentialist, metaphysical Newfoundland psycho-genetic unconscious, and its critique of modernization in Newfoundland, align it with a far more conservative ethic than at first appears.

<sup>4</sup>Horace Walpole’s foundational Gothic novel *The Castle of Otranto* (1764) and Ann Radcliffe’s *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794), for example, contain ruptured genealogical lines (people don’t know who their rightful ancestors *are*) which must come to light. As in *The Town That Forgot How to Breathe*, both *Otranto* and *Udolpho* show how the ghosts of unrecognized ancestors haunt the living with an insistence that they be correctly memorialized.

<sup>5</sup>Needless to say, while evolutionary biologists do posit a phylogenetic lineage that would trace humans back to fish (and, beyond that, to a common ancestor of both), these theories could not align the fish off the Grand Banks with the people and cultural traditions of Newfoundland. In other words, biology is being used in the service of an extended fantasy of Newfoundland inheritance, continuity, and authenticity here.

<sup>6</sup>Hobsbawm’s definition of an “invented tradition” is a conscious “attempt to establish continuity with a suitable historic past” (1).

<sup>7</sup>Interestingly, there is also a genetic imperative in the Old Testament flood, since only Noah’s immediate family survives, meaning that the people who populate the earth will be direct descendants of Noah and hence representatives of one continuous genealogical line.

<sup>8</sup>This phrase is from the title of Richard Armstrong’s study *A Compulsion for Antiquity: Freud and the Ancient World* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2005).

<sup>9</sup>I purposely connect the terms genetic and memory here since the novel (and much of the discourse about inheritance and determinism that I am gesturing to) sometimes conflates these and sometimes distinguishes them. Both are posited as inheritable elements (in effect, both are regarded as somehow “genetic”). So physical and neurological characteristics are inherited within the novel (black hair, white hair, epilepsy, stuttering, webbed fingers) as are memories or experiences (near-death experiences, childlessness, isolation, bibliophilia, tragedy, drownings). An interesting element in this mix is the odour of fish that Judah’s body exudes. It, too, is inherited (by Judah’s son Patrick and later by his great-grandson Abel), yet it is not clearly a genetic characteristic since it is attributed to Judah’s entrapment inside the

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whale. The fact that the fish stink becomes diluted as one moves through the generations is a sign of the loss of historical memory.

<sup>10</sup>The most conspicuous traits that arise in Judah's descendants are near-white hair and blue eyes, which surface in his son (Patrick), his three grandchildren (Amos, Martha, and Eli), and his great-grandson (Abel).

<sup>11</sup>In a humorous scene in the novel, there is a dispute between the self-appointed preacher, Jabez Trim, and James Woundy about the name of the biblical figure who ends up inside the whale. Jabez rightly insists that the name is Jonah, whereas Woundy maintains that it is Judas: "[H]e was thrown overboard.... That's how I minds it. Thrown into the ocean for betraying the Lord.... And God had him eat up by a whale" (9). The stranger's name, as a result, becomes a combination of the two: Judah.

<sup>12</sup>Similar legends get reworked over the course of the novel — the curse that the Widow lays upon King-me's progeny (70, 71, 98); the story of the "French Cemetery" (56); the story of the infamous ghost of Mr. Gallery (114); the origins of "Selina's House"; and the miracle of Kerrivan's Tree, to name just a few.

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