

MASCULINITY  
IN THE CONTEMPORARY NEWFOUNDLAND NOVEL

by

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## Abstract

Challenges to conventional understandings of gender have garnered increased visibility in recent years, as people reconsider the stereotypes of masculinity and femininity they are often expected to uphold. However, contemporary global shifts in economics and politics have also encouraged defensive celebrations of past iterations of hegemonic manhood. Because the novel form plays an especially important role in reproducing and moreover constructing gender and national identities it provides an excellent lens through which to view shifts in both. Focusing on literary fiction published between 1993 and 2014, this thesis argues that figurations of masculinity in contemporary novels imagining Newfoundland respond to the pressures of globalization, but also signal a localized return to the objectives of the Newfoundland cultural renaissance of the 1960s and '70s. Renewed fears in recent decades that Newfoundland's purportedly distinct culture and identity are under threat have inspired a nostalgic promotion of anachronistic gender identities.

Using theories of masculinity developed by Michael Kimmel, David Savran, Jack Halberstam, Judith Butler, and others, I identify and contextualize four different, yet related, approaches to masculinity in recent Newfoundland fiction. The first chapter of this dissertation looks at Patrick Kavanagh's *Gaff Topsails* (1996), Michael Crummey's *Galore* (2009), and Paul Bowdring's *The Strangers' Gallery* (2013). This set of novels endorses patrilineal traditions, overtly connecting the survival of Newfoundland's national identity to father-figures. Chapter 2 examines how E. Annie Proulx's *The*

*Shipping News* (1993), Michael Winter's *Minister Without Portfolio* (2013), and Crummey's *Sweetland* (2014) suggest that men living in present-day Newfoundland can only prove and maintain their manhood by returning to rural spaces, namely the Newfoundland outport. The third chapter, which analyzes Edward Riche's *Rare Birds* (1997), Jamie Fitzpatrick's *You Could Believe in Nothing* (2011), and Joel Thomas Hynes's *Down to the Dirt* (2004), argues that there is no solution for the problems that face contemporary Newfoundland men. These three novels adopt a despairing view of male Newfoundlanders as wounded victims, and suggest masculinity on the island is in crisis. Chapter 4 considers Michael Winter's *This All Happened* (2000), Kathleen Winter's *Annabel* (2010), and Jessica Grant's *Come, Thou Tortoise* (2009). It concludes that these books attempt to offer more nuanced versions of Newfoundland masculinity, in part through their presentations of queer and intersex characters. However, this grouping of novels also suggests that Newfoundland cannot provide space for the successful expression of alternate masculine identities.

This thesis attests that the contemporary Newfoundland novel defines successful masculinity as the exclusive purview of white, heterosexual, working-class, rural-dwelling fathers. The dissertation also concludes that Newfoundland fiction sees threats to the hegemonic conception of manhood it valorises as dangerous to the island's own supposedly unique wider cultural identity.

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## Table of Contents

Abstract.....	ii
Acknowledgements.....	iv
Introduction: Making Masculinity Visible.....	1
Understanding Gender.....	14
Newfoundland Culture: Nationalism and the Novel.....	29
Newfoundland's Literary Past.....	34
Four Approaches to Newfoundland Masculinity.....	41
Chapter 1: History, Fatherhood, and Myth.....	49
Founding Fathers and Whiteness in <i>Gaff Topsails</i> .....	58
Masculinity and Myth in <i>Galore</i> .....	70
Looking to the Past for Guidance in <i>The Strangers' Gallery</i> .....	85
Chapter 2: The Outport as New Frontier.....	97
Masculine Transformation in <i>The Shipping News</i> .....	107
Manhood in the Newfoundland Outport: <i>Minister Without Portfolio</i> .....	116
The Death of the Newfoundland Man in <i>Sweetland</i> .....	129
Chapter 3: The Newfoundland Novel's "Crisis of Masculinity".....	144
Searching for the "Real" in <i>Rare Birds</i> .....	151
Disappointment and Blame in <i>You Could Believe in Nothing</i> .....	165
Masochism and Victimhood in <i>Down to the Dirt</i> .....	182
Chapter 4: Alternate Masculinities?.....	200
<i>This All Happened</i> and Newfoundland Fiction's "New Man".....	205

Resisting the Gender Binary in <i>Annabel</i> .....	215
Queer Fathers in <i>Come, Thou Tortoise</i> .....	236
Conclusion.....	249
Works Cited.....	268

## Introduction

### Making Masculinity Visible

[Books] about men are not about men as men. These books do not explore how the experience of being a man structured the men's lives, or the organizations and institutions they created. ... Strange as it may sound, men are the "invisible" gender. Ubiquitous in positions of power everywhere, men are invisible to themselves.

—Michael Kimmel, *The History of Men*

The ideology of male dominance is strong in Newfoundland culture. A combination of the male culture of fishing, a strong Church presence and a kinship system which separates women from their own community, seems to ensure an ideological domination which reflects the male control of the technical means of production.

—Marilyn Porter, "Notes on the History of the Sexual Division of Labour in Newfoundland"

In February 2016, firefighter Brenda Seymour of Spaniard's Bay, Newfoundland, brought forward sexual harassment allegations against the community's otherwise all-male fire department. They resulted in the resignation of twenty firefighters and a community backlash against Seymour. Although Seymour spoke of being shown pornography in the work place, and having a number of men tell her that they had ejaculated into her professional gear, those in the community blamed Seymour for drawing negative attention towards her co-workers. They also stated that Seymour should have "known better": one woman told a television news reporter that "if [Seymour's] going to be in a room of men, she has to be able to take the heat" (qtd. in Brown). Many also blamed her for "tearing the community apart" (qtd. in Brown). Though sadly not uncommon, Seymour's story indicates the maintenance of strict gender roles in

Newfoundland.<sup>1</sup> More specifically, the community's response exposes how widespread support of an antiquated form of manhood creates indifference to sexual harassment.

Although sociologists have drawn attention to problems with hegemonic masculinity in Newfoundland—problems experiences like Seymour's starkly expose—critics of Newfoundland literature have not.<sup>2</sup> In this, they are not out of step with literary scholars focused on Canadian writing more broadly. In-depth research on figurations of masculinity in Canadian fiction, for instance, has not been extensive.<sup>3</sup> While there are shorter studies that focus on a single text, or author, Daniel Coleman's *Masculine Migrations: Reading the Postcolonial Male in 'New Canadian' Narratives* (1998), which proclaims to be "the first book-length study of masculinities in Canadian literature" (i), remains one of very few extended considerations of this topic.<sup>4</sup> Coleman examines men

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<sup>1</sup> CBC's "The Fifth Estate" produced a documentary in 2015 about the harassment female firefighters, throughout Canada, face daily (See "The Fire Within").

<sup>2</sup> Nicole Power, Donna Harrison, Linda Cullum, Barbara Neis, and Willeen Keough have all examined the influence of gender on various aspects of Newfoundland society. I return to their work later in this Introduction.

<sup>3</sup> A wide variety of books on literary masculinities examine different countries. These include: Berthold Schoene-Harwood's *Writing Men: Literary Masculinities from Frankenstein to the New Man* (2000), which focuses on British literature; Caroline Magennis and Raymond Mullen's *Irish Masculinities: Reflections on Literature and Culture* (2011); Brenda M. Boyle's *Masculinity in Vietnam War Narratives* (2010); Jeffrey B. Leak's *Racial Myths and Masculinity in African American Literature* (2005); Kathy J. Phillips's *Manipulating Masculinity: War and Gender in Modern British and American Literature* (2006); and Kai Jensen's *Whole Men: The Masculine Tradition in New Zealand Literature* (1996).

<sup>4</sup> Certain book-length projects, including *Making It Like a Man: Canadian Masculinities in Practice*, edited by Christine Ramsay, incorporate literary studies but more broadly look at arts and culture (and often include historical, sociological, and psychological studies as well). Journal articles on this topic include Anita Baksh's "Indo-Caribbean Working-Class Masculinities at Home and Abroad: David Chariandy's *Soucouyant* and Ian Harnarine's *Doubles with Slight Pepper*" (2017); Robin Nobel's "Heroic Imaginings: Judaism, Masculinity, and Compensation in Richler's *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz*, *St. Urbain's Horseman*, and *Solomon Gursky Was Here*" (2010); Alison Nyhuis's "Domestic Work, Masculinity, and Freedom in Austin Clarke's Toronto Trilogy" (2013); Anca-Raluca Radu's "Fathers and Other Clowns: Representations of Masculinity in Alice Munro's *Dance of the Happy Shades*" (2014); and Katherine Ann Roberts's "'The Taste of Wet Steel': Bordertown Masculinities in Craig Davidson's *Cataract City*" (2017).



in fiction by Austin Clarke, Dany Laferrière, Neil Bissoondath, Michael Ondaatje, Ven Begamudre, and Rohinton Mistry, and aims to show how “cross-cultural migration disrupts assumed codes for masculine behaviour and practice” (i). Another rare example of detailed analysis is Paul Nonnekes’s *Northern Love: An Exploration of Canadian Masculinity* (2008), which uses psychoanalysis to examine representations of manhood in novels by Rudy Wiebe and Robert Kroetsch.<sup>5</sup> Nonnekes examines settler representations of Indigenous men and submits that Canadian masculinity is less restrictive than the dominant form often found in American literature.

This thesis thus provides one of very few sustained considerations of masculinity in Canadian fiction, and the first ever of Newfoundland literature. Contrary to Coleman’s and Nonnekes’s arguments, I contend that the majority of novels written by and about Newfoundlanders focuses on white, island-born men; there are very few descriptions of Indigenous masculinities, little interest in migration of the kind Coleman discusses in his book, and even less suggestion that Newfoundland men should embrace change.

I intentionally use “Newfoundland” here and throughout this thesis, instead of the province’s official title of “Newfoundland and Labrador.” Though the two have been politically joined since 1763, Newfoundland and Labrador maintain separate cultural and literary histories, marked by their distinct geographies and an imbalance in political

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<sup>5</sup> I use “masculinity” and “manhood” interchangeably to denote masculine identity; the *Merriam-Webster* dictionary defines both as “qualities associated with men.” Both manhood and masculinity are, in large part, derived from activities, and must be demonstrated and asserted. Yet, as I explain in this Introduction, and reiterate elsewhere in my dissertation, these terms are extremely limited and are used only provisionally, with the understanding that no single term can sufficiently encompass the many ways to perform, possess, and/or experience an ostensibly masculine gender.

control.<sup>6</sup> Gender within the literature of Labrador deserves its own separate analysis. The novels I include in this thesis are either by writers who were born and/or raised in Newfoundland, or they are set on the island; usually, they are both.<sup>7</sup>

I look at twelve novels published between 1993 and 2014: E. Annie Proulx's *The Shipping News* (1993), Patrick Kavanagh's *Gaff Topsails* (1996), Edward Riche's *Rare Birds* (1997), Michael Winter's *This All Happened* (2000), Joel Thomas Hynes's *Down to the Dirt* (2004), Michael Crummey's *Galore* (2009), Jessica Grant's *Come, Thou Tortoise* (2009), Kathleen Winter's *Annabel* (2010), Jamie Fitzpatrick's *You Could Believe in Nothing* (2011), Paul Bowdring's *The Strangers' Gallery* (2013), Michael Winter's *Minister Without Portfolio* (2013), and Michael Crummey's *Sweetland* (2014). I chose this time period as it follows the moratorium on fishing in Newfoundland, which occurred in 1992. I address the significant impact the moratorium had, and continues to have, on those who inhabit the island later in this Introduction.

When I commenced work on this dissertation, it quickly became apparent that many Newfoundland novels showcase one of four responses to perceived changes in contemporary masculinity. These include: (1) endorsing forms of masculinity popular in the past; (2) celebrating the outport as a space for proving manhood; (3) claiming that contemporary men are in crisis; or (4) embracing a potential shift as providing an

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<sup>6</sup> James K. Hiller describes how, "for many years, Labrador was treated as a subordinate dependency of Newfoundland" (113). To talk of the two as if they are interchangeable ignores this colonial history.

<sup>7</sup> The inclusion of *Annabel*, by Kathleen Winter, in this thesis deserves explanation, as half of the text takes place in rural Labrador. Notably, *Annabel* is written by a woman who lived on the island of Newfoundland, and a large portion of its action is set in St. John's. The novel uses the setting of the capital to explore the potential for alternate gender identities specifically within Newfoundland's urban centre, and thus situates itself firmly within my research topic.

opportunity for alternate masculinities to thrive. Significantly, there is much masculinity theory—from both Canadian and American contexts—that begins to explain the popularity of these four responses. I introduce each of my chapters with a review of this relevant scholarship.<sup>8</sup>

Although I argue that the widely cited “crisis of masculinity” noted by North American scholars in recent years finds commensurate expression in Newfoundland’s fiction, these trends are not simply imposed on the island’s novels. Newfoundland fiction responds to local events, such as Confederation with Canada in 1949, making its “crisis” experience fairly unique. As historian Liam O’Flaherty notes, Newfoundland is one of “the few societies in the world to have willingly given up parliamentary government and independence” (318). This, and other important political and economic events, has deeply impacted both the way that Newfoundland men view themselves and the way they are imagined in fiction. Newfoundland’s geographical and political situation also, however, makes it a useful case study for exhibiting the operations of wider systems of gender. Newfoundland offers a population that is caught up in global current events while being firmly attached to a particular idea of its cultural past. It is this ambivalence that makes a study of Newfoundland masculinity and the novel so compelling.

Although they each showcase a specific response to shifts in gender roles, the four prevalent approaches to figuring masculinity that I identify all ultimately endorse

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<sup>8</sup> As a result of my four-part rubric, some well-known Newfoundland authors have been left out of this project; perhaps most notably, I do not examine the fiction of Wayne Johnston or Lisa Moore in a sustained way. Although these two writers often engage with concerns of gender in their fiction, their approaches diverge from those which predominate in Newfoundland literature.

hegemonic masculinity, a term I define later in this Introduction, or at least imply that there is only one form of masculinity that can be successful in Newfoundland. Therefore, I argue that the contemporary Newfoundland novel celebrates men who are physically strong, have some attachment to Newfoundland's past, and who embrace fatherhood. "Real" Newfoundland men, these novels imply, are white, heterosexual, working-class individuals who prefer the rural parts of the island; they often possess little advanced education and rely on their physical strength to take care of themselves and their families.<sup>9</sup> Newfoundland men rebuff the commodification of culture, and consumerism more generally, despairing of the impact of neoliberalism. Invoking the spirit of Romanticism, many of the novels present urban areas as emasculating, and they position certain modes of work, including those connected to primary industries and manual labour, as more legitimate than occupations in the service industry. Most of the novels pine for some imagined "Eden" of manliness that they locate elsewhere, in time or space.

Furthermore, these narratives suggest that unless society allows Newfoundland men to openly express the particular form of masculinity they endorse, the island's ostensibly unique culture will also cease to exist. The novels I study therefore connect concerns about masculinity with neo-nationalism. They assert that, in the face of globalization, Newfoundlanders must ensure that elements of the island's past—including

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<sup>9</sup> Newfoundland's prevailing contemporary masculinity is not only evident in the island's fiction. It can be found in "Cold Water Cowboys," a reality television show which began airing on *The Discovery Channel* on February 25<sup>th</sup>, 2014. Following six different captains and their all-male crews as they fish off the coast of Newfoundland, this program, now in its fourth season, highlights how difficult it is to be a fisherman. The male fishers must grapple daily with poor weather conditions, malfunctioning technology, and the danger that being on the sea necessarily entails. Vicki S. Hallett argues that the show presents the men of the fishery as "emblematic of Newfoundland identity, supporting long-held myths of regional/ethnic masculinity" (n.p.).

historical gender roles—be maintained if the island is to sustain its particular cultural identity.

This identity is “marked by a political and cultural nationalism drawing from the ... memory of Newfoundland’s independence” (Delisle, *Diaspora* 24). Benedict Anderson famously argues that a nation, rather than being a physical or political entity, is an “imagined community” (6). This community, or nation, is imagined by the people. Correspondingly, Ronald Rompkey contends that, by the end of the nineteenth century, Newfoundlanders had emerged as a distinguishable group; since this time, there has been a “growing acknowledgement of the existence of Newfoundlanders as a people with identifiable peculiarities of pronunciation and idiom, of song, proverb, and folk tale” (267). Rompkey states that, in part, “such peculiarities were at times regarded as ... consequences of the struggle against climate and terrain” (267). In doing so, he echoes what Patrick O’Flaherty calls the myth of the “hardy Newfoundlander” (56), a pride in an identity “forged out of decades of hard work and suffering” (Delisle 18). Both Rompkey and O’Flaherty argue that the collective memory of hardship and oppression experienced by generations of Newfoundlanders led to islanders’ sense of a separate national identity.

This sense also derives from the fact that, as I mention above, Newfoundland was not always a province of Canada. Prior to 1934, it was a self-governing British dominion. The decision to join Canada in 1949 was contentious: only 52% of Newfoundlanders voted for Confederation. That the majority of these lived in the poverty-stricken outports (Malone 202) suggests that the desire to join Canada was inspired less by identity politics than a real fear of starvation. Though the reasons for and against Confederation were

many, the general consensus by historians is that rural Newfoundlanders voted for Confederation because they wanted access to schools, hospitals, and financial relief.<sup>10</sup> For those who wanted Newfoundland to remain independent, Confederation was what Jennifer Delisle calls a “debilitating psychic wound” (*Diaspora* 134). A preoccupation with the Confederation moment continues to colour the work of many contemporary writers, who view the decision to join Canada as a “rupture” (135) of cultural identity.<sup>11</sup> Paul Bowdring and Patrick Kavanagh, for example, use their novels to argue that the “problem” of Confederation has not yet faded from cultural memory.<sup>12</sup> Confederation was not only a historical event. It continues to inspire a popular mythology for Newfoundlanders, providing a story that defines the way that the island’s inhabitants view themselves and their island culture.

Other mythologies are also important. These include the myth of the spiritual connection between the Newfoundlander and the land, as Paul Chafe explores in “‘Only an Artist Can Measure Up to Such a Place’: Place and Identity in Contemporary Newfoundland Fiction.” They also encompass what Adrian Fowler calls the “myth of the old outpost” (“Patrick” 71), a celebration of Newfoundland’s small harbours and communities as providing the cultural identity of the entire island. Legends and folklore

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<sup>10</sup> Melvin Baker writes: “Smallwood continuously emphasized [the benefits of Confederation with Canada], which found sympathetic hearing in cash-poor outpost communities” (42). Similarly, Ralph Matthews argues that, for Newfoundland, Confederation “was a union of necessity” (1). In 1949, most Newfoundlanders were “living in rural fishing villages where ... standards of living were low. Educational facilities were poor. Roads were almost nonexistent. Hospitals were widely scattered” (1).

<sup>11</sup> Stan Dragland states that “confederation will die as an issue in Newfoundland when everyone feels the same way about it,” and then asks ironically “What [is] the chance of [that] happening?” (189).

<sup>12</sup> I discuss the role of Confederation in both Bowdring’s *The Strangers’ Gallery* (2013) and Patrick Kavanagh’s *Gaff Topsails* in Chapter 1 of this thesis.

influence the way that people view Newfoundland. An adherence to the past structures the contemporary understandings of gender that many of the novels I study display.

However, the majority of the scholars I draw on do not acknowledge how myths of island nationalism conflate the Newfoundland man with the Newfoundlander more generally, in the process removing women entirely.<sup>13</sup> Similarly, in the island's contemporary fiction it is predominantly men—and those who possess a particularly potent form of masculinity at that—that are imbued with the power to maintain the identity of the island.

In addition to celebrating myths popular in the past, Newfoundland has frequently resisted industrial change, something which is tied to concerns about masculinity.<sup>14</sup>

Joseph R. Smallwood, first premier of Newfoundland, wanted to increase commerce in the province in the 1950s. In particular, he and his government wanted to move men away from fishing and into new positions in business and public service.<sup>15</sup> Though a main concern was generally improving living standards, Smallwood's government also wanted to, in Sean Cadigan's words, "build an industrial economy that would support ... expanded consumption" (*Newfoundland* 242). Ultimately, "rural people [began] to suspect that Smallwood might have been a false prophet" (242) as the government failed to generate significant industrial employment, especially in rural areas.

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<sup>13</sup> For example, even Newfoundland's provincial anthem, the "Ode to Newfoundland," written by Governor Sir Cavendish Boyle in 1902, states: "As loved our fathers, so we love / Where once they stood we stand."

<sup>14</sup> I elaborate on this topic in Chapter 2. For more, see Christopher Dummit, *The Manly Modern: Masculinity in Postwar Canada* (2007).

<sup>15</sup> Sean Cadigan argues that "Smallwood's goal was to transform the province into a modern urban and industrial society dominated by consumerism" (*Newfoundland* 235), and describes how Smallwood's government "embarked on a disastrous program of industrial diversification that failed to provide employment to those fishers who were displaced by fisheries' modernization" (241).

This distrust of Smallwood and his government was exacerbated by his resettlement plan. In 1954, the provincial government began to resettle the dispersed populations of coastal communities into centralized locations to reduce the cost of health care, education, and public utilities. Although many rural people initially favoured resettlement, “disillusionment quickly set in” (246) as resettled people found “little work, inadequate housing, poor land for supplementary farming, and insufficient financial assistance from government” (246). These factors, bolstered by the reality that integration into Canada meant it was easier for Newfoundlanders to move away to find work, led to a number of mass emigrations.<sup>16</sup>

As a result of Smallwood’s failed efforts, many Newfoundlanders began to believe that all attempts to change Newfoundland were mistaken. Out of the modernizing philosophy of the resettlement program arose a critique of modernization as potentially weakening the past way of life within the province. Journalist Sandra Gwyn first discussed the notion of the resulting “cultural revival” this triggered in “The Newfoundland Renaissance,” published in 1976.<sup>17</sup> Believing that an authentic culture and rural way of life were being sacrificed in Smallwood’s race for development in the 1950s and 60s, many Newfoundland artists began to promote a distinct Newfoundland style of

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<sup>16</sup> Jennifer Delisle explores this topic at length in her book, *The Newfoundland Diaspora* (2013).

<sup>17</sup> James K. Hiller writes that “Smallwood was a modernizer” (130) and it was “his job to bring about a ‘New’ Newfoundland” (130). Smallwood’s relocation of the rural population under the resettlement programs “seemed to constitute an attack on the real Newfoundland – the traditional society of the outports” (130) and it was in this context that “the modern nationalist movement took root” (130). Namely, this neo-nationalism “celebrated traditional customs, songs, dialects and artefacts as well as the province’s history and landscape” (130). Eventually, artists, writers, actors and academics worked to remind “fellow Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, and all Canadians, that their province was a distinct and special place ... that deserved respect rather than condescension” (130).



art and performance. This cultural renaissance reflected an anti-materialist, often romantic rejection of urban-industrial society. In the decades that followed, the arts were “driven by a sense of national identity” (O’Dea 385) that ultimately shaped Newfoundland, including the way Newfoundlanders presented the island to outsiders.

Yet, in *Anne of Tim Hortons: Globalization and the Reshaping of Atlantic-Canadian Literature* (2011), Herb Wyile argues that there now exists “a broader trend ... of writers highlighting the disparity between outsiders’ expectations about life in the region and the more complicated and less idyllic lived realities” (1). He states that, in the “touristic” (1) version, which has become more widespread with the advent of travel and promotional technologies, Newfoundlanders are seen as “proud, stoic, independent, communal, and culturally vibrant, providing a welcome antidote to the alienating, consumerist modernity that characterizes life in the ostensibly more prosperous and cosmopolitan parts of the country” (1). However, where visitors so often expect a “laid-back, unchanging rural existence” (1), the Newfoundland of today is actually preoccupied with the economic, political, cultural, and social shifts that compose globalization. As a result, over the twenty years preceding 2011, Wyile notes a “veritable explosion” (6) of writers for whom “the stereotypes by which the region is framed have presented a substantial challenge” (6). One of the central problems with regional stereotypes is that they can engender a particular set of expectations in a reader. According to Wyile, many Newfoundland novelists, including Lisa Moore and Michael Winter, work to break down these expectations and present Newfoundland as a place that resists classification.

Larry Mathews anticipated Wyile's argument in his 2004 article "Report from the Country of No Country." Here, Mathews writes that:

the thematic preoccupations that link [Newfoundland writers from the 1970s] seem to have disappeared. Neither [Lisa Moore nor Paul Bowdring] have any interest in developing an overview of Newfoundland identity, though for both the Newfoundland setting is integral to their artistic projects. It is as though the issues of collective identity addressed by the other writers have now been settled or become irrelevant, and the texture of their characters' lives has taken centre stage.

(12)

Although both Wyile and Mathews expected that this departure would become a prominent trend, I argue that this has not eventuated. A small number of texts exist that satisfy Wyile and Mathews's descriptions, yet the majority of contemporary Newfoundland novels do not.

Specifically, I submit that, as a response to rapid economic and political change, Newfoundland fiction has remained committed to nostalgic renderings of the past, including how it figures masculinity, with only very few exceptions.<sup>18</sup> For example, Barbara Neis contends that the moratorium had significant "wide-ranging implications for gender identities" (*Changing Tides* 1).<sup>19</sup> Sociologists Nicole Power and Donna Harrison similarly claim that discourses exist within the Newfoundland fishing industry

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<sup>18</sup> For instance, Michael Winter's earlier work, which I briefly discuss in Chapter 2, satisfies the trends set out by Wyile and Mathews; yet, his most recent novel, *Minister Without Portfolio*, returns to themes popular in the cultural renaissance, such as celebrating the outport and rejecting consumerism.

<sup>19</sup> For more on the moratorium, see Jenny Higgins's "Economic Impacts of the Cod Moratorium."

that “tend to solidify, and even idealize” (229) certain historical gender stereotypes of work, including “male dominance” (229). The proximity of the ocean provided many pre-1992 Newfoundland men with the opportunity to test themselves against the dangers of nature and to view themselves as producers. The removal of this opportunity changed the way that work and men were understood on the island. Moreover, in the mid-2000s, Newfoundland and Labrador “became a ‘have province’ for the first time in its history because of the revenues generated from the capital intensive oil and mining sector” (Baehre 22).<sup>20</sup> This relatively abrupt economic shift alerted Newfoundlanders to the possibility of subsequent cultural and social change.<sup>21</sup> Changes to the island’s industry and financial situation—even ostensibly “positive” changes—necessarily influence its identity. Thus, in an attempt to save the island’s culture from vanishing entirely, many contemporary authors promote past modes of living, including historical understandings of work and gender, in their writing.

Newfoundland is also necessarily influenced by its longstanding relationships with other Western, English-speaking nations. For example, the “Frontier Myth” popular in American fiction finds adapted expression in Newfoundland fiction, as do elements common in imperial British literature. I examine these trends more closely later in this

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<sup>20</sup> For more on the influence of oil on Newfoundland masculinity, see folklorist Nicholas Hartmann’s dissertation, “Vernacular Perceptions of Masculinity and Fatherhood among Newfoundland Offshore Workers and their Families” (2015). Hartmann examines the way that offshore oil workers “express and reflect upon traditional Newfoundland constructs of fatherhood and masculinity through narrative and ritual” (3). Namely, he argues that “nostalgic memoirs of outport Newfoundland create models of hegemonically masculine fatherhood in the province” (3).

<sup>21</sup> For example, historian Rainer Baehre notes that “this shift away from the traditionally more labour-intensive maritime and forest resources has resulted in a decline of smaller rural communities, a growing number of which have lost population, have been abandoned or continue to face a bleak future” (23).

Introduction. In what follows, I also provide an overview of North American masculinity studies, consider how gender influences ideologies of nationalism, and examine the history of the novel in Newfoundland. This Introduction concludes with an outline of the specific concerns of each of the dissertation's chapters. Though masculinity, in general, is the primary preoccupation of all of the novels I study, each of my chapters offers different pathways into the topic.

### **Understanding Gender**

Gender has garnered increased visibility in recent years, within Newfoundland and beyond, as men and women reconsider the stereotypes that they are often expected to uphold. Seymour's experience as a firefighter is just one example of gender-based conflict facing Canadians in the twenty-first century. These conflicts frequently reveal the damaging impact certain forms of masculinity can have, as men in positions of authority are often seen abusing their power. In 2014 for example, the country was shocked by the sexual assault accusations made against popular CBC radio broadcaster Jian Ghomeshi, which ultimately drew national attention towards both sexual harassment in the work place and the abuse of power by celebrities (Borel).<sup>22</sup> At a more local level, the exoneration of Constable Douglas Snelgrove, a police officer accused of raping an intoxicated woman while on-duty, led to protests within St. John's which criticized the

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<sup>22</sup> These events find expression beyond Canada. For example, in October 2017, American film producer Harvey Weinstein was accused by over 80 women of sexual assault. These accusations inspired the #metoo movement, which prompted women from all over the world to share their stories of sexual harassment and assault on social media.

disproportionate power held by men in positions of authority (Rollman).<sup>23</sup>

Such examples underscore conflicts between men and women. Yet, there also exist gender struggles that move beyond this binary. For example, University of Toronto professor, Jordan Peterson, has drawn considerable attention for his refusal to use his students' preferred pronouns (Kivanc). Peterson's documented diatribes against trans identity are arguably a response to what he perceives as the undermining of heteronormative, white, Christian masculinity. Though not explicitly anti-trans, much Newfoundland fiction expresses a yearning for an idealized version of masculinity that existed primarily in the past, and this yearning reflects and contributes to wider current debates around gender in society. As many of the aforementioned situations show, prescriptive masculinity often creates serious problems, and change is necessary.

Gender is typically understood as constituted by the attitudes, feelings, and behaviours that a given culture associates with a person's biological sex. For example, Susan Stryker writes that gender is a "social, linguistic, or subjective representation of ... material sex" (8). Gail Bederman emphasizes how gender is a "historical, ideological process" (*Manliness* 7) through which individuals lay claim to certain types of power. These definitions gesture towards what Stephen Whittle describes as "the most controversial issue in sex and gender theory" (xiii), which he presents as a question: "[is] the basis of gender identity essential and biologically based or is it socially constructed?" (xiii). Though in recent years critics have argued that the essentialism/constructionism

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<sup>23</sup> On October 19<sup>th</sup>, 2018, it was announced that there would be a new trial as a result of an appeal made by the Crown.

debate is limiting, it provides a useful starting point for this dissertation's exploration of masculinity.<sup>24</sup> The majority of the novels I study present masculinity as wholly reliant on biological sex and the physical body.<sup>25</sup> These texts suggest that, to be successfully masculine, Newfoundland men must possess certain physical attributes. Their ability to father children is of the utmost importance, and many male protagonists either rely on their bodily strength to prove their manhood, or consider the decay of their bodies as the loss of their masculine identity.

Deconstructing popular myths and stereotypes of gender is not an easy task. In one effort to do so, some scholars present gender as a performance, an understanding perhaps most famously explored by Judith Butler in *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (1990). Here, Butler writes:

If gender attributes and acts, the various ways in which a body shows or produces its cultural signification, are performative, then there is no preexisting identity by which an act or attribute might be measured ... That gender reality is created through sustained social performances means that the very notions of an essential sex and a true or abiding masculinity or femininity are also constituted as part of the strategy that conceals gender's performative character and the performative

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<sup>24</sup> Riki Lane argues that "although biological essentialism versus social constructionism has been posed as a central debate in feminism ... the conceptual and political dividing line now less concerns nurture against nature than support for diversity against dichotomy" (136), adding that, "by welcoming the direct assault on binaries of gender ... and accepting people who live without their gender identity constantly being marked as 'abnormal' ... we can regenerate a movement as an alliance for making the world safe and just for people of all genders and sexualities" (137).

<sup>25</sup> The novels of Chapter 4—Winter's *Annabel*, Grant's *Come, Thou Tortoise*, and Winter's *This All Happened*—remain the exception to this rule.

possibilities for proliferating gender configurations outside the restricting frames of masculinist domination and compulsory heterosexuality. (180)

Butler emphasizes that gender should be considered as an “ongoing discursive practice” (43), a process which encourages interference and constant reinterpretation.

There were writers publishing much earlier than Butler that made similar arguments. For example, in *The Second Sex* (1949), Simone de Beauvoir historically argues that “one is not born, but rather becomes, woman” (283), and that “a man never begins by positing himself as an individual of a certain sex: that he is a man is obvious” (5). Similarly, Erving Goffman explores gender as “display” in his work, *Gender Advertisements*, published in 1976. Goffman suggests that gender is a “ritual,” or a set of “conventionalized acts” that form under “pressure,” from “emotionally motivated behaviours [becoming] formalized” (69). Following Beauvoir and Goffman, Butler argues that the definition of the term “woman” (*Trouble* 4) cannot be exhaustive, because gender is not something that is consistent across different historical contexts. Moreover, she draws attention to the ways that gender intersects with race, class, ethnicity, sexuality, and regional culture: gender is always evolving and adapting, and to consider it as something static, is to imbue gender with a sort of biological essentialism, which these theorists strongly resist.

In her later work, *Undoing Gender* (2004), Butler continues to argue that one is always “doing” (1) gender for another, even if that other is imaginary. Gender is a performative act: it is accomplished by *doing* something rather than *being* something. A woman, performatively speaking, is one who says she is—and who then does what

“woman” means.<sup>26</sup> Thus Butler insists that no identity exists behind the acts that supposedly express gender, and these acts constitute—rather than express—the illusion of stable gender identity. This is the view of gender that this thesis takes: that individuals have been conditioned by society to believe that they should behave in certain ways depending on whether they are assigned male or female at birth. By showing how volatile experiences of masculinity are within the island’s fiction, my work presents a constructionist understanding of gender, and argues that prescriptive notions of masculinity are harmful, for both men and women.

In the past, the genre of gender studies has focused particularly intently on the construct of femininity, as women have been positioned as “Other” in a way that denies them autonomy or power. Bryce Traister argues that until quite recently, the concept of “man” was, for many, “superfluous to study” (281). Man has, according to Michael Kimmel, been positioned as “the standard” (*History* 5) and thus the history of men has been simply acknowledged as the history of all humankind. Yet, Traister, Kimmel, and others tell us that this is changing.<sup>27</sup> To make gender visible not only to women, but also to men, masculinity, too, must be considered a constructed foundation. Calvin Thomas shares the belief that “invisibility reproduces inequality” (6), suggesting in his text,

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<sup>26</sup> Also of interest is Monique Wittig’s observation that lesbians are not women. In *The Straight Mind and Other Essays* (1992), Wittig argues that the idea of woman is already so embedded within heteronormativity that a woman cannot be understood outside of the binary of man/woman: “one feature of lesbian oppression consists precisely of making women out of reach for us, since women belong to men. Thus a lesbian has to be something else, a not-woman, a not-man, a product of society, not a product of nature, for there is no nature in society” (13).

<sup>27</sup> Stephen Whitehead and Frank J. Barrett state that, “whereas [in the 1980s] critical insights into masculinities were relatively few, today there are no areas of men’s activities that have not been subject to some research and debate by both women and men” (1).



*Masculinity, Psychoanalysis, Straight Queer Theory*, that “to leave masculinity unstudied ... would be to leave it naturalized” (5) or essential—masculinity becomes something requiring protection.

John Beynon argues that contemporary masculinity as a uniform concept has been “exploded” (2) by the influence of feminism and the “gay movement” (2), and therefore he suggests that masculinity should be viewed as something “diverse, mobile, and even unstable” (2). Thus, while normative masculinity has simply been defined as the possession of the qualities typically associated with men, many gender theorists in recent decades pluralize masculinity, as a way of suggesting that there are, in fact, multiple ways to be a man. Masculinity is always interpolated by cultural, historical, and geographical location, and it is something into which men are assimilated. It is composed of “social codes of behaviour” (Beynon 2) which men learn to reproduce in “culturally appropriate ways” (2). Masculinity is not a conception globally shared by men: there is no universal, *a priori* masculinity, but, rather, multiple and competing versions of alternative masculinities exist at any given time.

What I above call “normative” masculinity is what R.W. Connell labels “hegemonic masculinity.” Connell defines hegemonic masculinity as “the pattern of practice (i.e., things done, not just a set of role expectations or an identity) that [allows] men’s dominance over women to continue” (“Hegemonic” 833). Hegemonic masculinity “[embodies] the currently most honored way of being a man” (833) and it requires all

other men to “position themselves in relation to it” (833).<sup>28</sup> Hegemonic masculinity therefore rests on the assumption that other masculinities exist, but are somehow subordinate. There are various mechanisms of hegemony that ensure that this particular form of masculinity remains in power, from something as visible as the “pageantry” (834) of masculinity in televised sports, to the “censure” (834) directed at subordinated groups (including the criminalization of homosexuality, the bullying of ostensibly effeminate children, and the maintenance of patriarchal structures). Yet, Connell notes that there is some “optimism” (833) in her theory, as it rests on the assumption that masculine identity can, and will, change. Challenges to hegemony, she asserts, are common.

Alongside this realization has arisen a powerful (if unsurprising) backlash. In his book, *Male Trouble: Masculinity and the Performance of Crisis* (2012), Fintan Walsh argues that, “since the 1990s,<sup>29</sup> men have increasingly appeared across a range of social and aesthetic practices as troubled subjects, with Western masculinity repeatedly reported to be in a critical state” (2).<sup>30</sup> As a result of this, some Men’s Rights Activists at the end of the twentieth century began to complain that contemporary society no longer allowed men to be “real.” They called this the “crisis of masculinity.” There are three primary reasons often given for this crisis: first, the post-Fordist globalization of society (which

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<sup>28</sup> Connell reminds us that hegemonic masculinities can be constructed that do not actually correspond to the lives of any “actual men” (839). Instead, these models of masculinity express “widespread ideals” (839), or fantasies, that provide aspirational models of behavior.

<sup>29</sup> Periods of crisis have existed in every generation, from the end of the nineteenth century to the period following World War II. Yet, the rhetoric has gained strength in recent decades.

<sup>30</sup> Walsh, a scholar of British and Irish drama, addresses a variety of topics in his book, such as American film and British playwrights, focusing more broadly on the Western experience of masculinity; he and many other theorists argue that crisis rhetoric is not restricted by national borders.

many argue led to high levels of unemployment and the movement of men into the service sector, which was previously filled by women) (Walsh 170); second, the promotion of the female as equal to the male; and third, the “increased presence of the homosexual or intersexual figure” (Whitehead and Barrett 6) in both society and literature.<sup>31</sup>

Power is fundamental in the construction of masculinities. Beynon argues that the precise nature of a “crisis of masculinity” is “ill defined and elusive” (75), but he also submits that the primary cause of any alleged crisis is that questioning men’s innate masculine identity ultimately undermines their position of power. This is likely one of the reasons that Seymour faced so much harassment, as she was perceived as posing a threat to masculine hegemony: she had the audacity not only to join a historically male-only space, but to also critique the behaviours of the men working within this space. Some writers—including Robert Bly, Lionel Tiger, and Warren Farrell—therefore study masculinity as part of an effort to revitalize the “true” manhood that they believe has been “emasculated by feminism and threatened by gay male outism” (Traister 278).<sup>32</sup> These writers position men as society’s most recently marginalized victims.

David Savran adds a racialized element to this idea of masculine victimhood in

*Taking It Like a Man: White Masculinity, Masochism, and Contemporary American*

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<sup>31</sup> Gender historians Christopher J. Greig and Wayne K. Martino make a similar argument when writing about Canada: “at a time marked by deep economic and social uncertainty brought on by (1) the advent of globalization ... (2) the crisis of deindustrialization ... (3) women’s emergence as primary breadwinners ... and (4) the eclipse of the traditional definition of marriage, the contours of what constitutes masculinity are being contested, reformed, and redrawn” (1).

<sup>32</sup> I discuss Bly’s work at length in later chapters; for more from Tiger and Farrell, see Tiger’s *The Decline of Males: The First Look at an Unexpected New World for Men and Women* (2000) and Farrell’s *The Myth of Male Power: Why Men are the Disposable Sex* (2001).

*Culture* (1998). Savran argues that an abundance of “white, heterosexual, working- and lower-middle-class men ... believe themselves to be the victims of the scant economic and social progress ... over the past thirty years by African Americans, women, and other racial, ethnic, and sexual minorities” (3). “Trading themselves,” Savran writes, “with the people they loathe, they imagine themselves the new persecuted majority” (4). Michael Messner similarly argues that “the cultural and political invocation of the white guy as victim/loser may offer white men a symbolic avenue of escape from the ‘hidden injuries’ of a destabilized or insecure masculinity, while simultaneously delegitimizing the collective claims of women, sexual and racial-ethnic minorities” (“On Patriarchs” 85).

We can connect this trend of white male victimhood to the belief—as discussed by James Gilbert in *Men in the Middle* (2005) and Susan Faludi in *Stiffed* (1999)—that the 1950s was the ideal decade for white men. It was this era, Faludi argues, which provided men with “all the elements for attaining manhood” (30). Stating that “no subsequent period has elicited such widespread nostalgia” (771) than the 1950s, Stephen Whitfield suggests that this is the time that many look to as the last decade where white men still had complete and obvious power over women and other minorities. Other contemporary critics view different historical periods as providing a particularly fertile terrain for masculine expression; though not always a specific era, these vague periods *always* exist sometime in the past. For example, in *The Masculine Century: A Heretical History of our Time* (2008), Michael Antony argues that “a process of masculinization of men took place in the latter half of the nineteenth century, culminated in the mid-twentieth century, and ... since the 1960s we have been trying ... to get back to normal”

(45). Correspondingly, my thesis looks at the ways that various Newfoundland novels similarly promote the past—namely those decades before Confederation in 1949—as a time when Newfoundland men were best able to experience an ideal form of masculinity.

Michael Kimmel claims that, since the early nineteenth century, the quest for manhood has revolved around certain expectations of men and women.<sup>33</sup> These expectations still influence contemporary men. Kimmel writes that in the late 1800s, masculinity was based on a “flight from women,” or what he calls fantasies of male escape” (*History* 18-9). It was “women versus the wilderness” (18), as the former were equated with institutions, constraints, harnesses, and responsibility. This wilderness often took the form of the frontier, a space which has inspired its own well-known mythology.

The “Frontier Myth” was popularized by Frederick Jackson Turner in the late 1800s and explored in further detail by Richard Slotkin in *Regeneration Through Violence* (1973), *The Fatal Environment* (1985), and *Gunfighter Nation* (1992). Turner defines the frontier as the “meeting point between savagery and civilization” (3) and maintains that this “idea” was the foundation for American identity.<sup>34</sup> Slotkin, defining a

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<sup>33</sup> In *Manhood in America*, Kimmel focuses on white, middle-class men from the United States. In her review of this book, Gail Bederman warns that, although Kimmel “repeatedly acknowledges the existence of excluded ‘others’—female, gay/lesbian, or black” (“Review” 20), by “taking only white, privileged men as historical actors” (20) and positioning these others as simply excluded, Kimmel’s narrative “misleadingly implies that black ... men have not actively defined ‘American Manhood’” (20). Like Kimmel, I focus on the way that white, privileged men construct and promote a particularly pervasive form of masculinity in Newfoundland fiction, and so Kimmel’s work is useful for my purposes. However, I do not want to imply that men of colour have had no impact on the way that Newfoundland masculinity has been defined, in both society and fiction. Both mine and Kimmel’s projects offer only one particular perspective; a further study into the ways that, for example, Indigenous masculinities are portrayed in Newfoundland fiction would be valuable. I return to this in my Conclusion.

<sup>34</sup> Pekka Hämmäläinen points out some problems with Turner’s understanding of the frontier in *The Comanche Empire* (2008). He writes: “Turner’s frontier thesis [is] an ethnocentric and narcissistic rendition of the European takeover of North America [consisting of a] binary dividing line between civilization and savagery” (7). Hämmäläinen argues that the frontier should be re-envisioned “as a socially

myth as “a set of narratives that acquire through specifiable historical action a significant ideological charge” (*Fatal* 31), explains how American settlers brought with them the myth that in America they could reinvent themselves.<sup>35</sup> In *Regeneration through Violence*, Slotkin writes that the first colonists believed that America provided an opportunity to “regenerate their fortunes, their spirits, and [their] power” (3). Men at this time proved their masculine power by conquering the frontier.

Although Slotkin writes of the frontier’s importance to a specifically American culture and identity, this ideology, I argue, is also important in the context of Newfoundland masculinity. Winifred Siemerling and Sarah Casteel argue that the Americas “share, beyond geographical adjacency, a number of comparable historical parallels and differences, common legacies as white-settler societies that derive from their relationships with indigenous societies ... and the imperial powers against which they sought to define their emergent cultural and political identities” (12). More directly, Tracy Whalen declares that American notions of conquering the frontier and proving manhood have a “long tradition” (“Camping” 55) in Newfoundland, “as Americans, historically, have made Newfoundland a site of escape and intrigue” (55). Similarly,

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charged space where Indians and invaders competed for resources and land but also shared skills, foods, fashions, customs, languages, and beliefs. Indian-white frontiers, new work has revealed, were messy, eclectic contact points where all protagonists are transformed – regardless of whether the power dynamics between them are evenly or unevenly balanced. This has brought the frontier closer to its rival concept, the borderland, which Herbert Eugene Bolton, the pioneering historian of Spanish North America, coined to challenge Turner’s constricted Anglo-centric vision” (8). Despite its problematic approach, it is largely Turner’s understanding of the frontier that finds its way into the novels I study. These novels, which are largely explored in Chapter 2, ignore the role of Indigenous people to frontier ideology, and simply embrace the idea of a “wilderness” space as a place for proving white masculinity.

<sup>35</sup> Examples of the “Frontier Myth” in American literature include James Fenimore Cooper’s *The Last of the Mohicans*, as well as fiction by Zane Grey, and Louis L’Amour, amongst many others.

James Overton argues that Newfoundland continues to be considered by Americans as “a place which [offers] much to those interested in sport and novel and wild adventure for those who [do] not mind roughing it at the annual seal slaughter” (15). Concomitantly, many contemporary Newfoundland novelists use the outport in much the same way that American writers deploy the frontier in their own fiction.

A similar way of thinking has roots in a distinctly Canadian context, as well. Margaret Atwood’s *Survival: A Thematic Guide to Canadian Literature* (1972),<sup>36</sup> argues that the “single unifying and informing symbol” (26) of Canadian identity is, “undoubtedly, survival” (27).<sup>37</sup> In *White Civility: The Literary Project of English Canada* (2006), Daniel Coleman introduces the phrase “Environmental Darwinism” (24), which he defines as a widespread Canadian myth in which “the rigors 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).

Indeed, a corresponding ideology is also found within British imperial literature. In *Contested Masculinities: Crises in Colonial Male Identity from Joseph Conrad to Satyajit Ray* (2008), Nalin Jayasena argues that the women’s rights movement of late-nineteenth-century Britain evoked in Englishmen “a prevailing fear” (1): by rejecting the ideology of “separate spheres” (1), while embracing other “feminist activities” (1),

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<sup>36</sup> Christine Ramsay notes that “masculinity has mattered in the national discourse since [*Survival*] emerged in 1972” (xvi).

<sup>37</sup> Ironically (at least, for my purposes), Atwood states that the “frontier” is the major symbol of Americanism, clearly delineating between the two concepts (26). I argue, however, that these two ideas, frontier and survival, are necessarily intertwined, as one often inspires or requires the other. Moreover, in *Contrasts: Comparative Essays on Italian-Canadian Writing* (1985), Joseph Pivato points out that the survival theme is not original, “nor particularly Canadian” (23).

Victorian women disturbingly “defied the traditional roles ascribed to them by patriarchal Victorian society” (1). At the same time, literary critic Graham Dawson posits that, “during the growth of popular imperialism in the mid-to-late nineteenth century, heroic masculinity became fused in an especially potent configuration with representations of British imperial identity” (1). “New imperialist patriotism” was connected with the “virtues of manhood” (1). According to Jayasena, Dawson, and other critics, colonialism became a way for British men, recently threatened by shifts in gender roles, to regain a sense of their masculine identity, which was marked by their whiteness. Significantly, Jayasena also states that the literature of the *fin-de-siecle* “reflects [this] urgent need to reiterate masculine narratives” (2). In response to a perceived “crisis in masculinity,” British novelists wrote about the daring adventures of men travelling to far-away colonies in an effort to re-establish men to positions of power and authority.<sup>38</sup> As studies like this show, masculinity plays a significant role in both nationalism and cultural identity.

However, despite the importance of studying masculinity in literature, and rendering it visible, one must tread carefully. Feminist scholar Lynne Segal posits that there is a risk that masculinity studies more generally can “appropriate feminist scholarship, resituating men as the new authorities on gender matters, making men rather than women the latest victims of normative masculinity” (xxi). There is a risk too that the act of studying men and masculinity will validate the crisis rhetoric.

Fortunately, in recent years masculinity studies has shifted to include the

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<sup>38</sup> Some examples are Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* (1899), Rudyard Kipling’s *Kim* (1901), and George Orwell’s *Burmese Days* (1934).



interrogation of masculinities beyond the traditional binary, including queer masculinities, female masculinities,<sup>39</sup> and trans masculinities. This works to destabilize normative masculinity, encouraging us to reconsider the ways that we think about gender. For example, the past decade has seen the publication of Kate Bornstein and S. Bear Bergman's *Gender Outlaws: The Next Generation* (2010),<sup>40</sup> Rae Spoon and Ivan Coyote's *Gender Failure* (2014), and Quinn Eades's *All the Beginnings*. In *Gender Failure*, Spoon writes:

If being a man is something that required a person to tick off a bunch of boxes, not many people would make it through. ... If the gender binary was enforced based only on body characteristics, very few people would be read as a man or a woman. ... My failure to be accepted as a man by many people was rooted mainly in my failure to strive toward the physical traits stereotypically associated with masculinity as if they were the highest points on a hill ... [Now] I don't think there is a way to define a male body, and I no longer believe in the system of classification that never fit me. (105)

Spoon suggests that any discussion of gender as a binary is necessarily limiting, and they provide a new avenue of thought: instead of viewing masculinity as the culmination of certain qualities, we should instead find entirely new ways of talking about identity.

Lori B. Girshick, author of *Transgender Voices: Beyond Women and Men*,

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<sup>39</sup> For instance, Jack Halberstam's *Female Masculinity* (1998) and Jean Bobby Noble's *Masculinities Without Men?: Female Masculinity in Twentieth-Century Fictions* (2004).

<sup>40</sup> A follow up to Bornstein's *Gender Outlaw: On Men, Women, and the Rest of Us*, published in 1994.

similarly argues that “the gender binary does not work” (5). Girshick suggests that the promotion of the gender binary as “normal” allows for “hierarchical political structures, economic systems, and social conventions that benefit those on top of the pyramid” (5). Those who “deviate from the norm” (5) are unable to achieve the sort of authority granted to those who are considered normal. Connell’s theory of hegemonic masculinity rests on the notion that men construct particular masculine identities by resisting those traits that they believe to be perceived as weak or aberrant by society. For example, many believe that gay men must be somewhat effeminate. This way of thinking about gender and sexuality—in terms of polarities, and not as something that exists on a spectrum—excludes anyone who does not satisfy the binary from a position of authority.<sup>41</sup>

Though this thesis ultimately focuses on one particular form of masculinity that is, I argue, increasingly popular within contemporary Newfoundland fiction, it is important to remember the complexity that encompasses this category, and the way that subordinated masculinities challenge—and in some ways reinforce—hegemonic masculinities. For example, Connell writes in *Masculinities* (2005) that “black masculinity” (197) is a “sexual and social threat in dominant white cultures” (197) and this has led to “harsh policing and political racism” (197) in various settings. Thus, even as alternate masculinities emerge, there are always hierarchies in place to ensure that the

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<sup>41</sup> Chrys Ingraham argues that heterosexuality is “taken for granted” (4), that it is considered by many to be “naturally occurring and unquestioned” (4). By treating heterosexuality as normative, Ingram states that we “participate in establishing heterosexuality—not sexual orientation or sexual behavior, but the way it is organized, secured, and ritualized—as the standard for legitimate and prescriptive socio-sexual behavior, as though it were fixed in time and space and universally occurring” (4).

hegemonic form retains its power.

### **Newfoundland Culture: Nationalism and the Novel**

The novel plays an important role in disseminating ideologies of gender. Moreover, Terry Eagleton argues, “the rise of the novel goes hand-in-hand with the emergence of the modern nation-state” (“What Are We?” n.p.). When it first appeared in eighteenth-century Britain, the novel was, among other things, “an exercise in nation-building” (n.p.). For Eagleton, the novel has subsequently remained something that helps form a shared national sensibility.<sup>42</sup> In a similar manner, I argue that the Newfoundland novel continues to perform a pivotal role in the formation of Newfoundland nationalism, in that it not only holds a “mirror” (n.p.) to the island’s culture but in fact *produces* this culture, disseminating national ideology through its promotion of particular images and myths.

In *Nationalism and Literature: The Politics of Culture in Canada and the United States*, Sarah Corse elaborates on this topic at length, arguing that national literatures exist not because they “arise naturally” (74) but because they are “an integral part of the process by which nation states create themselves and distinguish themselves from other nations” (74). Corse emphasizes that national literatures are not merely reflections of the national character, but rather “manifestations of the ‘invention’ of the nation, of the strategies used to create national identities” (74). While reflection theories often ignore

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<sup>42</sup> Similarly, Patrick Parrinder notes how many identify the novel as a vehicle for national myth, adding that it is often the source of many expressions of national identity, as it plays an important role in the “transmission and dissemination” (7) of national images, memories, and myths.

how national literatures are created—that is, resulting from conscious human acts—Corse suggests that viewing the novel as an object of construction itself allows for a greater understanding of the ways that nations and novels intersect. Agreeing with Corse, Patrick O’Flaherty sees Newfoundland fiction as something that shapes the identities of its readers. He begins *The Rock Observed* with the argument that “the general Canadian view of Newfoundland and, more significantly, Newfoundlanders’ conceptions of their own history and character have been shaped to some extent by the written word” (ix).

Gender also plays a vital role in conceptions of nationalism. Joane Nagel argues that “the culture and ideology of hegemonic masculinity go hand in hand with the culture and ideology of hegemonic nationalism” (249). Significantly, Nagel argues that there is an intimate historical and modern connection between manhood and nationhood. She states that various gender roles support ideologies of nationalism. These include: “the construction of patriotic manhood and exalted motherhood as icons of nationalist identity” (110) and “the designation of gendered ‘places’ for men and women in national politics” (110).

As the impact of globalization and neoliberalism increases, so does the conversation surrounding the influence of nationalism on both culture and literature. Jan Nederveen Pieterse considers globalization “the awareness of the world becoming smaller and cultural difference receding” (43), something which, he argues “coincides with a growing sensitivity to cultural difference” (43). Dan Rebellato adds to this the important role of economics, arguing that the primary impact of globalization can be seen in “the rise of global capitalism operating under neoliberal policy conditions” (12). He

explains how the creation of a global market “wreaks enormous changes upon the world—shattering national boundaries, displacing populations, generating unthinkable new levels of wealth and hardship, revolutionizing the world around us” (17). By extension, novelistic boundaries shatter too. Both Pieterse’s and Rebellatto’s understandings of globalization apply to a Newfoundland context, as global changes in trade, technology, and politics impact personal, cultural, and literary identities on the island. Globalization threatens to fragment both the nation and the novel.

That said, Suman Gupta contends that “the literary form of the novel proves to be particularly conducive to conveying the complexity” (23) of the actions of globalization. He further argues that literary representations of social movements can characterize discussions of globalization. Not only do globalization and literature intersect, but they begin to transform one another. The role of both nation and literature must therefore be closely analysed within our current postnational, transnational, and globalized contexts (Brydon 4).

This thesis is primarily concerned with the way that Newfoundland writers have framed the consequences of global change in their fiction. Although Lisa Moore’s work consistently offers a cosmopolitan look at contemporary Newfoundland culture, and Michael Winter’s occasionally does, the work of most other contemporary Newfoundland authors does not.<sup>43</sup> Wyile is right to argue that some Newfoundland writers have been

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<sup>43</sup> For example, in an article about *Alligator*, Jonathan Parsons argues that “branded Newfoundland is the so-called real Newfoundland, packaged and placed on the market. It is the TV commercials, the billboards, and the feature articles in airline on-board travel magazines. But it is also the myth and underlying narrative of the brand, its appeal to a nostalgic longing for traditional values and quaint people in a place untouched by the depredations and excesses of modern society. This is not the version of Newfoundland in Moore’s novel. Whereas branded Newfoundland is presented as culturally specific, rustic communities,

concerned with the way globalization changes the island, yet I propose that many writers respond to this concern by returning to tropes that were popular in the past, as a way of protecting what they view as the island's authentic identity.

These past tropes often include separate spheres of work for men and women. Defined arenas of masculine and feminine labour have a lengthy history within Newfoundland. In her article, “‘It was a Woman’s Job, I ’Spose, Pickin’ Dirt Outa Berries’: Negotiating Gender, Work, and Wages at Job Brothers, 1940-1950,” Linda Cullum explores these divisions. She looks at the Job Brothers fish plant in St. John’s, which employed women as the primary labour in processing while “male waterfront workers handled the ‘physical’ tasks” (186). Cullum argues that this gendered division of labour “embodied contested meanings of femininity and masculinity produced in, and through, workplace hiring procedures, and workers’ talk about work and work processes” (186). Gender stereotypes were considered normative, and binary divisions between men and women’s work reinforced hegemonic conceptions of gender. The men’s jobs in fish plants were associated with masculinity: men not only performed the more physically demanding tasks, such as loading the boats, but worked at the highest and “most respected jobs” (189), including filleter or cutter. Conversely, women were given repetitive jobs, which always kept them indoors, and which “required little or no training or skill” (189). As a result of this gender-segregated work, Cullum believes that

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*Alligator* is an urban novel set in the heart of cosmopolitan St. John’s. Whereas the people of branded Newfoundland are presented as innocent and pluralistic, the characters in *Alligator* are cynical and self-interested” (6).

definitions of masculinity in Newfoundland solidified.

As I state earlier, the fishery has long played an important role for gender on the island. Writing in the 1980s, Marilyn Porter explains how “the ethos of ‘fishermen’ is a rugged male identity” (106), one which is “clamped firmly” (106) over the image of outport life. Yet, Porter is quick to point out how, despite this gendered culture of work, women in the outport have been found to be “relatively independent, politically and economically, and to suffer apparently little marital violence or overt male hostility outside the home” (106).<sup>44</sup> This may seem to be a “puzzling ...apparent contradiction” (107), but nonetheless it serves to remind us that the situation of both men and women in Newfoundland is a complex one.

I argue that the Newfoundland novel provides an effective medium for a study of nationalism, globalization, and gender, three concerns which frequently intersect, as Phillip Mallett elucidates in *The Victorian Novel and Masculinity*. Mallett conducts a study of late-nineteenth-century British novels, exploring how this fiction reflects the changing cultural, economic, and political environment of that time in Britain. Such studies are useful as they draw attention not only to the way that the novel influences the structure of a country’s or culture’s nationalism, but also the interweaving of gender and national identity. I construct a similar study of the connection between Newfoundland nationalism and masculinity, as represented in the island’s contemporary literature. Before looking at Newfoundland’s recent fiction, however, I turn to its literary past, examining trends that, although made popular decades earlier, continue to influence

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<sup>44</sup> See also Hilda Chaulk-Murray’s *More than 50%: Woman’s Life in a Newfoundland Outport, 1900-1950*.

today's novels.

### **Newfoundland's Literary Past**

Adrian Fowler argues that Newfoundland's fiction can be chronologically organized into three different categories: the "Heroic Myth" (1900-1939), the "Pastoral Myth" (1940-1960), and a third, unnamed category for the fiction of the present-day (i.e., since 1970), which he states is "more difficult to define" ("Townie Lit" 95). It is likely that Fowler is in debt to Northrop Frye for these categories; they are not unique to a Newfoundland context but rather reflect popular archetypes. Moreover, I argue that these groups are also quite similar to one another. For example, although Fowler claims that the contemporary period is difficult to define, I argue that it is, in fact, simple: the contemporary period adopts many ideologies that were popular in the past, reprising those tropes that he conversely argues exist primarily in his historical categories. Fowler never draws attention to gender, despite his categories often being marked by characteristics important to hegemonic masculinity, such as adventure or heroism. I therefore introduce Fowler's categories with the intention of dismantling them. Although I do not believe Newfoundland literature can be divided into such discrete, chronological categories, Fowler's descriptions of the trends that can be found in the island's literary past are popular and therefore enlightening.

Fowler includes writers such as Norman Duncan, E. J. Pratt, and George Allan in the first category, the "Heroic Myth," which contains books published between 1900 and



1939.<sup>45</sup> These works focus on the “proletarian heroism” (95) of outport life. This category centers on masculine adventure, something which Fowler does not problematize. Newfoundland’s early-twentieth-century texts often promote separate gender roles for men and women, and this myth attributes strength and bravery only to white, heterosexual Newfoundland men, excluding not only women as protagonists, but also people of colour and those possessing any sort of queer identity. Only men who possess certain masculine qualities possess hero status.

The fictional worlds of writers included in Fowler’s first category not only revolve around incredible stories of male achievement, but are written for a particular male audience. If one were to look at the introduction<sup>46</sup> to Norman Duncan’s *The Adventures of Billy Topsail*, published in 1906, one would note the direction, “To the boy who reads this book.” The introduction goes on to state:

The boys of the outports are like English-speaking boys the world over. They are merry or not, brave or not, kind or not, as boys go; but it may be that they are somewhat merrier and braver and kinder than boys to whom self-reliance and physical courage are less needful. At any rate, they have adventures, every one of them; and that is not surprising—for the

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<sup>45</sup>Though Fowler does not include them, there were also women producing fiction at this time. For example, many of Tryphena Duley’s short stories focus on the First World War, and she uses these texts to craft and promote an ideal image of wartime masculinity, one which requires men to be strong, heterosexual, and adventurous. Sonja Boon argues that Duley’s stories, which rely on “conventional middle-class understandings” (74) of gender roles, “insist on normative understandings of gender as essential components for wartime success” (74). Duley’s short story, “A Pair of Grey Socks,” has a female character claim: “It is every woman’s lot to suffer for men’s bravery. We must help, not hinder” (12).

<sup>46</sup> Duncan himself travelled to the north of Newfoundland for *McClure’s* magazine, to bring news of Wilfred Grenfell’s mission work to a growing body of interested readers in America. During this time he became fascinated by what he called the “real” Newfoundland of the outports.

conditions of life are such that every Newfoundland lad intimately knows  
 hardship and peril at an age when the boys of the cities still grasp a hand  
 when they cross the street. (n.p.)

Alongside excluding any girls of the outport, here Duncan tells young men how they should behave and what qualities they should possess.<sup>47</sup> Newfoundland men must be self-reliant, courageous, and adventurous, because they live in a place of peril that makes them stronger than weak, effeminate city boys.

When discussing Duncan's fiction, sociologist James Overton calls Duncan "the first writer ... to make ordinary Newfoundlanders the leading characters in his stories and to see in their routine, everyday activities a fit subject for literature" (14). He, too, implies that the "ordinary Newfoundlander" is a young man living in the outport. Both writers connect a certain kind of masculinity to Newfoundland identity, implying that it is through these heroic male characters that the culture of Newfoundland, the "real" Newfoundland, was created. Though Duncan was writing over a hundred years ago, I continue to see the same sort of assumptions and implications in contemporary Newfoundland fiction. Characters in novels published in the last twenty years continue to present the outport as the heart of Newfoundland, and they place idealized masculine figures in these outports, thereby reinforcing patrilineal structures.

As I mention earlier, the tropes that Fowler presents as unique to Newfoundland

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<sup>47</sup> Duncan is writing in a literary marketplace that has both discovered children as a demographic and has also divided it along gender lines, so that there are "boys' books" and "girls' books." Children's author Melvin Burgess notes the "truism in publishing that girls will read books that have boy heroes, whereas boys won't read books that have girl heroes" (qtd. in Flood).

fiction—including the country/city binary and the promotion of the self-reliant, heroic man—are also integral for late-nineteenth-century British fiction. For example, in *Kipling's Imperial Boy*, Don Randall writes that Rudyard Kipling's fiction expresses “faith in the enabling virtue of fraternal or homosocial bonds” (12).<sup>48</sup> Randall describes Kipling's construction of the “imperial boy” as a “site of sociocultural aspirations and anxieties, where envisionings of masculine adolescence and cultural hybridization” (12) are connected and presented as vital elements of Western imperial modernity.

Newfoundland's past literature can thus be included as part of a more widespread English-language imperial literature. This suggests that the gender politics of Newfoundland's novels correspond, to a degree, with the gender politics established in an imperial genre. As a result, the preference for this particular masculine identity suggests that Newfoundland is not yet postcolonial—rather, the island's adherence to gender roles made popular during this time period suggests that Newfoundland fiction remains haunted by the fiction produced for boys in the British Empire.

Fowler's second category, the “Pastoral Myth,” though established as a distinct grouping, continues to promote similar ideologies of gender and nationalism. The “Pastoral Myth” is, Fowler argues, expounded by authors such as Arthur Scammell, Ron Pollett, and Ted Russell; the novels of this group “[extoll] the community life of the old outport” (“Townie Lit” 95), covering a period ranging from the 1940s to the 1960s. Fowler claims that, with the increasing prominence of industrialization and globalization in the early second half of the twentieth century, Newfoundland writers altered the

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<sup>48</sup> Randall considers Kipling “the representative voice ... of ... the Age of Empire” (12).

narratives they used to define themselves. Of note, he argues, is how these authors move away from praising the daring Newfoundland hero (and the strength required to live in such a harsh landscape) to venerating the community itself.<sup>49</sup> Yet, I am wary of Fowler's argument that these texts celebrate the "community." Who does he include in this community? Women are not involved, as these books frequently praise a community of men.

Ted Russell's collection of short stories, *The Chronicles of Uncle Mose* (1975),<sup>50</sup> sheds some light on these concerns. In her short introduction to the anthology, Elizabeth Miller comments on the stories' "occasional remarks about women that might by today's standards seem somewhat belittling" (3) but does not elaborate on this inherent sexism. She does elaborate on the way that the stories are marked by "a deep respect for the dignity of the traditional way of life" (3) and how they "successfully [capture] the incongruities of life in an isolated community confronting the effects of change" (2). Thus, it would seem that sexism is merely accepted as part of the "traditional way of life" of Newfoundland (something which Seymour's experience with her fellow firefighters also revealed). The stories present a lighthearted but extremely patriarchal view of outport Newfoundland. Instead of showcasing daring quests or grand exploits, the stories

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<sup>49</sup> Martina Seifert states that "Scammell emphasizes communal life by placing no 'heroes' in the forefront of his stories, only 'fisherman gathering' and sharing in a whole, integrated natural existence" (37). She stresses how the features of the Newfoundlander were given, in Scammell's work, "a utopian past," and she states that his collection of stories, *My Newfoundland* (1966), "eulogizes an outport way of life that has been eroded by outside influences which alter the face and heart of the Newfoundland outport" (37).

<sup>50</sup> Though published as a collection in 1975, these short stories were written and presented on the radio much earlier, between 1953 and 1961.

shower “average joes” with veneration.<sup>51</sup> The codes of masculinity promoted by authors during the “Heroic” period therefore persist in the “Pastoral period.”<sup>52</sup>

Fowler’s remaining, unnamed, category includes novels written from around the 1970s and onward, such as Percy Janes’ *House of Hate* (1970). This novel presents a different image of outport Newfoundland than those found in the work of writers included in the “Heroic” and “Pastoral” stages—at least initially. *House of Hate* closely follows the tragic lives and deaths of a family living in Corner Brook in the 1960s. The family’s patriarch, Saul, is the primary preoccupation of the novel: a violent and angry man, Saul deeply impacts his children’s lives in a negative way. The novel’s narrator argues that Saul’s poverty as a child “must have caused him endless humiliations of spirit long before he was a man” (Janes 318). Patrick O’Flaherty, however, suggests that “to place the blame for Saul’s senescent spleen upon the burdensome history of Newfoundlanders may be to reach for a ready-made, facile solution to a problem whose roots lie closer to home, in some pent-up frustration with industrial stresses” (176). Saul’s destructive behavior could be understood as the result of a difficult childhood, marked by

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<sup>51</sup> Pollett’s work does the same. For example, his short story, “A Born Trout,” immediately establishes how “almost every boy [in Newfoundland] is either a born trout or contracts the malady with his first pair of hard boots” (14); his collection of short stories elaborates on how the difficulties associated with living in an abandoned outport in the 1940s and 1950s formed both the Newfoundland man and the island’s distinct culture. In his forward to this anthology, G.A. Frecker goes so far as to claim that, “in recent years, under the influence of mass media of communication, particularly the radio and the cinema and more recently television, the old order is yielding place to the exigencies of the age in which we are living” (n.p.). He sees Pollett’s stories as a corrective to these things.

<sup>52</sup> It was not only writers from Newfoundland that were writing stories about this island’s people and culture at this time. Patrick O’Flaherty explains how Canadian author Farley Mowat, who lived in Newfoundland for about seven years during the 1960s, wrote books—*The Boat Who Wouldn’t Float*, *A Whale for the Killing*—during and/or about his time here. O’Flaherty states that “Farley [was] delighted with [Newfoundland’s] atmosphere of rugged individualism, the colourful and distinctive characteristics of its people” (177) and that his “greatest dread is that Newfoundland, too, will eventually succumb to what he calls ‘the disease of creeping Americanism’” (177).

the poverty he experienced growing up in the harsh outports of Newfoundland (an argument O’Flaherty rejects). I argue that the novel presents the loss of the “traditional” way of life in Newfoundland, marked by advances in industrialization, as overwhelming Saul, and causing him to become hateful and violent.

Thus, whereas the two former categories of fiction—the “Heroic” and “Pastoral” myths—celebrate the ostensibly traditional way of life in Newfoundland, I argue that the third, unnamed category includes fiction that laments how changes in industry and politics have caused this way of life to be irrevocably tarnished. This trend finds expression in more recent fiction, as well. Even as contemporary novels acknowledge the increasing influence of globalization on the culture from which they emerge, they do not always embrace this change. I argue that they ultimately react to, or reinvent, the myths that Fowler perceives in the island’s past literature: recent novels either endorse past versions of masculinity (the “Hero Myth”), celebrate the outport (the “Pastoral Myth”), or introduce characters whose struggles with their masculinity are shown to be the result of change in Newfoundland. Ultimately, in the majority of fiction currently being produced in and about the island, there remains a general lament for some aspect of pre-industrial Newfoundland.<sup>53</sup> This lament lends itself to the construction of a particular form of masculine identity in the Newfoundland novel, one which honours white, heteronormative, outport-dwelling, working-class men as somehow more “real” than those possessing other identities.

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<sup>53</sup> Jennifer Delisle states that there is an “obsession” with the past in both historical and contemporary Newfoundland literature (*Diaspora* 140).

### **Four Approaches to Newfoundland Masculinity**

The four chapters of this thesis examine four different, though related, trends in masculinity. Each of these trends is a response to the crisis-of-masculinity rhetoric that I describe earlier: that is, while perceiving masculinity as threatened, the texts I examine offer various reactions and solutions. The three novels in Chapter 1 suggest that a return to iterations of manhood popular in the past will “save” the Newfoundland man—and the island’s distinct culture—from extinction. The novels of Chapter 2 suggest that what is most important for the Newfoundland man is a return to the outport. Chapter 3’s novels claim that there is no solution; rather, they present the Newfoundland man as society’s latest victim, lamenting the inability of Newfoundland men to thrive in the present day. Finally, the novels of Chapter 4 suggest that, instead of mourning changes to hegemonic masculinity, we should embrace them. These texts argue that a “crisis of masculinity” does not have to be something negative; rather, it can provide an opportunity to dissolve the gender binary.

Although Wylie suggests that much contemporary Newfoundland fiction from the past twenty years takes the form of revisionist histories, the novels I explore in Chapter 1 do little to reconsider or alter the events that they explore. Although they certainly revisit historical moments, they tend to romanticize the past, or lament something that has been lost in recent years, rather than retrospectively shed light on certain situations or offer alternate readings of past events. In particular, they emphasise the role of the father in creating the cultural nation of Newfoundland, promoting a traditional understanding of the nuclear family, and imbuing the father with social and cultural control.

For example, two of the three novels I study in this chapter, Kavanagh's *Gaff Topsails* and Crummey's *Galore*, explore past events with the hope of establishing, for the present day, a Newfoundland cultural identity that is connected to a father-figure. *Gaff Topsails* takes place over the course of a single day, in between the two referendum votes that ultimately led to Confederation with Canada in 1949. Interspersed are flashbacks to the founding of Newfoundland by European Tomas Croft. This structure suggests that Newfoundland's unique past is about to be obliterated by its connection to the mainland. Similarly, *Galore* opens with the discovery of Judah, a mysterious figure who becomes a biological and figurative father-figure for many inhabitants of the novel's fictional community. Historical events, such as World War I and the founding of a Fisherman's Protective Union, also impact the fictional community of Paradise Deep, showing how global changes can have a negative effect on the identity of the island.

Chapter 1 also analyzes how the past consumes the protagonist of Bowdring's *The Strangers' Gallery*, a novel which frequently quotes from real historical documents, including government reports and newspaper articles. This is significant, as the genre of historical fiction has often been considered a tool for nation building. *Galore* and *Gaff Topsails* appeal to readers' nostalgic sensibilities, as they encourage them to think of the past as an ideal time. And, though *The Strangers' Gallery* is not historical fiction, its goal remains the same: by presenting the reader with stories of Newfoundland's past, and providing lengthy references to historical works, the novel glorifies a version of the island that no longer exists, in an effort to inspire readers to look to this time for inspiration. Moreover, as in *Gaff Topsails*, Confederation with Canada remains a central



preoccupation for *The Strangers' Gallery*, which connects the absence of biological fathers to the island's lost fatherland status. All three link the loss of Newfoundland's unique cultural identity with the loss of ideal masculinity.

Chapter 2 returns to elements of the "Frontier Myth" introduced earlier in this Introduction, as the novels I explore all suggest that eschewing "civilization" (in the form of city-living and consumerism) is a major step in securing an ideal masculine identity. This chapter examines how Proulx's *The Shipping News*, Winter's *Minister Without Portfolio*, and Crummey's *Sweetland* emphasize Newfoundland's outports as spaces for proving manhood. Both *The Shipping News* and *Minister Without Portfolio* follow male protagonists as they abandon dissatisfying lives in cities. Relocated in outports, they build their own homes and grow or catch their own food. The men find heteronormative success in proving their virility and ensuring that they become fathers, which subsequently guarantees that the island's cultural legacy will be passed down to the next generation.

Conversely, Crummey's *Sweetland* proposes what can happen when men are *not* allowed to live this way. Forced to leave his outport community during a resettlement program, protagonist Moses Sweetland fakes his own death to stay in his home; however, he is unable to survive the harsh winter, and the novel concludes with an assembly of ghosts embracing Moses. The novel overtly suggests that the ideal Newfoundland man—exemplified by Moses's stoicism, his physical strength, and his connection to the island's culture—needs the outport to succeed. Moses's death symbolises the death of the last real Newfoundland man (and of Newfoundland itself), more generally, at the hands of

globalization. *Sweetland* thus appropriates the myth of the Vanishing Indian, suggesting, in part, that Newfoundlanders are their own race.<sup>54</sup>

Notably, *The Shipping News*, which was published almost two decades before either *Minister Without Portfolio* or *Sweetland*, is written by an American. In Chapter 2, I note the influence that this earlier text has had on these later novels, despite complaints by Newfoundlanders that Proulx's vision of Newfoundland was a dangerously "limited" (Whalen, "Camping" 51) "romanticization" (Mathews 15) of the island and its inhabitants. The impact *The Shipping News* has had on the island and its writers cannot be dismissed, partly as this connection gestures towards the enduring relationship between Newfoundland and America more broadly. It is also interesting that, although many in Newfoundland disapproved of Proulx's depiction of the outport, *Minister Without Portfolio* and *Sweetland*, which enact similar pastoral myths, have not received such criticism.

The novels of Chapter 3 go on to reveal what happens to present-day men when they are somehow denied the opportunity to embrace the kind of masculine identity that the majority of male protagonists in the novels of Chapters 1 and 2 are able to attain. These novels include Edward Riche's *Rare Birds*, Jamie Fitzpatrick's *You Could Believe in Nothing*, and Joel Thomas Hynes's *Down to the Dirt*. Unlike *Sweetland*'s Moses, who

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<sup>54</sup> Cynthia Sugars addresses this concern in her essay, "Original Sin, or, The Last of the First Ancestors: Michael Crummey's *River Thieves*" (2005), where she writes that "the Beothuk ... have become the focus of both Canadian postcolonial guilt (over past atrocities) and postcolonial desire (for origins/authenticity)" (152). It is the latter that I see in *Sweetland*, as the novel supports Sugars's claim that "the Indian must be eliminated in order for the forward momentum of (settler) history to proceed" (152). In order to position Moses *Sweetland* as somehow "native" to Newfoundland, the novel must ignore the island's actual Indigenous peoples.

was born in the early 1950s, the men in these novels—financial-failure and cocaine-addict, Dave; jaded and decrepit Derek; and rebellious alcoholic, Keith, respectively—were raised in modern, late-twentieth-century Newfoundland. They were never fully immersed in the “traditional” outport life. These novels take the form of the anti-*bildungsroman*, as they subvert the expectations of the coming-of-age tale, presenting men who show no development or growth. The men appear as victims who blame their dysfunction on changes in society. *Down to the Dirt*, *Rare Birds*, and *You Could Believe in Nothing* all show how nostalgia for patriarchal traditions can inspire responses other than those discussed in previous chapters: instead of looking to the past to provide an outline for successful masculinity, these novels contend that contemporary Newfoundland no longer encourages men to flourish.

Characters in Hynes’s, Fitzpatrick’s, and Riche’s novels enact what becomes recognizable as one of the more obvious reactions to a perceived “crisis of masculinity.” Gender historians Christopher J. Greig and Wayne K. Martino argue that “crisis tendencies in manhood ... provoke attempts to restore a dominant masculinity” (130) marked by physical aggression and “macho” behaviour. The men of Chapter 3 suggest that, as a result of the “crisis of masculinity” they perceive as existing in Newfoundland, their lives are destined to consist only of pain and failure. I argue that these contemporary men, increasingly imagining themselves as victims, willingly inflict pain upon themselves and others as an attempt to regain control in the face of what they perceive as a loss of power.

In Chapter 4, I look at how some recent Newfoundland authors present more

nuanced versions of masculinity in their fiction: Michael Winter's *This All Happened*, Kathleen Winter's *Annabel*, and Jessica Grant's *Come, Thou Tortoise* resist constructing the versions of masculinity that we see depicted by many of their contemporaries, and instead suggest that other understandings are emerging in popular culture. While *Tortoise* presents a loving relationship between two queer men, *Annabel* presents an intersex character who wants to embrace an androgynous, non-binary identity, and *This All Happened* introduces the reader to Gabriel English, whom Terry Goldie describes as "not quite the norm of the heterosexual male" ("Angel" 180). In fact, *This All Happened* immediately subverts expectations with its diary-like structure written by a man in his thirties; by disrupting stereotypes regarding gender and literary form, the novel prepares the reader for its construction of a "new" Newfoundland man, one who is marked by his sensitivity and cosmopolitan nature. *Tortoise* similarly plays with language as a way to emphasize its thematic concerns: for example, the text entirely omits question marks, in the process ironically revealing the importance of curiosity and investigation. The novel suggests that one does not merely have to adapt to norms, but can question the *status quo*, and learn more about one's self and others in the process. *Annabel* equally breaks down boundaries by its setting in both Newfoundland and Labrador: as the protagonist moves from one place to the other, the text criticizes the limiting nature of all borders, physical and figurative, and celebrates the liminal.

These three books are important for the advances they make in representing alternate masculinities: *Annabel* is the only Newfoundland text to include an overtly intersex individual, and *Tortoise* provides one of the few positive depictions of gay men

within the island's fiction. Nonetheless, these novels are, at times, unable to avoid adhering in some way to strict norms of gender.<sup>55</sup> For example, the importance of fathers, particularly to identity formation, is a prominent theme in *Annabel* and *Come, Thou Tortoise. This All Happened* and *Annabel* also suggest that alternate masculine identities are unable to succeed in Newfoundland, thus projecting a negative view of the possibility for a more nuanced understanding of gender on the island. However, *Annabel*, *Tortoise*, and *This All Happened* remain groundbreaking, and unique, for reasons which I explore in greater detail in Chapter 4. I therefore remain cautiously optimistic about the possibility for alternate masculine identities in Newfoundland's cultural and literary future, and use these novels to showcase the potential for positive change.

I draw my thesis to a close by highlighting similarities between the four separate categories of masculinity prominent in Newfoundland fiction. I contend that writers deploy anachronistic patriarchal understandings of gender in order to defend what they perceive as the island's wider traditional culture and identity. I also gesture towards other potentially valuable avenues of research pertaining to Newfoundland fiction and gender—these include the study of Indigenous and queer masculinities—and more detailed comparisons with Canadian, as well as American, literary depictions of men. Though my study of Newfoundland masculinity may appear bleak, this thesis also showcases various progressive paths. I conclude my study with the hope that future

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<sup>55</sup> Alternate masculine identities can be found *within* white, heterosexual masculinity: the presence of these factors do not produce nor ensure a homologous identity. We see an example of this in Michael Winter's *This All Happened*.

literary representations of manhood on the island will become less restrictive and more inclusive.

## Chapter 1

### History, Fatherhood, and Myth

The deep yearning for a return to gender stability, brought on by the global restructuring of capitalism and other social and political changes, has fuelled an intensification and celebration of a traditional version of manhood.

—Christopher J. Greig and Susan Holloway, “Canadian Manhood(s).”

On 24 June 1997, while the great world peered expectantly into the new millennium, the province of Newfoundland and Labrador on the rugged Atlantic coast was—not untypically—looking elsewhere: to its roots.

—Karl M. Earle, “Cousins of a Kind: The Newfoundland and Labrador Relationship with the United States.”

Patrick Kavanagh’s *Gaff Topsails*, Michael Crummey’s *Galore*, and Paul Bowdring’s *The Strangers’ Gallery* present masculinity as something sacred—something to be cherished, maintained, and cultivated over time, with hard work, heightened self-awareness, and sacrifice. Regretting that the ideal expression of masculinity exists primarily in the past, these three novels make recuperating a patriarchal culture their main goal. Both *Galore* and *Gaff Topsails* celebrate past masculinity in their romanticized historical fictions, while *The Strangers’ Gallery*—a novel that, though set in the late twentieth century, is entirely preoccupied with the past—similarly glorifies a more traditional mode of manhood by celebrating its revival in the present day. To maintain the island’s identity, ostensibly threatened by changes in technology, economics, and politics, these three novels dramatize a mythology that casts the father as the founding figure of

Newfoundland. The novels overtly intertwine patrilineality with the island's identity.

These goals comply with those of historical fiction, as it is broadly understood. In his seminal text, *The Historical Novel*, György Lukács argues that the French Revolution and Napoleonic wars brought about a realization of the “constantly evolving character” (25) of human existence. He notes at this time an “awakening of national sensibility” (25) tied to an understanding of national history.<sup>56</sup> Together, the “inhumanity” (26) of capitalism, the “destruction of the small by the big” (26), and the “debasement of culture by the transformation of all things into commodities” (26) led to what Lukács calls the “social idyll of the Middle Ages” (26), the exaltation of an era ranging from the fifth to fifteenth century. This historical period inspired much nostalgia, as European society near the end of the eighteenth century remembered the Middle Ages as a “period of peaceful cooperation among all classes, an age of organic growth of culture” (26), whether or not this was historically accurate. Extreme changes in politics and society therefore encouraged writers to look to the past as a means not only of escape but also of promoting past ideals.<sup>57</sup> This understanding of historical fiction applies to

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<sup>56</sup>Sir Walter Scott is well-known for establishing this emphasis on nation in historical novels. Yet, George Dekker notes that, while it was Scott “who created ... the genre as we know it” (1), it is important to acknowledge how “the historical romance has inevitably undergone many changes that could not have been prefigured in the works of Scott” (1). Fiona Robertson notes that Scott “explicitly wrote histories of Scotland in the context of its constitutional union with England, creating a national identity precisely because such identity must now function imaginatively and emotionally, rather than politically” (108). I read *Galore* and *Gaff Topsails* as being indebted to Scott's version of the historical novel, as they, too, work to create a national identity which must function “imaginatively” in light of Newfoundland's political connection to Canada.

<sup>57</sup>In his essay, “Fiction for the Purposes of History,” Richard Slotkin argues that historical fiction is composed of “the ways in which communities and nations transform their historical experience into the symbolic terms of myth; then use mythological renderings of the past to organize their responses to real-world crises and political projects” (222).



Newfoundland's literary context as well. In recent years, many Newfoundland writers have used historical fiction as a means of symbolically escaping a modern existence and sentimentalizing the past. In the process, they ultimately confirm the critical truism that historical fiction is always about the present.<sup>58</sup>

Many scholars of masculinity, including Christopher Forth, argue that contemporary masculinities are haunted by a past where men were tougher, more physically virile, and less constricted, or corrupted, by civilization (10). This reflects the way that the historical novel sentimentalizes the past. Forth argues that every change in the Western world, including new technology, the rise of commercialism, and urbanization, enables new modes of masculinity, such as the "stockbroker" (9) or the "metrosexual" (9). Yet despite changes in Western society, there often remains a preference for past modes of masculinity. Similarly, Mark Moss asserts that "the distillation of strategies ... to prompt men to be assertive and supremely macho, can be seen in the trend toward ... retro-masculinity" (5). Forth's and Moss's arguments inform my reading of *Gaff Topsails*, *Galore*, and *The Strangers' Gallery*. I argue that these novels likewise exhort men "to reassert their traditional and historical rights as men" (5).

To shed more light on what I mean, exactly, by masculinities located in the past, I turn to the work of gender historians E. Anthony Rotundo, Peter Gossage and Robert

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<sup>58</sup> Tamsin Spargo writes: "The past is, in a sense, over but in another sense it is only available to us, knowable, as part of the present. The past may be real but it is, by definition, irrecoverable in its pastness" (1). Dirk Göttsche similarly states that "historical fiction is always concerned with the present as much as with the past it represents" (335), while Stella Tillyard argues that "the past [in historical fiction]...is not the setting or the scenery; it is part of character itself.... [The] historical novel is always about the present, not just in the sense that the past is always filtered through a present consciousness, but also in the sense that the past makes us who we are" (152).

Rutherford (2018). Rotundo argues that various conceptions of “manliness” (2) have existed. There is not one form of hegemonic masculinity that can encapsulate all of Western history.<sup>59</sup> Instead, Rotundo describes three different phases of American manhood which, he argues, were popular from the end of the eighteenth century to the end of the nineteenth century. Rotundo calls the first “communal manhood” (3), which found expression during “the first decades of the nineteenth century” (3). This phase suggested that “a man’s identity was inseparable from the duties he owed to his community” (2). Following this is “self-made manhood” (2)—which “[began] to grow in the late eighteenth century” but “eclipsed” (3) the communal in the mid-nineteenth—where men based their identities on their own achievements, “not from the accident of [their] birth” (3). Independence and dominance were the most popular virtues during this period. The third phase, “arising in the late nineteenth century” (3), entitled “passionate manhood” (3) saw value placed on “male passions” (3) such as ambition, toughness, sexual desire, and bodily strength. Though Rotundo separates these three phases, they overlap in many ways, and elements of all three are together perceived as the dominant, or most approved, historical masculinity.

Rotundo examines a specifically historical American context. Though Canadian

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<sup>59</sup> Others who look at this topic include George L. Mosse in *The Image of Man: The Creation of Modern Masculinity*. Mosse argues that the birth of modern masculinity occurred at the same time as the rise of “bourgeois society” (specifically, the second half of the eighteenth century) and states that “the body itself” (instead of “its adornments”) became the “chief signifier of manliness” (5). Similar work has been done by Karen Harvey. In her essay, “Men Making Home: Masculinity and Domesticity in Eighteenth-Century Britain,” Harvey argues that the “invention of modern domesticity” in eighteenth-century England influenced the construction of modern masculinity (523). See also Kathryn M. McPherson’s, Nancy M. Forestell’s, and Cecilia Louise Morgan’s anthology, *Gendered Pasts: Historical Essays in Femininity and Masculinity in Canada* (2003).

historians do not offer a comparable set of categories, or classifications, Gossage and Rutherford argue that in Canada, too, “new norms for modern manhood [seem] ensconced in the settled worlds of hegemonic masculinity associated with imperial nationalism and with the class-based and racial assumptions of the latter nineteenth century that served to justify it” (10).<sup>60</sup>

Some masculinity scholars have identified popular masculinities in the twenty-first-century Western world. These include, but are not limited to: the “new man” (Tim Edwards), who cares greatly about his emotions and his physical appearance; the “loveable happy loser” (Messner), the “scrawny, nerdy men who fail to get the girl but who can still have a good laugh and a cold brew with their buds” (Green and Van Oort 693); the sensitive musician (Gibson); the gang member (Baird); the technology geek (Salter and Blodgett); and so on. All of these masculinities can be found in popular culture and have been considered “acceptable” masculine identities in recent years. Yet, it is an older version of masculinity that materializes in the contemporary Newfoundland novels I study in this chapter. According to many contemporary Newfoundland novels, ambition, emotional toughness, virility, physical strength, and athleticism—noted by Rotundo as the most important elements of a specific, and glorified, nineteenth-century manhood—remain the most valued traits for men to possess and perform today. *Galore*,

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<sup>60</sup> In their text, *Making Men, Making History: Canadian Masculinities across Time and Place*, Gossage and Rutherford argue that there are four emerging “themes” that structure historical Canadian masculinities. These include expertise and authority, masculine spaces, performing masculinities, boys to men, men in motion, and faces of fatherhood (4-14). Their categories are broad, and although my dissertation examines a different set of trends in masculinity and fiction, there are some parallels. For example, this chapter looks at, to borrow Gossage and Rutherford’s phrase, “faces of fatherhood,” and my entire project is concerned with masculine performances and spaces.

*Gaff Topsails*, and *The Strangers' Gallery* all suggest that any contemporary mode of masculinity is lacking compared to these historical expressions.

This chapter primarily looks at the role of fatherhood. These three novels introduce various, often mythological, father figures to replace missing biological fathers. They connect the masculine identities of these fathers to concepts of nation and political control, suggesting that it is upon these figures that Newfoundland's national and cultural identity rests. Preoccupation with fathers has inspired much writing about masculinity; this is especially true for the 1990s, which, as I state in my Introduction, is the decade that critics argue contained a particular rise in both masculine crisis rhetoric and masculinity studies. For example, in his book, *Absent Fathers, Lost Sons: The Search for Masculine Identity* (1991), psychoanalyst Guy Corneau argues that today's men are troubled partly because they are choosing to have children in their late thirties and early forties, "a good deal later in life than ... previous generations" (3). Corneau claims that contemporary men "find few occasions to experience or actualize their masculine potential in the presence of their fathers" (14), who are often absent, mainly, he suggests, as a result of changes in work.

Corneau's arguments are more than slightly suspect, largely because his "research" is frequently personal and anecdotal, and his case studies are limited to a small sampling of men, yet his beliefs found much support in the 1990s and beyond. Corneau, however, was not the first to make this argument. Writer Robert Bly, for example, claims in his popular book, *Iron John: A Book About Men* (1990), that "the love unit most damaged by the Industrial Revolution is the father-son bond" (19), and he therefore

advocates for a renewed intimacy between fathers and sons, something that should be created through the two working together. Bly, echoing arguments made by psychoanalysts like Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan, claims that the modern man is too influenced by his mother, and needs to move “from the mother’s realm to the father’s realm” (ix) if he wishes to discover his true masculine identity.

Though critic Roger Horrocks notes that “Bly’s nostalgia for an ancient state of intimacy between father and son may be overly romantic” (79), he maintains the belief that boys who grow up without their fathers receive too much influence from their mothers. “A boy,” he writes, “needs his father ... to protect him from the danger that his mother represents for him” (79). This “danger” is a primarily oedipal one, as Horrocks writes that “the rivalry” (79) of father and son is part of their “bonding” and is a “necessary part of establishing [the boy’s] own masculine identity” (79). Corneau, Bly, and Horrocks all insist that the absence of the father figure has demoralized men and created a “crisis of masculinity” in recent decades. Though published decades later, *Gaff Topsails*, *Galore*, and *The Strangers’ Gallery* similarly maintain that the father figure is necessary, not only for masculine development, but also cultural identity.

Others have written about the importance of fathers in Newfoundland fiction. For example, Méira Cook argues that, “given the persistence of the recognizable figure of the absent father ... it is probable that [novels by Newfoundland author Wayne Johnston] are also alluding to ... the longing for a lost place, a fatherland: the demise of region commensurate, in these texts, with the son’s filial longing for his ghostly progenitor” (119). Though Cook specifically refers to the work of Wayne Johnston here, his novels

are not unique in their portrayal of contemporary Newfoundland as haunted by loss of independence to Confederation with Canada, and his characters are not the only ones in contemporary Newfoundland fiction who share absent fathers.<sup>61</sup> Johnston's novels use these absent fathers as a metaphor for Newfoundland's altered national identity following Confederation.<sup>62</sup> These novels suggest that, just as the son longs for his missing father, Newfoundlanders long for their missing country. Missing fathers—those who are either dead, have abandoned their children, or are emotionally distant—abound in contemporary Newfoundland fiction, and their influence suggests the important role that fatherhood plays in not only forming individual identities, but the identity of the nation-turned-province.

Johnston's work offers a more sceptical view of the themes that sustain the novels of this chapter. Instead of constructing a hopeful or optimistic interpretation of the role that fathers can perform—particularly as it symbolizes the possibility for an autonomous, and somehow authentic Newfoundland identity—his novels, most notably *The Colony of Unrequited Dreams* and *The Divine Ryans*, suggest that both fatherhood and the island have fundamentally changed and can no longer exist in their idealized past forms.<sup>63</sup> These

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<sup>61</sup> These include Jessica Grant's *Come, Thou Tortoise*; Lisa Moore's *February*; Lisa Moore's *Alligator*; Michael Crummey's *The Wreckage*; Crummey's *Sweetland*; Crummey's *Galore*; Patrick Kavanagh's *Gaff Topsails*; Paul Bowdring's *The Strangers' Gallery*; Joel Thomas Hynes's *Down to the Dirt*; Joel Thomas Hynes's *Right Away Monday*; and Michael Winter's *Minister Without Portfolio*, among others.

<sup>62</sup> In "Gendering Nationhood: A Feminist Engagement with National Identity," Joanne Sharpe writes that "nation and gender are clearly central aspects of contemporary subjectivity that converge in the performance of identity in everyday life" (98). Sheila McManus also argues that, historically, governments have relied on "social boundaries like race and gender" (xiv) to support national political borders.

<sup>63</sup> *The Divine Ryans* proclaims that change is not only inevitable, but has already happened, and must be accepted. In his review of the novel, Stuart Pierson states that *The Divine Ryans* presents "irresolute men, who leave [protagonist Draper Doyle Ryan] with a leaderless or model-less struggle towards manhood" (79). Thus, instead of receiving an elegant genealogy like the one in Crummey's *Galore*, nine-year-old

two novels, in particular, suggest that contemporary Newfoundland is unable to support its traditional culture in the face of great political, economic, and social changes, and perhaps, even if it could, it should not. However, *Gaff Topsails*, *Galore*, and *The Strangers' Gallery* maintain a more positive outlook. They suggest that by returning to past modes of masculine identity, and celebrating mythical father figures, the island will be better able to maintain its own cultural identity.<sup>64</sup>

Neta Gordon argues that much Canadian literature attempts to “recuperate the patriarchal dividend” (178) and this is also true for a distinctly Newfoundland context. *Gaff Topsails*, *Galore*, and *The Strangers' Gallery* attempt to re-write, or at least celebrate, history in such a way that both encourages patrilineal beliefs and ignores the role of the mother in any type of identity formation. These three novels are explicitly concerned with nation building, and the cultural survival of Newfoundland is their main preoccupation.

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Draper Doyle, is frequently thwarted in his attempts to uncover his family's origins, denying him any romantic notions of lineage or succession.

<sup>64</sup> Such arguments are also prevalent in Canadian and Australian literature. Neta Gordon notes that in Canadian literature, “the masculine figure exemplifies the developing nation” (176), and his “‘development’ is always figured under the rubric of social advancement” (176). She argues that the male is often perceived as the main representative of Canadian culture, and that there is only one particular way to be a Canadian male (178). Similarly, Kay Schaffer's *Women and the Bush: Forces of Desire in the Australian Cultural Tradition* (1988) explores how the Australian man has been formed and developed over time through various cultural forms, including literary texts.

### Founding Fathers and Whiteness in *Gaff Topsails*

Kavanagh's *Gaff Topsails* establishes an ancestry for Newfoundland that is based on white settlers. The text positions a white man as the founder of Newfoundland and reduces Newfoundland's Indigenous peoples to a single representative figure whose humanity is denied.<sup>65</sup> Both acts suggest an overt attempt to create a body of people that contemporary Newfoundlanders can and should aim to emulate. *Gaff Topsails* situates Newfoundland as a colonial space, emphasizing Newfoundland's white European ancestry, as the basis for the real Newfoundland, while ignoring the island's original, and rightful, inhabitants.

In *Gaff Topsails*, founding father Tomas Croft becomes the bearer of a divine destiny. The language used to describe Croft's "discovery" of Newfoundland in the 1500s positions him as what Jennifer Delisle describes as the "natural inheritor of the landscape" ("Nation" 28). The land is "blessed" and "populated with every sort of God's creatures" (Kavanagh 113), all of whom "are harmless to Tomas Croft" (113). In her essay on *Gaff Topsails*, Delisle argues that "the narrative of a national culture often

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<sup>65</sup> In the novel's 456 pages, an Indigenous person appears only once. Chapter 7 describes Newfoundland's "origins," painting a portrait of the island and its inhabitants prior to 1497, when it historically was discovered by the British (an event the novel portrays on page 128). Preceding this event, the narrator states: "Once during all the time—just once—he sees another human being. It happens on a sunny winter's day.... Croft rambles aimlessly overland, farther than he has ever gone... [He] finds his way blocked by a mysterious fence.... Croft follows the fence until he comes in sight of a creature crouched behind it.... It is a heathen, a man, clad in rough peltry, his flesh withered by the sun and painted ochre-red like the sea-cliffs. He wears on his person the skulls of birds and the claws of bears. ... Croft is alarmed, and without thinking he ... clubs the man until his brains spill out of his skull" (126-7). Following this, years go by "but no one [else] comes;" that is, until the white Europeans arrive in the late 1400s (127). The image of the fence ensures that readers will view this "heathen" as someone who is beyond the pale of humanity, a point that the text also emphasizes by describing the man's clothing as "peltry," or leather that is not tanned, thus emphasizing how "raw" this "creature" is.



begins with a ‘foundational myth,’ a story that ... locates the origin of the nation, the people, and their national character” (“Nation” 23). Primarily, she states that “we are able to relate these cultural stereotypes back to a single mythological originator or father figure” (23). The book provides such an origin myth, a national narrative of the island, to separate Newfoundlanders from Canadians. Alongside Delisle, critics Adrian Fowler and Michele Holmgren similarly argue that *Gaff Topsails* is concerned with romantic traditions, using Tomas Croft’s discovery as a national narrative for Newfoundland.<sup>66</sup>

In doing so, *Gaff Topsails* also ultimately enacts what Terry Goldie calls “indigenization,” a process through which the “settler” becomes as though they were “born of the land” (“Man” n.p.). Croft embodies the wilderness: he “strolls among the beasts ... and eats their flesh raw” (Kavanagh 123); he “drinks the fresh water that cascades down [an iceberg’s] side” (123); he walks “barefooted” (124) and “erects a crude hut of wattle and daub” (124). Weeks, months, and years pass, and Croft continues to “enjoy the abundance of all things” (125). To catch fish he “manufactures a hook from a piece of bone” (125) and to hunt rabbits he “sharpens a stick of alder” (125). The reader is told that, “whenever he needs a cod” (125), he merely paddles out into the waves “and the fish swim to the surface to accommodate him” (125). When other Europeans arrive on the island, Croft camouflages himself entirely, becoming one with the land: “he [has] fashion[ed] a cozy hut that harmonizes with the landscape so thoroughly that it deceives

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<sup>66</sup> Paul Chafe (2016) disagrees. He argues that *Gaff Topsails* actually “unsettles the foundational, national narrative” (“Terrain” 38). Though his argument is detailed and challenging, Chafe relies too much on authorial intent, using statements from interviews with Kavanagh as evidence for the novel’s overall message.

the eye and becomes invisible” (125). He is both European and an indigenized version of a European: he is the real Newfoundlander.

*Gaff Topsails* presents a mythology of Newfoundland that is steeped in sexuality. Mythology and sexuality come together to structure the majority of the novel’s symbolism and characterization.<sup>67</sup> The novel’s plot takes place almost entirely in 1948, on what it calls “Sweetheart’s Day,” and the narrative is filled with images of fertility and growth, for both the individuals and the community as a whole. While young people use folklore to discover who they will marry,<sup>68</sup> traditional songs are sung and St. John-the-Baptist-bonfires are lit to celebrate the capelin that washes up on the shore, providing food for the inhabitants. Significantly, this specific day—June 24<sup>th</sup>, 1948—is a historically important moment for Newfoundland, as it falls before the referendum that ultimately resulted in Newfoundland becoming a Canadian province. Fowler writes that the village represents the “essence of Newfoundland outport life” (“Patrick” 72) at a time when everything was about to change.

The first few chapters of *Gaff Topsails* provide a historical background upon which the remainder of the novel rests. The community in the novel is not named, and so Fowler argues that the village is a “mythological rather than real community, representing the distilled essence of Newfoundland outport life” (“Patrick” 72). This

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<sup>67</sup> For example, the novel highlights Mary’s fascination with mythology as a way of understanding female sexuality. Mary is fascinated by the image of a “huge black centaur” (224) in her text book. She later “dreams of black centaurs” (272) before having the urge to “to slide her hand under her skirt” (320).

<sup>68</sup> *Gaff Topsails* follows Mary as she enacts the numerous superstitions that her mother has taught her will reveal her future lover: examining the shape of an egg white suspended in water to discover “his station” (55); baking a “dumb cake” (51) which she and her friends must bake and eat if they want to dream of their lovers’ faces; and analyzing the morning dew on a scarf placed outside the night before, in order to divine his initials (62).

place becomes a synecdoche, as the reader accepts that what happens here exemplifies what happens in the majority of Newfoundland outposts. While the majority of the novel's plot takes place during the mid-twentieth century, multiple chapters early in the text are solely dedicated to outlining the island's early "history." The structure of *Gaff Topsails* suggests to the reader that history is the foundation for everything contemporary.

In particular, in Chapter 7, entitled "The Kingdom of God," the narrator once again effaces the Beothuk presence while outlining for the reader some important historical moments that take place while Newfoundland is ostensibly "empty" (98) and waiting to be "born" (98):

Beyond the seas, the empire falls to the Ostrogoths. Saint Columba founds his mission at Iona. ... The Chinese invent tea and gunpowder. Moors invade Iberia. ... Anglo-Saxons conquer the Britons. ... Marco Polo travels to China. ... The Black Death kills most of Europe. ... Chaucer writes *The Canterbury Tales*. ... Lisbon markets sell African slaves. ... English and French conspire to burn Joan of Arc. Gutenberg prints the Bible. Vlad Dracula dies in battle. Prince Ferdinand marries Infanta Isabella. (99-101).

Immediately following these two pages of listed events, the text describes Croft's arrival on the island. With such an introduction, the novel assures the reader that this moment, one which Kavanagh created solely for this novel, is as important as those historically important and well-known events which precede it. It possesses commensurate mythological and historical significance.

The title of this chapter, “The Kingdom of God,” is also important for how it reveals the text’s use of Christianity to define Newfoundland masculinity. Christianity has long been considered masculinist, with the Bible often cited as proof that God ordained distinct gender roles, marked by subservience in women.<sup>69</sup> Historically, Christianity has greatly influenced the island of Newfoundland. Newfoundland Folklorist Marion Bowman argues that the harsh conditions found in the lives of those who lived in a pre-Confederation outpost—the isolation, the weather, the rugged terrain, the dangerous occupations of fishing and sealing—were “conducive to the flourishing of religion” (288). Religion was not only entertainment—people relied on “divine intervention” to help them through their difficult lives. Specifically, the “grand narrative” (288) of Newfoundland was a Christian one. However, in recent decades, as Newfoundland has undergone “great social, economic, religious and educational upheaval” (293), Bowman argues that there has undoubtedly been secularization ... [and] a noticeable drift away from churches generally” (293). That *Gaff Topsails* and, as I argue in the following section, *Galore* both take Christianity as their foundational theology thus heightens the gendered context of their message: firstly, they suggest that Christianity is decidedly connected to patriarchal traditions, and secondly, they suggest that a movement away from these traditions is a mistake—without a guiding father (or Christ-like) figure (even

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<sup>69</sup> *The Bible* often reinforces patriarchal ideology, from Old Testament commands such as “Wives, submit to you husbands as to the Lord” (Ephesians 5:22) and “I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, she must be silent” (1 Timothy 2:12) to New Testament descriptions that “women should remain silent in the churches. They are not allowed to speak, but must be in submission, as the Law says” (1 Corinthians 14:34-35).

one who may be considered flawed),<sup>70</sup> the island's past, and its authentic identity, will cease to exist.

*Gaff Topsails* is a work of historiographic metafiction, to use Hutcheon's well-known term. The novel is

self-reflexively art, but is also grounded in historical, social, and political realities ... both self-consciously fictional but also overtly concerned with the acts (and consequences) of the reading and writing of history as well as fiction ... [It] is a critical counterpointing or dialogue between the 'texts' of both history and art ... [that] does not deny the existence or significance of either. (14).

Kavanagh uses history—including specific dates and the names of individuals that actually existed—to provide a sense of “historical continuity” (Delisle, “Nation” 33). Delisle argues that, “by using real names drawn from cultural memory ... Kavanagh balances the mythical elements with recognizable references” (33). The novel creates a past for the island that it knows its reader will not accept as historical fact, but one that it suggests has a poetic truth or validity. In this way, *Gaff Topsails* attempts to, if not (re)discover, then (re)create a past of which Newfoundlanders can be proud. Furthermore, through the creation of the Croft origin story, the novel imbues the island with its own mythology—something arguably *more* important, it suggests, than “history”—and bases

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<sup>70</sup> What is interesting about these priests' “flaws” is that they somehow support their Newfoundland identity—though some of the behaviors they exhibit veer away from those expected of deeply religious men (i.e., sexual immorality, excessive drinking, vulgar language, etc.), they heighten these male characters' identities as Newfoundlanders. In this way, they serve as the perfect symbol of Newfoundland: influenced by religion, especially as something which is practiced as a tradition, yet also reliant on folklore.

this mythology on a male founding figure.

*Gaff Topsails* presents Croft as the Father of Newfoundland as he populates Newfoundland's shores with his children and grandchildren.<sup>71</sup> The omniscient narrator writes: "it comes to pass that Tomas Croft, the orphaned castaway [from England] who for so many years lived in such hopeless solitude on the edge of nowhere, reigns with absolute dominion over a society born of his own loins" (135). Though Croft himself has suffered from the loss of his father at an early age, he is able to start over in Newfoundland, becoming a father to all who come after him. His arrival can, to use biblical metaphors, serve as the "creation" of man—Croft becomes an Adam-like figure who is given ownership of the land and its creatures, and goes forth to multiply. Literary critic Rebecca Weaver-Hightower argues that island narratives often "dramatize [the] fantasy of masculine reproduction through plots of a male castaway who peoples his island solely with his progeny" (72). This act, she concludes, suggests a "desire for reproduction of the imperial culture in the colonies—in resistance to real-world fears of hybridity" (73). This, I argue, is absolutely the case for *Gaff Topsails*.

To elaborate, when Croft first lands on the island's coastline, "he tears open his breeches and bursts out ... [Milky] ribbons of his seed hang suspended before his eyes,

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<sup>71</sup> Towards the end of the day on which the novel centres, the actions of another father figure, Father MacMurrough, a newly arrived priest from Ireland, reinforce the importance of maintaining a strong communal identity, especially when facing the threat of future cultural assimilation. Since arriving in Newfoundland, Father MacMurrough has struggled with feelings of loneliness and isolation. It is not until he gives a homily to the school children about love that he realizes he is not alone. Rather, he is an important father-figure for these children. Lawrence Mathews describes Father MacMurrough's subsequent lighting of the St. John-the-Baptist bonfires as his being "symbolically incorporated into the community" ("No Report" 17).

and in the next instant are vaporized by the wind and scattered in a ... mist" (119). This scattering of seed echoes an earlier description in the book of capelin spreading their seed on the beach, with fertility in humans thus quickly becoming associated with the sea:

Tonight ... tens of thousands will cast themselves up on the beach. Tonight the tide will caress their seed ... the sound of the sea stroking the earth, tenderly, at the narrow band between the tides, the ever-moist zone, the special place where the land and the wash are one. (17)

This passage connects "seed" and "sea," as the novel highlights the beach—the space where the sea and land meet—as a connective space. Croft lays claim to the land by spreading his own seed, and also through multiple impregnations of his partner, Sheila. Heteronormative sexuality and fertility become associated with having command over the land, in turn allowing an identity to be created upon it.

Readers will recall Croft's masturbation on the beach when Mary becomes aroused while she explores Gallows Beach for the first time:<sup>72</sup>

[She] has travelled beyond the last house ... In the region between here and the lighthouse stretches an expanse of barren ... On the south shore of the barren ... is Gallows Beach...The scratch she made in the dirt is the furthest she has ever been. The line is the border of her life—on this side she has, on that side she has never. Soon, the beach will be in her present ... Mary [sleeps on the beach and]

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<sup>72</sup> This toponym alludes to Freud's theories about humanity's "death instinct," or *Thanatos*, which opposes *Eros*, or the individual's tendency towards survival, sex, and propagation (*The Ego and the Id*, 36). Here, Mary and Michael resist death (physical and cultural) by taking steps towards propagating the Newfoundland race.

dreams ... She feels a sinful urge—to slide her hand under her skirt and down into her bloomers. (272).

Yet, significantly, Mary's own attempt at masturbating on the beach is interrupted when she hears a "buzz" (273), the sound of an "outboard motor" (273). Mary abandons her place on the beach to watch the boat—carrying her future lover, Michael—return to land.

Ultimately, although Mary appears to possess a certain agency here, she is a necessary tool for Michael's development and growth, which corresponds to what Annette Kolodny argues in *The Lay of the Land*. Mary does not physically possess any "seed" of her own—it is therefore only men who can fertilize the land, and thus take ownership of it. Land has been figured as feminine. Kolodny's work, published in 1975, explores how "America's oldest and most cherished fantasy" (4) is the "daily reality of harmony between man and nature based on an experience of the land as essentially feminine ... the land as woman" (4). Kolodny explores how this understanding of the land became nuanced over time. Though such an understanding initially reflected the way that American settlers viewed the untouched land as a "return to the primal warmth of womb or breast" (7), colonization brought with it "an inevitable paradox" (7): the success of settlement depended on the colonizers' ability to control the land and transform it into something else—a farm, a road, a factory, a city, an "urban nation" (7).<sup>73</sup> This conflict has been historically understood in gendered terms, with the wilderness becoming a space

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<sup>73</sup> Though useful for the way it deals with gender, one should not read Kolodny's characterization of early American settlers without some skepticism. Early colonial texts, from Puritan magistrates, characterized the landscape as "fallen" while other tracts were propagandistic, designed to promote colonization. The focus, arguably, was on commercial exploitation.



for the “single male figure” (133) to exercise his “sexual mastery and assertive independence” (133) in much the same way as he might conquer virginal women.<sup>74</sup>

Tzeporah Berman argues that such environmental discourse often goes so far as to engage with a “rape metaphor” (265).<sup>75</sup> She adds that there exists a popular socialization process in many cultures that “sets men up as dominant, powerful and strong and sees women (and Nature) as passive—as objects for man’s use” (265). I return to this idea in Chapter 2, where I deal more broadly with the search for ideal masculine spaces. In *Gaff Topsails*, gendering the earth as female “perpetuates the patriarchal ideology of domination” (263) and reinforces the subordination and oppression of both women and nature.

The use of terms such as “conquest” and “penetrate” perpetuates the notion of possession and domination, and one can find such language in *Gaff Topsails*. Tomas Croft penetrates the land upon his arrival, and then spreads his seed to lay claim to it. The children he eventually has with his wife all marry and have their own children, and the land is “transformed into a civilization” (Kavanagh 145), a place of “order” and “work” (145).<sup>76</sup> Moreover, when Michael, Mary’s love interest, is fishing and hunting seals with his two male friends—thus satisfying Bly’s belief that men require homosocial bonding to become “real” men—the text describes their own exploration as a sexual experience.

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<sup>74</sup> Kolodny notes that a man could “[prove] worth and manhood by overcoming and dominating the natural world” (133).

<sup>75</sup> An infamous example can be found in the letter Sir Walter Raleigh sent to Queen Elizabeth regarding the colonization of Guyana: “Guiana is a country that hath yet her maidenhead, never sacked, turned, nor wrought; the face of the earth hath not been torn, nor the virtue and salt of the soil spent ... It hath never been entered by any army of strength, and never conquered or possessed by any Christian prince” (732).

<sup>76</sup> The novel later informs the reader that all of Croft’s children were women, and that various men seemingly “appeared” on the island at random times, thus allowing this act to occur.

The young men reach the “mouth of a tunnel” (354) which is “barricade[ed] with lolly” (354); their boat easily “rends and batters aside the film...slipping into the arch, into the murky...beyond” (354). They are “swallow[ed]” by this “fissure,” this “cavity” which has been “carved out just to receive” them (354). Michael “stroke[s]” the ceiling and compares the sound of the engine to a “pulse,” commenting that it feels like they have “penetrated” a body (354). At the end of this tunnel, they find “a small measure of light” (355), a “glow” that fills Michael with feelings of satisfaction and wonder. Earlier in the novel, Michael sees Mary on the shore, walking home from school, and he describes her as “a pillar of white light” (221), whose white dress “swells and fills his head with light” (229). The discovery of the grotto echoes the discovery of Mary, and both exist to inspire and gratify Michael. Mary is Michael’s muse, his salvation, his guiding light. While he is on the water, freely exploring and piercing nature with his vessel, she is on the land, simply waiting for him to return.

Following Croft, only men are the true bearers of Newfoundland identity in *Gaff Topsails*. Mary fully becomes Michael’s “light,” losing her own identity to this role, late in the novel. When Michael returns to shore later in the day, he sees Mary and realizes that she is a “light that swells from behind him ... deliver[ing] heat” (386). On the following page, the narrator states “the light is here, at his shoulder” (387), referring to Mary’s sudden appearance. When Mary and Michael go to the beach near the end of the novel, he thinks:

He feels like Cabot, or the Vikings, or Saint Brendan, sailing over the horizon, into the unknown, into mysterious waters where anything might happen. But he

has no fear any more of these unknown places, because the simple touch of her hand is his true destination, and he has already arrived. (438)

With his list of men, Michael reminds the reader that it is he who must be the adventurer and the discoverer, continuing the traditions that have already begun on the island. It is not Mary who feels like Cabot—she cannot discover Newfoundland, nor lay a claim to it, without securing first the presence of a man.

Throughout the novel, *Gaff Topsails* displays for its reader the various tasks that Michael and his male friends must undertake to develop their masculine identity and fulfill the destiny bestowed on them, as Newfoundland men, by Croft. Fowler suggests that they are all “engaged in an exploration of personal identity within ... their community” (“Patrick” 83). First, to maintain a connection to the island’s past men, Michael and his friends spend time recalling stories of their village and of outport Newfoundland in general. These include the discovery of Lukey Dwyer’s body (Kavanagh 38-39); the battle of Michael’s Pop with a sea monster (40); the body of the boy sealer that washed up on Fogo Island, encased in ice, after the 1914 sealing disaster (207); and the exploits of Captain William Jackman (232, 234). Second, they hunt as a means to understand themselves as men: when Gus kills and butchers the seal, he proclaims: “Goddamn swilers! Goddamn MEN! That’s us!” (247). Sharing hypermasculine stories and experiencing such events for themselves is integral to their development. Thus, with its emphasis on separate gender roles and its celebration of Newfoundland’s pre-Confederation past, *Gaff Topsails* endorses a reactionary understanding of masculinity as an integral part of the cultural identity of Newfoundland.

### **Masculinity and Myth in *Galore***

Like *Gaff Topsails*, Crummey's *Galore* also follows the daily lives of a group of interconnected Newfoundlanders living in an isolated outpost in the decades leading up to Confederation with Canada. The novel is equally concerned with whiteness, masculinity, and national identity, yet *Galore*'s presentation of these topics is arguably even more troubling. While it, too, uses a white man to act as the island's father figure, suggesting that Newfoundland's cultural identity is indebted to masculinity and whiteness, the novel initially appears to be less explicit in its celebration of these traits.<sup>77</sup> Unlike *Gaff Topsails*, *Galore* introduces several female characters who seemingly have much agency; the novel includes queer characters; and it presents various modes of progress as existing in Newfoundland. However, upon closer analysis, readers will note how these women are little more than tools for masculine development; that anyone who is not heterosexual is portrayed in a negative light; and that these signs of progress are ultimately viewed with contempt by the novel. Moreover, *Galore* connects concerns of race and gender to Christianity, and praises the influence that this patriarchal religion has had on the island.

*Galore* covers multiple generations of two important, interconnected families, the

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<sup>77</sup> Lisa Jardine argues that Shakespeare's plot in *The Merchant of Venice*, "unlike [Christopher] Marlowe's [in *The Jew of Malta*] ... is historically more transposable—more culturally accessible over time—than Marlowe's precisely topical plot-version of mercantile greed ... and anti-Semitism. But for that very reason ... Shakespeare's play more dangerously persuades us that its prejudices are transhistorical or ahistorical. The plot of *The Merchant of Venice* uses the audience's emotional engagement with the characters to elicit our consent as to the justice of the plot's outcome—to confuse our reasoned sense of the temporal specificity of early modern conventions governing ideas of justice, contract, and obligation" (96). This is what I argue is happening in *Galore*: unlike *Gaff Topsails*, which is more abstract and less dependent on likable characters, *Galore* draws its reader in by making the plot relatable, and for this reason it is, to borrow Jardine's phrase, "dangerously persuasive."

Devines and the Sellars.<sup>78</sup> As a result, the novel provides a detailed look at the influence of ancestry and patrilineality on identity. Near the end of the novel, Abel Devine informs the reader that, as he listens to stories about his grandparents and great-grandparents, he learns “who he was” (325). His cousin, Esther, asks him “has no one told you a thing about yourself?” (325) before telling him about his great-grandfather, Judah, being “born out of the belly of a whale” (325). Neither she nor Abel see anything unusual in the idea that their great-grandfather’s biography is an integral part of their own identities. Significantly, as she tells him these stories, she also begins to make love to him, kissing him in between sentences and slowly undressing him as she elaborates on their genealogy. Thus, much like in *Gaff Topsails*, the importance of storytelling and culture becomes intertwined with the importance of heteronormative sexuality—just as myths are shared between generations, so are genes. In *Galore*, sex between a man and a woman goes hand-in-hand with maintaining tradition, as Abel and Esther’s union leads to the conception of a child who will continue their family’s legacy.

Significantly, Esther is the only woman we see telling stories in *Galore*, and her stories are told with the goal of forming a masculine identity. They are also told only to Abel; they are not for public consumption and they do not circulate in a community of women. In “Speakerly Women and Scribal Men,” Christine Neufeld argues that women have historically been identified with oral and vernacular traditions, while men have been

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<sup>78</sup> Names are important in *Galore*, highlighting a character’s most salient traits: the patriarch of the Sellars’ family is the community’s only merchant, who is known for his greed; his name should also make the reader think of cellars, the spatial opposite of the celestial, where the “divine” resides. The Devines, who make Judah a part of their family, are known for their connection to folklore and tradition; the novel’s onomastics suggest that this is godly and worthy of praise.

connected with “manuscript authority” (422). However, instead of positioning women as important storytellers, *Galore* presents only men as the ones who do the storytelling and influence culture.

This section reveals two important aspects of this novel. First, the reason Abel does not yet know about his ancestry is because his father, Eli, is often away from home. The narrator states that Eli “spent most of his nights” (319) at the office of the Fisherman’s Protective Union; he is frequently “gone for months” (327) at a time. Eli does not appear to be interested in his son’s wellbeing; the novel implies that he begins a sexual relationship with another man, and following this, is too busy for his son. The reader is told that Eli initially distances himself from his son because he tires of having to deal with Abel’s constant illnesses, which Eli irrationally believes are “designed to pull [him] in the youngster’s wake” (281). Corneau connects the breakdown of masculine identity to both the collapse of father-son relationships and the loss of ancestral customs (15). This is what we see in *Galore*. However, Eli takes a sudden interest in his son when he tries to convince him to join the army, a request Eli makes to please his lover, union leader William Coaker (299).<sup>79</sup> Abel therefore becomes a victim of cultural change: although Eli, as a father, should be responsible for telling Abel “who he was,” he is pre-occupied by matters that do not contribute to the maintenance of tradition on the island.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Coaker is a fascinating figure from Newfoundland history. His creation of the Fisherman’s Protective Union produced a major change from the serf-like conditions of the working classes, who had been dependent on the merchant system, in which one man often controlled the complete economy of a community (Cadigan). There have been many controversial comments on Coaker’s personality and personal life, including Crummey’s comment that “he was almost certainly gay” (xoxoxoe).

<sup>80</sup> There is a historical context for the way in which *Galore* treats Eli and Coaker’s relationship. Literary critic Michael Kane notes that, towards the end of the nineteenth century—particularly around the time that Oscar Wilde stood trial for “sodomy and gross indecency” (66)—“fears concerning ‘degeneration’ and

These include a non-heteronormative (and thus, quite literally, unproductive) sexual relationship, and the creation of a workers' union, a sign of the unwelcome industrialization of fishing.

Secondly, this moment between Abel and Esther reveals how the text frequently portrays, or uses, women. Although *Galore* revisits and celebrates patriarchal traditions popular in Newfoundland's past, it does not ignore or belittle women. The above scene portrays Esther as a "strong female character"—she not only initiates sex, but has great knowledge of ancestry and community history.<sup>81</sup> Various other female characters have significant roles in the story, and are often physically and mentally stronger than many of the men. For example, Devine's Widow is the only one bold enough to inspect Judah, the mysterious stranger who washes ashore at the beginning of the book. Devine's Widow is a matriarchal figure whose knowledge of herbal remedies and other traditional medicine means the majority of the townspeople rely on her healing powers. Devine's Widow shows her strength of opinion when, as a young, impoverished woman, she refuses the proposal of the wealthy merchant, King-me Sellars, because of his obsession with business and standing:

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'decadence' were also specifically linked to fears regarding issues of gender and sexual practices" (66). *Galore* uses this relationship, between two men, to signify the "negative" aspects of modernity; the novel suggests that Eli is a negative symbol of the way any sort of changes or advancements can detract from Newfoundland's "real" cultural identity.

<sup>81</sup> The "strong female character" has become something of a trope in recent years, with many critics arguing that including "strong female characters" in television, film, or fiction, is "not bad because it aspires to engender respect," but "because it tries to compensate for an existing imbalance by stacking the deck in favour of the female character, by making her better, more deserving, higher-toned, more virtuous and deserving of respect" (Chocano n.p.). Heather M. Porter argues that a "Complete Female Character," her answer to the "strong female," is someone who has agency, or that, instead of having something "merely happen to her ... makes [it] happen" (27).

The thought of marrying [Sellars] seemed no different than indentured servitude.

—You need to take a wife, is it? she said, and King-me nodded. ...

—And I need to take a piss, Master Sellars. Is that for or against we two getting married? (75)

Devine's Widow has quick wit and a confidence that serves her well during her long life. And yet, as her name tells us, her identity is wrapped up in her husband's.

There is a broader context for considering the various roles of the novel's women. American film director Budd Boetticher (prolific in the 1950s) once stated that:

What counts is what the heroine provokes, or rather what she represents. She is the one, or rather the love or fear she inspires in the hero, or else the concern he feels for her, who makes him act the way he does. In herself the woman has not the slightest importance. (qtd. in Mulvey, 837)

Here, Boetticher claims that female characters in film are important only for the way that they inspire their male counterparts. *Galore* treats its women in a similar way. Devine's Widow and her granddaughter, Mary Tryphena, are primarily important because they save Judah from various mishaps, allowing him to become the mythical father figure the text suggests the community of Paradise Deep needs. Terry Goldie notes the "centrality" ("Is *Galore*" 91) of the novel's "[male] heroes" (91), and of other "wildly masculinist characters, such as [the] Rabelaisian priest" (91), going on to state that, in contrast, the women "are on the edge of things: observers, sexual targets, widows, and spell-weavers" (91). It is the men who are in control of the narrative while "[the women's] lives always remain contained by the gender divisions of traditional Newfoundland" (91). These



gendered divisions are one of the many elements of “traditional” Newfoundland that the novel endorses. It is as if *Galore* wants its readers to think it is instilling women with agency and authority, though ultimately it simply ratifies old gendered divisions.

While folklore and mythology colour the first part of the novel (in the form of ghosts, magical trees, men being born from whales, and storytelling), the second part comments repeatedly upon how the outside world has come to change the island.

Improved transportation and communication impact Paradise Deep, as exhibited through the arrivals of school teacher Ann Hope, Dr. Newman, and William Coaker, symbols of education, science, and politics, respectively. The novel suggests that, as a result, the old ways and unique oral traditions begin to fade. The myths that were once held as absolute truths are now doubted, and those things that were valued are now forgotten. However, the novel prevents this from happening entirely by ending the story with a cyclical return: when Abel loses his memory during the war, it is his spotting of a whale in the ocean that “turn[s] like a key in a lock, a story spiraling out of the [ocean] ... to claim him” (356).

The story he has heard about his great-grandfather, Judah, being carried by a whale becomes a part of Abel’s own identity, and he embraces this path, jumping into the water to reclaim his paternal ancestor’s story as his own. Therefore, the novel suggests that while “real world” influences detract from Newfoundland’s authentic identity, Newfoundland men are able to regain this identity by remembering the past and claiming their ties to their ancestral fathers.

Significantly, *Galore* suggests that when Abel dives into the sea, he does not drown, but is reborn. Curiously, the text leads the reader to believe that Abel will return

as his own son, as he impregnated Esther—who, the novel reveals, should not be able to have children, thus implying that this pregnancy is a miracle—before leaving for war.

The last paragraph of the novel states:

The face of a girl waiting at home flashed below the surface and he pushed himself onto the deck. ... He shed his clothes as he went, returning to himself naked as a fish. Even as he fell he pictured her watching from across the room the next time he opened his eyes to the light. (356)

A few pages before this, Dr. Newman, visiting the pregnant Esther back in Paradise Deep, considers the uniquely Newfoundland phrase “now the once”:

It was the oddest expression he’d learned on the shore ... the present twined with the past to mean soon, a bit later, some unspecified point in the future. As if it was all the same finally, as if time was a single moment endlessly circling on itself. (349)

It is with this idea of the cyclical nature of time firmly placed in the reader’s mind that Abel jumps into the ocean and returns to Esther. History should and does influence the present, the novel implies. The mythological figure of Abel’s great-grandfather guides Abel and his community in Newfoundland into a future that honors a past guided and watched over by men.

Abel’s narrative is only one of the many ways that the novel highlights Judah as the novel’s most prominent father figure. Like Croft, Judah also has mythical status, beginning with his rebirth. He is removed from a whale at the beginning of the novel:

The white underbelly was exposed where the carcass keeled to one side, the stomach's membrane floating free in the shallows. The Toucher triplets were poking idly at the massive gut with splitting knives ... and then the head appeared, the boys screaming and falling away at the sight. It was a human head, the hair bleached white. (3)

This description of Judah as being “bleached white” is repeated throughout the text, as he is often called “the Great White” (231) or referred to as “that white bastard” (69).<sup>82</sup>

Though the townspeople are initially wary of Judah,<sup>83</sup> they eventually come to worship him for saving the cod stocks, which the reader learns “had never been so scarce, not in living memory” (23)—something which alludes to the cod moratorium in 1992. One morning, Judah steals aboard Callum Devine's fishing boat; as usual, the other men in the boat have no luck fishing, but when they let Judah jig for squid, he quickly fills the boat: Judah “dropped his line altogether and was bringing the squid in hand over hand in one continuous string” (29) while “no one [else] had managed to strike” (29). The men then go on to fill “every boat in the flotilla” (29) and:

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<sup>82</sup> The designation of “Great White” should remind readers of the eponymous “great white whale” of Herman Melville's *Moby Dick*. Toni Morrison argues that, “if the [white] whale [of Melville's text] is more than ... indifferent Nature unsubduable by masculine aggression, if it is as much its adjective as it is its noun, ... if the white whale is the ideology of race, what Ahab has lost to it is ... his own place as a human in the world. The trauma of racism is ... the severe fragmentation of the self” (141). Morrison connects the presentation of whiteness in *Moby Dick*—something that is feared yet also idealized—to Melville's “hostility to and repugnance for slavery” (144). In *Galore*, Jonah, the “Great White,” is viewed as saviour and father; instead of problematizing this ideology of whiteness, *Galore* appears to celebrate it.

<sup>83</sup> They “[chase] him off” their property, “brandishing rakes or sticks” while children “fling rocks at his head” (24).

by the end of the summer they were calling him the Great White or St. Jude for the patron saint of lost causes. Catholics began crossing themselves in his presence as they would before the altar. The sick sought him out for a laying on of hands if all other cures failed. ... There was talk that one person or another had returned to the blush of health after an audience with St. Jude. (30)

Judah therefore becomes a powerful religious figure. He is likened to a saint who is able to cure people, much like Jesus did in the Bible.

The religious symbolism that the text uses to describe Judah is not insignificant, especially as these allusions to Christianity are often accompanied by references to Judah's whiteness. The Eucharist wafers the townspeople receive at Mass are described as being as white as Judah's face, and the merchant Levi considers how Judah's hair is a "preternatural white" (245) immediately before the text inserts the line "They have ears but they hear not" (245). This line can be found in multiple chapters of the Bible, including Jeremiah 5:21, which reads "Hear this, you foolish and senseless people, who have eyes but do not see, who have ears but do not hear." In the Bible, this line is directly followed by God asking the people "Should you not fear me?" Thus, Judah becomes known not only for his whiteness, but his godliness: he is a white, God figure who influences the cultural identity of this mythical Newfoundland outport community, a place that, like the unnamed community in *Gaff Topsails*, is meant to symbolize the real Newfoundland.<sup>84</sup> The insinuation that the people of Paradise Deep "have ears but hear

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<sup>84</sup> Judah's grandson is similarly described as having "a Nordic look about him, the hair white-blonde and his face pale as the royalties of Europe" (168). These physical markers ensure that the reader recognizes the important patrilineal tradition at work here, one that is particularly marked by whiteness.

not” suggests that they have become, in later years, ignorant of what is important. Reflecting the ideology presented in *Gaff Topsails*, Crummey’s Newfoundland’s becomes associated with whiteness, Christianity, and patriarchal mythology.

Notably, when this statement—“they have ears, but they hear not”—is made by the narrator in the second part of the novel, Judah has become the community scapegoat. At Christmastime, a group of mummers attack Levi Sellars, a merchant who is widely disliked because he is a figure of capitalism and consumerism, qualities which contradict the ideal version of the Newfoundland man:

The mummers were on him before he turned, his arms pinned to the ground while the brin dress drew a fish knife from his costume of rags. –Give ear, he said, to the words of my mouth.

Levi screamed bloody murder before he blacked out, a foul whiff in his nostrils as he went under...The lobes and half the cartilage [were] sliced off both ears. (230)

Levi blames Judah for the attack (233), and has the constable arrest the entire Devine family, including Judah’s son, Patrick, who actually committed the crime, when he cannot find Judah.

Finally, Judah agrees to turn himself in if Levi will let the others go. Since he is mute, he communicates this desire to Mary Tryphena with Bible verses, which he has written out himself:

Let the enemy persecute my soul, and take it; yea, let him tread down my life upon the earth, and lay mine honour in the dust...They that trust in their wealth

and boast themselves in the multitude of their riches, none of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him. (235)<sup>85</sup>

Speaking through biblical passages casts Judah even more firmly as a Christ figure.

While imprisoned, Judah refuses to eat, but still somehow survives, and “stories of Judah’s biblical fast” (243) make their way “along the shore” (243). Judah’s behaviour renews the townspeople’s faith in him, as “older tales of Jude’s dominion over the fish of the sea, of the people healed by his presence, were revived and retold” (243). “Strangers pilgrimage from outports around the island to stand vigil outside the prison” (243), thus cementing Judah’s important position in the community and beyond. The text suggests that when Judah is not recognized as the father of the community, it is because the community members are ignoring an important part of their past cultural identity, the consequences of which will result in the permanent loss of elements of this culture.

This emphasis on Judah’s whiteness—he is “white as the driven snow” (15) and has “skin the white of sea ice” (15)—is particularly relevant within the context of contemporary theories of masculinity. White masculinity occupies a hegemonic position in Western culture, one which Sally Robinson argues was not questioned until the 1960s.<sup>86</sup> At this time, there arose what she describes as a “master narrative of white male decline”:

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<sup>85</sup> Judah’s verses are meant to criticize Levi, someone who “trusts in his wealth and boasts himself in the multitude of his riches.”

<sup>86</sup> Melissa Bell & Nichole K. Bayliss argue that, “when men, particularly White men, experience job insecurity, a perceived loss of control, and a rise of income inequality, they tend to celebrate a nostalgic version of manhood” (567).

In the late 1960s, in the wake of the civil rights movement, and with the rise of women's liberation ... white men begin to be decentered. Some accounts of this general shift take economic changes into account. ... While such economic shifts clearly affect women as well as men—and people of colour as much as or more than whites—an enduring image of the disenfranchised white man has become a symbol for the decline of the American way. (2)

This, Robinson argues, has encouraged the construction of white men as victims, something which I explore in greater detail in Chapter 3. Images of “wounded white men” (3) subsequently abound in late-twentieth-century American culture.

A similar context exists in Canada. Sherene H. Razack argues that national mythologies “enable citizens to think of themselves as part of a community, defining who belongs and who does not belong to the nation” (2). Unfortunately, Razack adds, this type of story is “manifestly a racial” (2) one. For example, settler societies established by Europeans, on non-European soil, including Canada, relied on the dispossession of Indigenous populations, and as they evolve, these settler societies continue to be “structured by a racial hierarchy” (2). We see this quite clearly in *Galore*. Daniel Coleman notes that the three standardizing ideals of Canada are “whiteness, masculinity, and Britishness” (*White* 10), and he argues that those who satisfy these ideals are “deeply invested in maintaining, if not increasing, their social status” (10). In other words, those in positions of privilege and power in Canada try to remain that way, and when they perceive threats to their positions, they suggest that those who differ from them, or who

reject their particular ideologies, are somehow un-Canadian.<sup>87</sup>

*Gaff Topsails* and *Galore* emphasize Croft's and Judah's whiteness, respectively, in their narratives (and, in Croft's case, his "Britishness" as well). The way that *Galore* frames Judah first as the community's saviour and later as its scapegoat therefore connects with both Robinson's and Coleman's theory that the wounded or angry white male frequently appears in North American society, media, and fiction as an attempt to draw attention to the ways that white masculinity has been victimized. The community of Paradise Deep loses its faith in Judah during decades of progress; as new, stricter religious figures, doctors, teachers, and politicians influence the townspeople, they forget about their saviour. However, *Galore* suggests that not all will be lost as long as Newfoundlanders enact the sort of ancestral memorialization that we witness from Abel towards the end of the novel.

Terry Goldie states that most of *Galore* seems "self-consciously mythic, beginning with the arrival of Judah" ("Is *Galore*" 90). He discusses the work of Northrop Frye, who wrote at length about "the central myth of the hero, whose mysterious birth, triumph and marriage, death and betrayal and eventual rebirth follow the rhythm of the sun and the seasons" (*The Educated Imagination*, 112). Frye's template accurately summarizes both Judah's and Croft's stories. Croft and Judah become Newfoundland

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<sup>87</sup> Himani Bannerji summarizes this situation by stating that the real "threat" to Canada comes "from within itself—from its denied, unincorporated, alienated nature and its human forms" (297). The "other threat" comes from "without," from Canada's "fear of being overrun by, and incorporated into, the United States" (297).



archetypes: they are the mysterious heroes who endure triumphs and betrayals all in the name of protecting their lands and their extended families. Significantly, their roles as archetypes become necessarily intertwined with their skin colour and their gender. Judah's eventual imprisonment therefore provides a literary representation of the trajectory of white masculinity in crisis, lending symbolic support both to the ideology that white men are suffering as a result of changes in contemporary society and to the equating of Newfoundland culture with whiteness.

In addition to Judah, Father Phelan is another white, aggressively heterosexual man whom *Galore* constructs as a creator of the outport's cultural identity. The novel especially values Father Phelan for his storytelling abilities. His tales of "drinking and whoring" (17) lead to the narrator's statement that "he had no sense of shame and it was this quality that marked him as a man of God in the eyes of parishioners" (17). Though this statement is not without irony—shamelessness is not generally a guaranteed mark of spirituality—Phelan's freedom with his stories convinces the community that they can trust him. Father Phelan is much like Tomas Croft, who possesses the ideal blend of civility and wildness that form the authentic Newfoundland male in these two novels. Phelan uses his stories to entertain the men, and thereby "to make himself useful" (23). By "offering reminiscences of the women he'd bedded" (23), Phelan provides the townsmen with "a night without worry ... a taste of God's Heaven on earth" (23). Storytelling is a form of sustenance in *Galore*, and the novel's characters often consider it as necessary as manual labour.

However, although clearly an integral part of the community in Part One of the

novel, Father Phelan becomes lost to the community in Part Two. His persecution is very similar to Judah's: although the community once considered Phelan an important father-figure, they later shun him, an event which precedes his tragic death at the end of Part One. The last page of this section describes Phelan's corpse floating in the sea: "Father Phelan had drowned while travelling among the Northern-most islands of the coast. The priest's corpse was found afloat on its back in open seas, decked out in the threadbare remains of ... clerical robes, his arms crossed over his chest" (156). The visit from the archbishop immediately precedes and influences this death. When the new archbishop visits the community, he finds Father Phelan's eccentric ways to be contrary to what he believes the Catholic Church signifies. Therefore, during mass, Father Cunico, who accompanies this archbishop, tells the congregation that Father Phelan is "*vitandis*" (142), to be shunned, and he warns them that a similar fate faces anyone who ignores "the Church's will" (142). The community obeys the archbishop's command and Father Phelan endures "doors barred against him, faces turned away ... not a soul [who] would so much as say hello" (143). Cunico rejects the community's superstitions and secular practices, condemning, for example, "the tradition of passing infants through the branches of Kerrivan's Tree" (147). While religion in Paradise Deep was once blended with folklore and mysticism, the Church becomes known for its "decorum" (147) and "religious formalities" (147).

Father Phelan's death thus symbolizes how the rich culture of Newfoundland is potentially, and regrettably, lost, as formalities, rules, and conventions restrict the island's people from living as they once did. Notably, Father Phelan's experience is the reverse of

Father MacMurrough's in *Gaff Topsails*. Though at the beginning of that novel MacMurrough feels disconnected from the outport and its inhabitants, by the end of the book he has become an integral member of the community. Phelan, however, moves from being a figure of both religious authority and cultural diversity to a less-than-spectral figure forgotten by the majority of the community's future residents.<sup>88</sup> While *Gaff Topsails* celebrates the inclusion of a priest, *Galore* laments the exclusion of one.<sup>89</sup>

Throughout this section, I note that *Galore* positions masculinity, whiteness, and Christianity as all playing an important role in the identity of both Newfoundland and the 'real' Newfoundlander. With both its celebration of Judah and eulogy for Phelan, the novel ensures that these qualities remain central in the construction of Newfoundland culture.

### **Looking to the Past for Guidance in *The Strangers' Gallery***

*The Strangers' Gallery* presents its reader with a contemporary example of a "guiding father figure"; significantly, he is a man deeply influenced by the past. As I state in my Introduction, *The Strangers' Gallery* is not historical fiction. However, its goal remains the same: by presenting the reader with stories of Newfoundland's past, and providing lengthy references to historical works, the novel encourages readers to look to the past as

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<sup>88</sup> Phelan's death exemplifies what Michael Hurley has said about the important relationship between the gothic, the grotesque, and periods of "cultural disorder or upheaval" (161). Primarily, Hurley notes that the gothic is concerned with the instability of boundaries—those that exist between the natural and the supernatural, the past and the present, the self and the other, the living and the dead (161).

<sup>89</sup> It should be remembered that "celebrating" and "lamenting" the past are the two goals that Gwyn and others note as shaping the cultural renaissance of the 1970s.

a source for renewal in the face of modern malaise.

Bowdring's novel closely connects the search for both personal and political identity with fatherhood: as middle-aged protagonist Michael struggles to understand the father he never knew, his houseguest Anton searches for the father who abandoned him. In fact, the novel opens on Father's Day, ironically emphasizing just how important absent fathers will be to the text. Michael and Anton's friend, historian Miles Arnett, is also desperate in his attempt to reclaim the lost "fatherland" (11) that is Newfoundland. Despite being set fifty years later, *The Strangers' Gallery*, like *Galore* and *Gaff Topsails*, is also preoccupied with Confederation with Canada. *The Strangers' Gallery*'s anxiety concerning Confederation is both implicit and explicit. For example, protagonist, Michael Rowe, informs the reader that he was born just before March 31<sup>st</sup>, 1949, the day that Newfoundland joined Canada.<sup>90</sup> We are also repeatedly told that his beloved home in Churchill Square in St. John's was built before Confederation. Michael directly connects his own identity—from his birth date to his current living space—to that of Newfoundland, and both are ultimately shown to be incomplete, or as existing in a sort of liminal space. Neither Michael nor Newfoundland are truly "Canadian," yet they are also not, we learn, independent entities.

*The Strangers' Gallery* suggests the public and the personal are inseparable. The novel has little plot but rather "a progression of disclosures" (Duke n.p.) by Michael

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<sup>90</sup> Salman Rushdie famously uses this device in *Midnight's Children* (1981), though in different circumstances: although Rushdie's protagonist, Saleem Sinai, is born at midnight, 15 August 1947, and is therefore exactly as old as independent India, Michael is conversely born just in time to witness the "death" of Newfoundland independence.

about intimate relationships with friends and family, and experiences, both past and present. And while the middle-aged Michael spends his days in existential ennui, questioning his relationships and daily routines, the various historical documents that he encounters through his work as an archivist—and from which he heavily quotes—remind him that the province subsists in a similar state. The main reasons given for these incomplete identities are that Michael’s father—a former travelling salesman who was hardly ever at home, and who died when Michael was young—is absent, and coincidentally that Newfoundland has lost its “fatherland” status. A large portion of the novel is dedicated to Michael’s frequent recognition of the many traces of the past that exist in St. John’s. Michael infuses the contemporary moment with the island’s past, consistently reminding the reader of Newfoundland’s history.

For example, when walking through the Arts building at Memorial University, Michael notices the John Lewis Paton memorial. The sight of this bust leads Michael to take out the “John Lewis Paton file” (133) when he is back in the archives. The novel then devotes four pages (133-136) to Paton’s history and his opinions about Newfoundland. President of the University from 1925 to 1933, Paton gave an address in 1934, in London, which contained descriptions of Newfoundland’s people. Michael’s retelling of this moment, already significant for the way it shows his preoccupation with the past, gains further import with the added detail that Lord Amulree was present for Paton’s presentation. Amulree was appointed chairman of the Royal Commission by the British Government in late 1932; he and the other members of the commission were expected to look into the financial and political state of affairs in Newfoundland at the

time (Malone 6). Ultimately, Amulree recommended that Newfoundland temporarily give up its independent government to receive aid from the British government. This recommendation was adopted and Great Britain took control of Newfoundland from 1934 to 1949, when Newfoundland joined Canada. Michael stops reading Paton's file "in anguish" (136). He cannot bear to think about how events conspired to take away Newfoundland's independence. That an event which took place over sixty years prior to the action of the novel has such an impact on Michael is telling. By drawing such attention to the past, the novel infuses this former time with much importance: history figuratively consumes Michael, and other characters, in their present-day lives.

Anton's "obsession" (244) with William Cormack, an explorer born in Newfoundland at the end of the eighteenth century, exemplifies the way that *The Strangers' Gallery* emphasizes the influence of men from the past on men in the present. After Michael mentions Anton's latest preoccupation, the text devotes over ten pages to describing Cormack's experiences, namely his "walk across Newfoundland" (251). Moreover, this description alternates with paragraphs concerning Anton's continued search for his father, as the novel splices descriptions of Cormack's journey through Newfoundland in the nineteenth century with Anton's present encounters with the Department of Veterans Affairs, where he hopes to find out information about his father's present whereabouts. Anton is visiting St. John's for the purpose of finding his father, a war veteran from Newfoundland who fathered Anton in Holland during World War II, and subsequently returned home, never to be a part of Anton's life. Michael expressly compares Cormack and Anton, calling both "explorers" (251). Michael wonders "if

Cormack would be the first and last European to face the ‘mocking emptiness’ of the wilderness of Newfoundland” (251). He wonders if “perhaps Anton was planning to be the second European to perform this feat” (251). This section of the novel closely joins together the European mapping—and therefore, claiming—of Newfoundland’s wilderness and the discovery of a missing Newfoundland father.<sup>91</sup> It connects concerns of national identity and fatherhood, imbuing the quest for the father with great consequence.

Critic Norma Lundberg highlights attempts by Michael, Anton, and Miles to keep the past alive in the novel, noting, in particular, how “[the three men] travel on foot through long-familiar streets ... conjuring the ghosts of demolished dwellings and shops, sharing their dismay that entire neighbourhoods were razed ‘waiting for progress to wave its magic wand’” (102). The novel subtly criticizes this concept of progress as something which only assists in razing, or destroying, the authentic culture that once existed. Lundberg’s comment that Michael “seems a virtual stranger in his changing neighbourhood where all but one of the original families has moved on” (102), gestures towards the potentially alienating impact of the urbanization and economic development that accompany contemporary life. These are forces which the novel implicitly connects to the loss of fatherhood.

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<sup>91</sup> Earlier in the novel, Anton describes how, “according to the Norse Sagas” (14), the “first man to cross [the Atlantic Ocean] and to set eyes on this cold and barren land [Newfoundland] had only been looking for his father” (14). Michael goes on to narrate the story of Bjarni Herjolfsson, a Norwegian trader, and his father, Herjolf. Upon arriving in Iceland in AD 986, Bjarni learns that his father has sailed on to the newly established colony of Greenland. However, Bjarni gets lost on the way and ultimately discovers what is now known as Newfoundland (14). The very discovery, and contemporary existence, of Newfoundland is the result of a son’s search for his father. The novel therefore establishes its central concern in its first chapter as it proclaims that the island’s cultural and national identity relies on its patrilineal traditions.

Many characters are missing their fathers in *The Strangers' Gallery*, and this absence deeply, and negatively, impacts them. The reader first meets the kindly Frank Morrow, a father dying of cancer. Later, we meet Hubert, Michael's brother, who chooses to send his two young daughters away to boarding school, turning away from his role as father. Miranda, Michael's neighbour and future lover, "lost both her parents in a tragic automobile accident that summer" (21) and consequently suffers from much "emotional distress" (21). Her unborn child, fathered by Anton, is also left fatherless when Anton abandons the two of them.<sup>92</sup> Moreover, Michael's ex-wife, Elaine, describes how her parents' divorce when she was a child led to a devastating and life-long separation from her father.

The novel connects many of these absent fathers to Newfoundland's history and culture. Anton's father was a Newfoundlander who volunteered with the Canadian army to help in Europe during World War 2. Michael claims that "it was his [own father's] many avocations ... proverb collector, storyteller, fiddler ... that kept [his father's] mind alive, and that now keep his memory alive, for better or for worse" (11). Similarly, Elaine's father is a preserver of traditional Newfoundland music (108). Thus, Michael's belief that "most [of his father's proverbs] contain the hard-earned wisdom of the race" (11) suggests the culturally defining role both fathers and tradition play in the province's identity. Connecting fatherhood to an independent Newfoundland culture suggests that there is something inherently masculine about nationalism, or the type of national identity

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<sup>92</sup> Michael eventually begins a relationship with Miranda and plans to become a father to the child, a point that I discuss at greater length later in this chapter.



that the novel fears Newfoundland has lost.

The novel engages with residual elements of the island's culture by granting a legitimacy to prescribed and distinct gender roles. Psychologists in the 1950s construed fathers and mothers as "ideal[ly] separate gendered roles" (Blatz 78). Mothers are given one particular set of parenting skills and goals, while fathers possess a different set. Significantly, though these characters' mothers are still living, they play a limited role in their children's lives. Only fathers influence the identity of their children. *The Strangers' Gallery* shows that past gender theories inform its theme more than contemporary ones.

Michael's father, like Newfoundland's past, is unable to contribute to Michael's own identity. The novel presents this situation as tragic. Michael tells that reader that he "had grown up ... knowing as much about the history of [his] father as [he] did about the history of the fatherland, which was hardly anything at all—about as much as Anton knew about his father" (233). Michael thus discusses Newfoundland the same way he discusses his father: "Yes, I remembered the COUNTRY of Newfoundland, but only vicariously. I hadn't been there, but how could I forget?" (32). Just as it is impossible for Michael to forget his father (even a father he did not truly know) it is equally impossible for him to ignore Newfoundland's past status as independent nation (even if he never actually was able to experience it).<sup>93</sup> Necessarily, then, by emphasizing the connection between fatherhood and political identity, *The Strangers' Gallery* reverts to patriarchal

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<sup>93</sup> Miles also ensures that neither Michael nor the reader forgets this important fact as he constantly mourns aloud Newfoundland's history, despairing what he views as the province's transformation into something disconnected from its independent past. He specifically bemoans the loss of "the fatherland—his dead country, his lost country, the New Founde Landes, ye Olde Lost Lande" (11).

traditions in its effort to provide what it positions as a stable identity for both the island and the protagonist.

The style of the book reinforces the sense that the past prevents Michael from fully inhabiting the present. The prose often feels weighed down by its heavy-handed use of historical quotation. As the narrator, Michael quotes pages of historical texts to a point where the plot of the novel disappears beneath the quotations.<sup>94</sup> For example, an innocuous introduction to Michael's dentist, Dr. Winston Giovannetti, turns into a four-hundred word treatise on the Atlantic Charter:

Winston ... had been named ... after Winston Churchill, who, in August 1941 ... had met with US President Franklin D. Roosevelt on a warship in Placentia Bay and signed the famous Atlantic Charter ... I had written about the charter in the Evening Telegram on August 14, 1991 ... [Miles] had, as usual, in a letter to the editor, delivered a typical jousting reply. (52-54)

The text goes on to quote four lengthy paragraphs of this letter written by Miles. The novel takes a simple detail in Michael's life—his dentist's name—and manages to connect it to the island's history.

In fact, the reader will be forgiven if they forget that they are reading a novel about Michael's life at the end of the twentieth century, as they become inundated with

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<sup>94</sup> Paul Chafe makes a similar argument about the extensive use of epigraphs in Bowdring's earlier novel, *The Night Season* (1997): "At times, the narrative of *The Night Season* appears as a veiled excuse to connect epigraphs, each chapter beginning with at least one, sometimes three quotations from an array of artists, novelists, philosophers, and playwrights ... Will seems to be amusing himself with these quotations, not trying to 'reconcile literature and life'" ("Beautiful" 119).

information from previous decades. In one instance, Michael provides the reader with the entire text of another two letters written by Miles (primarily concerning confederation with Canada), something which he finds in the “Brendan ‘Miles’ Harnett Fonds” while he is at work. Interpellations like this appear throughout the work, drawing the reader from the central plot: instead of talking about Anton or Miranda or his daily activities, Michael talks about Sir Richard Squires (126-127) and Rockwell Kent (128). It would appear that Michael is, in fact, more interested in these historical figures than he is in those individuals with whom he interacts daily. Notably, he is interested solely in men, and only those who played an important role in the structuring of Newfoundland as a nation.

The novel admires Michael’s obsession with the past: the text presents the main characters and their actions with the utmost sincerity. Rather than being satirized, Michael, Anton, and Miles are sympathetic characters whose preoccupations with the past and their fathers are presented as valid concerns. It is worth contrasting this stance with Johnston’s *The Divine Ryans*. As I state at the beginning of this chapter, *The Divine Ryans* suggests that neither fatherhood nor Newfoundland can continue to exist in an idealized form following Confederation. Nine-year-old protagonist, Draper Doyle, is frequently thwarted in his attempts to uncover his family’s origins after his father’s death. The novel follows Draper’s attempt to comprehend his father’s suicide, which takes place immediately after Draper witnesses his father having sex with another man. Draper’s father never embraced his fatherly position, but instead felt compelled to enter a heteronormative relationship. Cynthia Sugars suggests that “if the quest for the father is a quest for legitimating ancestors, this novel renders that goal elusive” (“Notes” 157).

Draper's father's death becomes a "simple negation of his life" (157) and his ancestral role is therefore "nullified" (157). However, in *The Strangers' Gallery*, Michael's quest is successful: in becoming a father himself at the end of the novel, Michael satisfies his preoccupations with fatherhood. Michael becomes the surrogate father for all of the novel's fatherless children, suggesting that Newfoundland's identity is also safe, as long as a man—a specific sort of man, one who is connected to the island's past, and its folklore, and one who champions independence for the island—is there to father it.

Finally, Michael's desire to record everything—he states that "archivists ... never throw anything away" (250)—gestures towards the novel's own goal: to ensure that the history of Newfoundland is never forgotten nor thrown away, to remind readers that the past infuses our daily lives. Thus, the blending of the personal and the public, the individual and the historical, appears intentional in the novel. Michael's life becomes inseparable from the island's history while Anton's search for his father becomes intertwined with Miles' desperate attempts to ensure that everyone remembers the "Country of Newfoundland." That the memory of independent Newfoundland is tied to the memory of these men's fathers is likewise not coincidental. Rather, the novel consistently suggests that, just as the island can have no real identity without its past, these men can have no identity without their fathers. In this way, nationalism, independence, history, and identity all become connected with concerns of masculinity.

## Conclusion

Absent fathers abound in contemporary Newfoundland fiction and the authors of the novels addressed in this chapter create mythological fathers, like Tomas Croft and Judah, and encourage alternative figures, such as Abel and Michael, to step into the role of father to alleviate this absence. Most notable perhaps is Michael's narrative: at the end of *The Strangers' Gallery*, Michael is on the brink of becoming a father to Miranda's unborn child, thus, the narrator tells us, "join[ing] the great fraternity of fathers" (317) and sparing this child a fate experienced by many other characters of Newfoundland fiction. When Anton abandons the child, Michael thinks: "it seems as if some sort of strange circle ... just repeats itself ... replicating the sins of the father ... visited on the son, and the son of the son, forever and ever" (318). This sentence shows the continuing patrilineal influence in Newfoundland's contemporary novels. The use of the word "son" (and omission of the word "daughter") suggests that it is only through the male line that history and identity find equal expression. Furthermore, the novel implies that the child will be subject to a particularly difficult life if he or she does not have a father-figure, ignoring the impact of the child's mother. The novel's preoccupation with Michael's and Anton's fathers, coupled with its near-exclusion of their mothers, indicates the essential role a father plays in his child's life. Although here Michael talks about the "sins" of the father being bestowed on the child, what he is actually referencing is the tragic loss a son faces when he is denied his father figure. When he chooses to become a father himself, Michael believes that he is ensuring that Miranda's child will not experience the sort of

identity struggles that he, Anton, and many others in the novel experience.

In *The Media and The Models of Masculinity*, Mark Moss writes:

It is important to bear in mind that the appeal of retro-masculinity still lingers in a very pronounced and potent way. It surfaces in a wide array of cultural practices, media messages, and marketing programs. It can manifest itself in individual terms but often seeks to find expression and fulfillment in group settings. It borrows freely from stereotypes and archetypes that were dominant in the late Victorian period as well as from the 1950s. (8)

While speaking broadly about the Western world, Moss's argument has particular relevance for the contemporary Newfoundland novel. Each of the books I address in this chapter endorses a "retro-masculinity," showing that residual gender roles still decidedly linger. These novels borrow liberally from stereotypes and archetypes of historical masculinities. *Gaff Topsails*, *Galore*, and *The Strangers' Gallery* all celebrate the history of the island, and promote folklore as an important force behind cultural maintenance and masculine self-actualization. These texts are obsessed with the all-important father-figure, a symbol of autonomy and control, and suggest that it is only through patrilineal processes that both the island and its inhabitants can thrive.

## Chapter 2

### The Outport as New Frontier

In spite of all its drawbacks, the old outport gave a man the  
 opportunity of mastery over tremendous, non-human forces.  
 —Patrick O’Flaherty, *The Rock Observed*

E. Annie Proulx’s *The Shipping News*, Michael Winter’s *Minister Without Portfolio*, and Michael Crummey’s *Sweetland* all centre on white, working-class men living in contemporary rural Newfoundland. Characters in these three novels are currently or recently employed in positions that revolve around Newfoundland’s natural resources and primary industries, or else they have recently lost these positions, something which the text subsequently laments.<sup>95</sup> Fishing, carpentry, and lighthouse keeping, for example, all figure prominently. This is anachronistic, as *The Shipping News*, *Minister Without Portfolio*, and *Sweetland* are all set approximately during the year that they were published—1993, 2013, and 2014, respectively. The novels suggest that modes of work that were popular in the past are still viable (or, if not viable, preferable) ways to make a living in Newfoundland, primarily because they allow Newfoundland men to inhabit an outport community; in reality, however, few of these areas still employ

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<sup>95</sup> Even though Quoye is a journalist, because he is responsible for the shipping news, he must spend the majority of his time on the docks, visiting with various captains and learning about their boats. Therefore, despite the moratorium on fishing, Quoye is able to retain a connection to the sea, something which the text suggests is essential to the formation of his identity, as both a Newfoundlander and a man.

Newfoundlanders.<sup>96</sup>

These novels provide an example of how changes in industry have impacted the masculinity of male manual labourers in Newfoundland. They promote a return to places and occupations which, they posit, allow men to maintain a particular form of idealized masculinity. These novels are not historical fictions; instead of focusing their attention on a particular time period in the past (i.e., the pre-confederate utopia imagined in *Galore*, *Gaff Topsails*, and *The Strangers' Gallery*), they emphasize a specific *place* in the present, arguing that Newfoundland outports offer contemporary men the opportunity to prove their manhood.

Newfoundland scholars often consider place as fundamental to the construction of the “authentic” Newfoundland character. This engagement with place includes both the importance of the land (the island’s specific geography) and of ancestry (the islanders’ presumptive biology and genealogy) in identity formation. Paul Chafe writes that the “relationship between person and place is at the core of many [contemporary Newfoundland] novels” (“Only” 4), something Jennifer Delisle agrees with. She states that Newfoundlanders possess a “profound attachment to place” (*Diaspora* 15). Cynthia Sugars similarly argues that “the idea of place has been considered constitutive in the construction of a unique and identifiable Newfoundland character” (“Genetic” 9). I argue that *The Shipping News*, *Minister Without Portfolio*, and *Sweetland* specifically imbue place with the power to define and maintain both nation and man.

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<sup>96</sup> In 2014, about 5,800 Newfoundlanders worked in the fishery, with over 233,000 employed elsewhere, making fishery workers less than 3% of the working population (“Employment in Fishing Industry Newfoundland and Labrador Annual Averages, 1987 to 2017”).



Promoting rural spaces as sustaining, or even forming, masculinity is not unique to Newfoundland fiction. Historian Christopher Dummit states that Canadian men, believing they were threatened with emasculation throughout the twentieth century, were encouraged to return to “wilderness” spaces, where they could escape the allegedly feminizing influences of contemporary civilization.<sup>97</sup> The rural parts of a region are often considered such wilderness space. David Bell argues that “urban men ... are constructed ... as feminized and effeminate, as ... physically weak ... queasy about the hard facts of rural life” (552). Conversely, one of the more prominent understandings of rural areas in the twentieth century is that they offer “space to reconnect with a lost sense of ‘natural’ masculinity” (558), or a “remasculinization” (558) of city men.

In general, Dummit argues that many postwar Canadians similarly believe “that being modern [is] antithetical to being masculine” (5), and that certain elements of modern life “[harm] an allegedly primal masculinity” (5).<sup>98</sup> He notes how, in Canadian history, “when masculinity has arisen in discussions of modernity, the two terms have ... been presented as antagonistic” (19), with men becoming the focus of “antimodern anxieties” (19). Transformations in science, politics, and economics have led to increases in industrialization, capitalism, and urbanization. Although these changes were often

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<sup>97</sup> He provides some specific examples, including how “turn-of-the-century Ontario doctors prescribed wilderness holidays so that men suffering from the disease of overcivilization could get in touch with their rugged, manly sides” (19); he also describes big-game hunting in British Columbia (19) and the work of early-twentieth-century Protestants “who advocated a more muscular Christianity” (19).

<sup>98</sup> Dummit arrives at this conclusion after analysing case studies of men living in Vancouver in the late 1960s. He argues that “the experience of those in Vancouver was characteristic of social and economic changes occurring throughout Canada in those years” (8), and therefore he does not see their experience as unique (8). Rather, he writes that “the theoretical underpinnings of modern existence ... encompass the globe” (11-2).

beneficial for everyone—advances in medicine, for example—there were some elements that caused uncertainty. Notably, there were fears that the roles of men and women were changing too rapidly. For instance, shifts in industry eventually led to more men working in the service industry, an area previously populated mostly by women.<sup>99</sup>

Similarly, in “American Women and the Making of Modern Consumer Culture,” Kathy L. Peiss writes that, with the rise of American consumer culture at the end of the nineteenth century, “an explicit conception of consumer identity” was formed, one which was “bound up in notions of the feminine” (n.p.). “Consumption,” she states, was “coded as a female pursuit, frivolous and even wasteful” (n.p.).<sup>100</sup> Within a specifically Canadian context, Donica Belisle contends that, between the 1890s and 1930s, commentators in Canada similarly “drew upon established connections among greed, luxury, hysteria, and femininity to describe women who went shopping as irrational” (581). Their motivation for doing so was, in part, to emphasise the legitimacy of male authority and attribute blame for economic problems, such as the degradation of labour standards and the decline of small business. Ultimately, by using stereotypes of femininity to understand the capitalist moment, Canadian critics constructed representations of women as scapegoats, allowing them to blame femininity for the ills of modernization.

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<sup>99</sup> Robert K. Schaeffer writes that, “when the steel, auto, and aircraft industries surrendered markets and ceded jobs to overseas competitors, they laid off” (10) many men. Few women, however, worked in these industries. Ultimately, Schaeffer notes that “the loss of wage work in manufacturing undermined male power in public life and male authority in private life” (10).

<sup>100</sup> Peiss notes that perceiving capitalist culture as feminine is ironic, especially when one considers the historical relationship between capitalism, which has largely benefitted men, and feminism, which has historically rejected capitalism. Peiss notes how the very construction of a feminine consumerist culture is a product of hegemonic masculinity: men are described as having actually encouraged the production of a society that establishes women as consumers in order to deny them an opportunity as producer.

Newfoundland fiction presents a similar condemnation of consumerism, suggesting that modern, urban life can be emasculating. Many recent Newfoundland novels lament the loss of an outport lifestyle, believed to be somehow more authentic and rewarding for men than an urban, city-based existence. Fiona Polack argues that under late capitalism, Newfoundland has become “increasingly fetishized and commodified as [a] zone of the ‘unique,’ the ‘authentic,’ the ‘different,’ and the ‘past’” (“Taking” 182). Though she explains that the reasons for these constructions are complex, Polack describes how Newfoundland has “lent [it]self to figuration as [a] ... wellspring of authenticity” (181) in part as a result of its extensive wilderness spaces.<sup>101</sup> In other words, the island’s geography encourages a romanticization of rural Newfoundland as the ideal location for proving manhood, as it allows men to escape the feminizing influence of consumerism and test themselves against nature.<sup>102</sup>

These arguments can be connected to the “Frontier Myth” ideology to which I referred in my Introduction. In 1893, Frederick Jackson Turner delivered what became a seminal essay on the role of the frontier in American development.<sup>103</sup> Turner argues:

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<sup>101</sup> Historian Willeen Keough argues that the reality of work in outport Newfoundland in the first part of the twentieth century was much different than romantic fictionalizations would have us believe. Keough interviewed Newfoundland men who took part in the sealing hunt in the middle of the twentieth century. Noting that the seal fishery has been constructed as a “metanarrative” (133) of Newfoundland men, “saturated with images of heroic masculinity” (133), Keough examines how, in actuality, this celebration of sealing manhood has “been suffocating and oppressive for Newfoundland sealers” (131). The sealers’ own stories actually challenge the romantic masculinist myth of sealing promoted on the island.

<sup>102</sup> This is not to say that every book recently published in Newfoundland is about rural areas. Lisa Moore’s *Alligator* (2005) and *February* (2009) are both set in St. John’s, as is Wayne Johnston’s *Son of a Certain Woman* (2013) and Joel Thomas Hynes’s newest novel, *We’ll All Be Burnt in Our Beds Some Night* (2017), which begins in St. John’s and then moves across Canada.

<sup>103</sup> John Mack Faragher calls Turner’s essay “the single most influential piece of writing in the history of American history” (1).

The frontier is the line of most rapid and effective Americanization. The wilderness masters the colonist. It finds him a European in ... industries, tools, modes of travel, and thought ... It strips off the garments of civilization and arrays him in the hunting shirt and the moccasin ... [A]t the frontier the environment is too strong for the man. He must accept the conditions which it furnishes or perish ... Little by little he transforms the wilderness, but the outcome is not the old Europe ... The fact is, that here is a new product that is American. At first, the frontier was the Atlantic coast ... Moving westward, the frontier became more and more American ... Thus the advance of the frontier has meant a steady movement away from the influence of Europe, a steady growth of independence of American lines. (3)<sup>104</sup>

Here, Turner argues that the product of European civilization and the American wilderness meeting is the American; this is similar to my argument in Chapter 1 that *Gaff Topsails* figures Tomas Croft, the original Newfoundlander, as both European and indigenous to the Newfoundland wilderness.

Turner claims that the American man owes his “striking characteristics” to the frontier: “that coarseness and strength combined with acuteness and inquisitiveness, that practical, inventive turn of mind, quick to find expedients, that masterful grasp of material things, lacking in the artistic but powerful to effect great ends, that restless,

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<sup>104</sup> As I state in my Introduction, there are many problems with Turner’s thesis. Yet his argument remains important to the mythology surrounding the frontier, especially as he was the one to openly state that the frontier has closed—it is this “loss” that eventually inspired the “back-to-nature” movement that I discuss elsewhere in this chapter.

nervous energy, that dominant individualism” (23). He rejects European civilization, as his description of the moccasin worn by the frontier man connects this man to the land’s Indigenous peoples, albeit in a fetishistic way (much like Rousseau’s “noble savage”).<sup>105</sup> Yet, this rejection is not solely about cultural appropriation: it is also about refusing to become emasculated by the industrialized world. Recalling Kolodny’s study of the way land/nature has often been figured as feminine, which I introduced in Chapter 1, Turner similarly suggests that the “west [the wilderness] was a woman”: “European men ... were lodged in the American wilderness, and this great American west took them to her bosom, taught them a new way of looking upon the common man” (206). Through their ability to penetrate and conquer the wilderness, American men were able to regenerate their masculine identities.

The understandings of masculinity that Dummit, Peiss, and Turner outline as being prominent at the end of the nineteenth century are still influential today, over a hundred years later. Writer Peter Schmitt argues that another anti-civilization movement coloured the late twentieth century. In particular, Schmitt notes how a widespread feeling of unease rose amongst the business and professional classes in both Europe and North America in the 1980s and 1990s. There was a fear amongst men of becoming effete, of losing vitality and manhood. Writers such as Robert Bly, whose opinions on fatherhood I

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<sup>105</sup> In *The Myth of the Noble Savage*, Ter Ellingson writes that Rousseau is regarded by many scholars as “the most effective agent” (2) of the promotion of the Noble Savage; even encyclopedias and dictionaries associate Rousseau with the term. However, Ellingson also points out that, “although anthropologists have generally tended to accept the legend of Rousseau’s connection with the Noble Savage more or less on faith” (3), this is a “myth” (4), and he instead attributes the term to John Dryden, noting that its earliest occurrence comes from Dryden’s seventeenth-century drama, *The Conquest of Granada by the Spaniards*.

refer to in Chapter 1, offer various “solutions.”<sup>106</sup> For example, in *Iron John* (1990,) Bly promotes the undertaking of wilderness quests as a way of ensuring that boys do not become “soft men” (2-3).<sup>107</sup> Bly encourages men to spend time away from women, in an environment that will test their strength and endurance. Books like Bly’s—both fictional and nonfictional—became popular during the closing decade of the twentieth century as many men’s-rights activists encouraged and promoted similar activities as a way of escaping what Kimmel calls “the fears of feminization” (*History* 66).<sup>108</sup>

I apply these American theories of masculinity to Newfoundland fiction partly because Newfoundland and America have a close historical relationship that encourages this type of reading.<sup>109</sup> Specifically, Gerald Pocius argues that:

[at] the beginning of the twentieth century, Americans increasingly felt that their frontier had vanished, that no longer were there vast unconquered spaces in their own country left to explore. ... With increasing urbanization and

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<sup>106</sup> Judith Kegan Gardiner argues that “Bly’s views have been widely criticized as ahistorical, inaccurate, ethnocentric, racist, and sexist” (102). She looks at what critics, such as Connell and Kimmel, have said about Bly’s text: “Connell attacks his lack of reliable evidence ... and his stereotyped thinking while Kimmel sees Bly’s quest for ‘deep’ masculinity as ‘developmentally atavistic’” (102).

<sup>107</sup> Bly writes that, during the sixties, “men began to notice what was called their feminine side” (2). For Bly, this recognition was accompanied by a “sense that there [was] something wrong” (2), that man will suffer great “anguish” (6) until he embraces his inner “primitive being” (6).

<sup>108</sup> A similar text from earlier in the century is Robert Baden-Powell’s *Scouting for Boys* (1908), a manual for self-instruction, which covers topics such as observation, tracking, and woodcraft skills, as well as self-discipline and self-improvement. See Lionel Tiger’s *The Decline of Males: The First Look at an Unexpected New World for Men and Women* (2000) for another contemporary example.

<sup>109</sup> Journalist Richard Gwyn makes the argument that, in the first half of the twentieth century, “Newfoundland’s ties with the United States were far stronger and far more affectionate than those with Canada” (152), drawing attention to the thousands of Newfoundlanders that emigrated to the Boston states in the twentieth century, and to the “thousands of Newfoundland girls [who] had married American servicemen” (152) during the Second World War. For more, see also Karl M. Earle’s “Cousins of a Kind: The Newfoundland and Labrador Relationship with the United States” (1998).

industrialization...Americans more and more turned to the primitive for inspiration, be it primitive man or primitive land ... It was not long before Americans realized that while their wilderness was becoming increasingly endangered, Newfoundland had plenty to spare. (49-50).

Pocius goes on to define “the wilderness” as a space connected to nature and “free from social ills” (67). He notes that Americans, and eventually others, viewed the Newfoundlander as someone who was “hardy” (68) enough to live in such a “raw” (65) place. Pocius is quick to point out that, although he does not view this as an accurate portrait of outport Newfoundland or the average Newfoundlander, it remains an image that many believe to be true. Perhaps more importantly, it is an image that, he argues, many Newfoundland writers promoted, mainly for the purposes of tourism,<sup>110</sup> in the early twentieth century.<sup>111</sup> These connections encourage an analysis of frontier rhetoric in Newfoundland fiction.

The relationship between the United States and Newfoundland that I outline above also explains, in part, the version of Newfoundland that American author Proulx presents in *The Shipping News*. *The Shipping News* openly criticizes the influence of technological and industrial advancements. The novel addresses the threatening effects of modernity—namely, the fear of men becoming effete—in many ways, including by endorsing prescribed gender roles and honouring patrilineality. Perhaps most importantly,

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<sup>110</sup> It is certainly ironic that the Romantic construction of Newfoundland expressed in the novels I study is itself a modern (and thus capitalist) invention.

<sup>111</sup> Pocius notes that there is a history of “Newfoundland writers [promoting] myths about the locals, pointing out ... material heritage” (67) often for the sake of attracting tourists. Other writers, however, “were sometimes disturbed” (68) by this “romantic image of the noble Newfoundlander” (68).

the novel follows its protagonist as he regains his manhood after moving from the United States to rural Newfoundland; Proulx uses the Newfoundland outpost as a “new frontier” for late-twentieth-century American men.

As I mention in my Introduction, *The Shipping News* is noteworthy in that it is written by an American—an “outsider”—and received much criticism in Newfoundland when it was first published. Tracy Whalen, for example, argues that Newfoundlanders’ readings of *The Shipping News* have been of the “corrective sort” (“Camping” 51), pointing to “the limited status of Annie Proulx’s vision or offering alternative representations of Newfoundland” (51). Interestingly, other novels enacting similar tropes, including *Minister Without Portfolio* and *Sweetland*, have not received comparable critiques. This could certainly be the result of ethnocentrism: Newfoundlanders are likely to reject Proulx’s outsider representation of their culture. However, it could also signify the shifting attitudes of Newfoundlanders in recent years. Rapid changes on the island have encouraged them to embrace the past, much as those supporters of the cultural renaissance did in the 1960s and 1970s.

I thus use *The Shipping News* to introduce themes that feature widely in novels published by Newfoundlanders during the following decade. *Sweetland* and *Minister Without Portfolio* also emphasize the outpost, not only as the fundamental space for the maintenance of Newfoundland’s authentic identity, but as the most effective space for proving masculinity. *Minister Without Portfolio* highlights the Newfoundland outpost as a necessary space for the male figure who has lost his sense of identity and control, allowing him to recuperate his patriarchal birthright—something that was lost, the novel



maintains, in urban centres outside of Newfoundland. Similarly, with the death of its eponymous character, *Sweetland* suggests that the potential for such masculine identification is no longer possible, as the space that once sustained this identity ceases to exist entirely. This novel provides a cautionary tale of what could happen if Newfoundland men are not vigilant in preserving their homes and traditions.

### **Masculine Transformation in *The Shipping News***

*The Shipping News* imagines Newfoundland as still untouched by globalization—or at least, as actively resisting its influence. Consequently, the protagonist, Quoye, transforms from a passive, emasculated American consumer to a rugged and confident Newfoundland producer, proving the belief that American men can find their manhood in Newfoundland. In addition to Quoye’s physical and psychological transformations, the novel positions heteronormative romantic relationships and homosocial bonding as necessary for the development of ideal Newfoundland masculinity. Other characters—such as Quoye’s love interest, Wavey; his boss, Jack Buggit; his coworker, Nutbeem; and his children, Bunny and Sunshine—are important primarily for how they help Quoye reach his masculine potential.

Quoye’s physical appearance is important throughout *The Shipping News*. The novel uses his physical body as a signifier of his emotional and mental state. The changes his body undergoes allow the reader to witness his growth. From being “buried under a casement of flesh” (25) as an ineffectual teenager living in Brooklyn, to living as a “damp loaf” (25) of a man in Mockingburg, New York (a city the text describes as “bedraggled”

(10) and “in its third death” (10), much like Quoyale is at the time), Quoyale finally manages to shed these layers, physically and figuratively, once he moves to an outpost in Newfoundland.

*The Shipping News* initially describes Quoyale’s appearance by revealing the treatment he receives from his father and brother, emphasizing the importance of homosocial (and especially paternal) recognition and approval. Quoyale’s brother calls him “Lardass” (16), “Ugly Pig” (16), and “Greasebag” (16), while his father calls him a “lout” (16), mocking him for his ostensibly abnormal height. The narrator, seemingly in agreement with Quoyale’s family’s opinions, tells the reader that this ridicule “all stemmed from Quoyale’s chief failure, a failure of a normal appearance” (16). The text’s emphasis on Quoyale’s size is ultimately hypocritical: though the implication here is that the father and brother are cruel, the novel also uses Quoyale’s eventual transformation into someone physically strong to suggest that there is something deficient about his body in New York. Scholars within the broad field of critical obesity studies generally agree that “fatness is not just a physical state, but is often used as evidence of a character defect” (Schur 160). In particular, fatness has often been linked to effeminacy (Bruch), and Julia McCrossin points out how many believe that “the materiality of fat sculpts feminine curves onto many fat men” (245). Quoyale being overweight therefore also signals his initial effeminacy to the reader.

Even the first chapter’s epigraph, taken from Clifford Warren Ashley’s *The Ashley Book of Knots*, coyly mocks Quoyale, as it suggests that he has been named after a “coil of rope” (15). The description used to elaborate this definition states: “a Flemish

flake is a spiral coil of one layer only. It is made on deck, so that it may be walked on if necessary” (15). Quoye, the reader soon learns, is a character who is often walked on, despite his size. He is all but invisible, a pushover to everyone he meets. The reader is told that Quoye merely “survived [his] childhood” (15) and spent his time in university “camouflag[ing] torment with smiles and silences” (15). He merely “stumble[s]” (1) through his twenties, and endures his thirties, never feeling comfortable or at ease with himself.

Quoye does not feel like he belongs with his family, and even suspects he may be adopted. This changes when he sees a photo of his ancestors, namely his grandparents and uncles. The narrator states that “Quoye recognized himself in their hair, their legs and arms” (17). Even from the first few pages of the text, the narrator is ensuring that the reader recognizes how Quoye *belongs* to Newfoundland, physically, spiritually, and mentally. Though he does not “fit in” with his immediate family, those living in America, the novel offers hope that he can develop an identity based on his ancestral homeland; and, as I argue below, this hope is eventually realised.

On this remote island, Quoye must also rely on his physical strength to get to work. He is no longer able to depend on his car for transportation, but instead must either walk or operate a boat, a method of travel that the book consistently reminds the reader is physically demanding and often treacherous. For instance, Quoye’s experiences with his boat provide the reader with an overt example of his ability to conquer the Newfoundland wilderness. Early in the novel, Quoye argues with his aunt when she tells him he should get a boat: “I don’t know anything about boats. They are expensive. They are

uncomfortable. They are dangerous” (73). Later, however, after his first solo trip, Quoyale asks himself: “Why had he feared boats?” (109). Learning how to captain his own vessel and survive near drowning becomes one of Quoyale’s first signs of masculine progress.

After Quoyale relocates to Newfoundland, his immense size becomes useful, and as he works, he sheds some of the feminine “lard,” replacing it with more masculine muscle. Historian Sean Cadigan states that, “in folk tradition and popular culture, the dangers of the seal hunt fostered an image of the sealer as a rugged individual, a Viking of the ice, the son of hardy fishers, who battled the elements to wrest a livelihood in the form of the seal pelts and fat taken in the hunt” (*Death* ix). It is these qualities—ruggedness, warrior-like strength, survival skills—that become attached to Quoyale’s body.<sup>112</sup> At the end of the novel, Quoyale looks at himself, naked, in a mirror:

Saw he was immense. The bull neck, the great jaw and heavy cheek slabs  
stubbled with coppery bristles. The yellowish freckles. Full shoulders and  
powerful arms, the hands as hairy as a werewolf’s. Damp fur on the chest, down  
to the swelling belly. Bulky genitals ... Thighs, legs like tree stumps. Yet the  
effect was more of strength than obesity. He guessed he was at some prime  
physical point. Middle age not too far ahead, but it didn’t frighten him. It was

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<sup>112</sup> In Chapter 3, the narrator describes the deaths of Quoyale’s parents, “first the father, diagnosed with liver cancer” (33) and then, “a month later a tumor fastened in the mother’s brain like a burr” (33). The narrator states that “the father blamed the power station. Two hundred yards from their house sizzling wires, thick as eels, came down from northern towers” (33). By having his parents’ deaths relate to their modern lifestyle, the novel suggests that these deaths could have been avoided if not for forces of industrialization and modernization.

harder to count his errors now ... He pulled on the grey nightshirt ... [and] a bolt of joy passed through him. (354) <sup>113</sup>

Quoyle's transformation is more than just physical, however. Consider, for example, the vastly different way that the novel describes Quoyle in the first chapter: "Head shaped like a crenshaw, no neck ... Features as bunched as kissed fingertips. ... The monstrous chin, a freakish shelf jutting from the lower face" (2). This description of his jaw, in particular, is significant: first a "freakish shelf," it is later simply described by the narrator as "great." We know it is not possible that his jaw has changed shape; it is Quoyle's (and the text's) opinion that has changed. In Newfoundland, Quoyle has become a new man, both physically and psychologically.

Notably, this description of Quoyle's "jutting" jaw gestures towards race, and notions of indigeneity. In the eighteenth century, many racial theorists—including Petrus Camper—described what they called the "prognathous," a forward-jutting jaw, as somehow inferior to the "orthognathous," the non-projecting jaw that was associated with white people. Historian Londa Schieberger notes that this figure, commonly known as "Camper's Angle," became

the central visual icon of all subsequent racism: a hierarchy of skulls passing progressively from lowliest ape to negro to loftiest Greek. As a primary

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<sup>113</sup> Paul Chafe argues that Proulx attempts "to create common characteristics amongst her Newfoundlanders—most of the local men 'ran to large jaws, no necks, sandy hair and barrel chests'" (*Only* 173). In this physical description, Quoyle firmly establishes his place among the other male Newfoundlanders.

instrument of racism in the nineteenth century, the facial line became the most frequent means of explaining the gradation of species (qtd. in Ewen, 121).

Proulx's description of Quoye therefore draws on a long tradition of racial profiling.

Proulx invokes images of the "native" or the "primitive" to imply that Newfoundlanders are somehow their own race: they are indigenous to Newfoundland, and Quoye is undoubtedly one of them, based largely on his physique.

Although Quoye is able to achieve a more desirable masculine identity in outport Newfoundland, Quoye's boss, Jack Buggit, worries that Newfoundland is slowly losing its ability to inspire such transformation. In a lengthy monologue, former fisherman Jack divides life on the island into two phases: the first, a "lawless" (81), wild one in which a man could do as he pleased; and the second, a Newfoundland regulated and controlled by Smallwood's government, and industrialized to the point where men are powerless. He proclaims:

It was a hard life, but it had the satisfaction. But it was hard. Terrible hard in them old days. You'll hear stories would turn your hair blue overnight ... There was some wild, lawless places, a man did what he wanted. ... But things changed. When the damn place give up on the hard times and swapped 'em in for Confederation with Canada what did we get? Slow and sure we got government. Oh yar, Joey Smallwood said, 'Boys, pull up your boats, burn your flakes, and forget the fishery; there will be two jobs for every man in Newfoundland.' (81)

Buggit describes these actions as the “Industrialization of Newfoundland” (83), and expresses his belief that modernity—including advances in technology and changes in politics—is threatening to take away the satisfaction that life in outport Newfoundland can provide.

Jack is the novel’s symbol of the “real” Newfoundland man, one who can fish, cut wood, and “throw hides in a vat all day long” (80). Jack is Quoye’s model of ideal masculinity. The novel therefore encourages the reader to agree with Jack’s version of events. Furthermore, Jack’s death and subsequent resurrection near the end of the novel are highly symbolic. Despite appearing to drown while fishing, Jack wakes up during his funeral, days later. This suggests to the reader that the old way of life for Newfoundlanders is merely lying dormant, and waiting to be revived.

Other characters reinforce how it is only rural, isolated Newfoundland that creates real men—those who are physically strong, emotionally tough, and heteronormatively virile. Quoye’s fellow reporter, Nutbeem, initially tells Quoye that “[in] eight months, [he hasn’t] exchanged a civilized word with anybody” (110). However, after hosting a “men only” party—and stoically accepting the drunken destruction of his boat—Nutbeem happily becomes a “true” Newfoundlander. The narrator states that, at this party,

Quoye began to enjoy himself in a savage ... way.<sup>114</sup> ... He had only been to two or three parties in his adult life, and never one where all the guests were men. Ordinary parties, he thought, were subtle games of sexual and social badminton;

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<sup>114</sup> The use of “savage” here should refer readers back to Quoye’s “savage” jaw.

this was something very different. There was a mood of rough excitement that had more in common, he thought, with a parking-lot fight. (277)

Homosocial bonding, according to Bly, Tiger, and Baden-Powell, is necessary for masculine development, and Nutbeem's party epitomizes the type of event required. The next morning, Nutbeem states that there is "no use crying in my beer" (291), telling the other men that what happened to his boat was "for the best" (291). Having planned to leave the outport community before holding this party, Nutbeem decides to stay; he has proven to both the community and himself that he deserves to be there. Moreover, that before coming to Newfoundland Quoye never attended a party "where all the guests were men" (277) emphasizes this location as an ideal space for homosocial bonding. The text suggests that urban areas cannot provide the kind of masculine interaction required for men to satisfy the requirements of outport masculinity.

The narrator has Quoye openly acknowledge that his life in New York was unsuccessful because he was not deserving of love. However, after Quoye symbolically makes love to the land (towards the end of the novel, he presses "his groin against the barrens as if he were in union with the earth" (218))<sup>115</sup> and has consummated his relationship with Wavey, we learn that he has changed his mind:

Quoye was not going back to New York ... [If] life was an arc of light that began in darkness, ended in darkness, the first part of his life had happened in ordinary glare. Here it was as though he had found a polarized lens that deepened and

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<sup>115</sup> This moment should remind the reader of the scene in *Gaff Topsails* where Tomas Croft "bursts out" and spreads his seed across the barren coast of Newfoundland.



intensified all seen through it. Thought of his stupid self in Mockingburg, taking whatever came at him. No wonder love had shot him through the heart and lungs, caused internal bleeding. (264)

In Newfoundland, Quoyale becomes the object of Wavey's affection and the novel embraces the marriage plot, providing both the characters and the readers with an ostensibly satisfying, if clichéd, heteronormative finale. It is also in Newfoundland that Quoyale becomes a more effective father. Early in the novel, he lets his daughters verbally abuse him (54), but, by the end of the text, the girls have become polite and obedient (341, 358) as a result of Quoyale's newly assertive personality.<sup>116</sup> Alongside his physical transformation, his newfound homosocial bonds, and his embracing of the "traditional" culture of Newfoundland, Quoyale thus fulfils many of the requirements of the ideal Newfoundland man.

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<sup>116</sup> In "Fathers Who Care: Alternative Father Figures in E. Annie Proulx's *The Shipping News* and Jonathan Franzen's *The Corrections*," Teresa Requena-Pelegrí argues that *The Shipping News* "depicts a father whose most salient feature about the relationship with his children is one of emotional involvement and care" (116); she argues that this separates him from fathers of the past, who felt it was not "their place" to take care of children. I submit that Quoyale's relationship with Bunny and Sunshine is, conversely, notable for the anxiety it inspires in Quoyale. Furthermore, although Quoyale's love for his children may be undeniable, this should not mark his form of fatherhood, or his masculinity, as "alternate." As the novels of Chapter 1 emphasize, patrilineal connections support a hegemonic form of masculinity in that they prove a man's virility and ensure that his mythology will be passed down to future generations. Moreover, the reader is unable to know whether or not Quoyale would have taken such an active role in child rearing if the girls' mother, Petal, had not abandoned them at birth.

### **Manhood in the Newfoundland Outport: *Minister Without Portfolio***

Like *The Shipping News*, Michael Winter's most recent novel, *Minister Without Portfolio* (2013), embraces what Adrian Fowler calls the myth of the old outport. According to this myth, which I briefly mention in my Introduction, the "real" Newfoundland includes only those parts of the province which are remote from cities and towns. Only in these areas can one experience a culture untouched by globalization. In *Minister Without Portfolio*, the outport specifically becomes the necessary space for the struggling male protagonist to renew his masculine identity. In this way, the novel conflates the island's national identity with male identity, suggesting that both are only able to flourish when based in rural areas.

Critics, such as Wyile and Mathews, have argued that Michael Winter is a Newfoundland writer who typically resists promoting the outport and the hardy Newfoundland man in his fiction. Michael Winter's oeuvre has, in fact, been widely described as "contemporary postmodern art" (Armstrong 37), literature that "playfully redraws the borders of fiction and reality" (37). He is an author whose work "reflects a culturally and stylistically sophisticated, consciously global sensibility that constitutes in itself a substantial rejoinder to the caricature of the East Coast as rural, parochial, and culturally rudimentary" (Wyile, *Anne* 239).

Most of Winter's work does satisfy these descriptions. His fictional worlds are "urban" and "cosmopolitan" (Wyile, *Anne* 93), and are "built around characters working in the service and cultural industries" (93). Three of Winter's novels, *This All Happened* (which I examine in Chapter 4), *One Last Good Look*, and *The Architects are Here*,

follow the same protagonist, Gabriel English, a character who lives only in cities, chiefly those outside of Newfoundland. *The Death of Donna Whalen* is based on a crime that happened in St. John's in the 1990s. Finally, Winter's foray into historiographic metafiction, *The Big Why*, actively works to deconstruct any romantic ideas one might have about Newfoundland's past. It follows the disappointing experiences of a fictionalized Rockwell Kent, an American painter who was ordered to leave Newfoundland after living there for only a year in the early twentieth century.<sup>117</sup>

However, *Minister Without Portfolio*, Winter's most recent novel, cannot be described as urban or subversive, and for this and other reasons it is fascinating. Through its romanticization of the outport, *Minister Without Portfolio* embraces the very stereotypes that critics argue Winter's work normally deconstructs.<sup>118</sup> In particular, it views the Newfoundland outport as a place for proving manhood. Therefore, I argue that Winter's novel is, in part, a response to the "crisis of masculinity" that I perceive in contemporary Newfoundland; his novel returns to these themes and tropes in order to resist the modern emasculation of man, and also, in line with the goals of the cultural renaissance, to defend Newfoundland's historical culture. Because of this pronounced thematic shift, *Minister Without Portfolio* epitomizes the cultural revival reprise that I put forward in my Introduction.

*Minister Without Portfolio* is, at its core, a love letter to outport Newfoundland.

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<sup>117</sup> Herb Wylie writes that *The Big Why* "discourages a dewy-eyed view of the fishing and sealing culture of bygone days" (Anne 206).

<sup>118</sup> Reviewers of *Minister Without Portfolio* note how the novel analyzes the "hidden fallout of war" (Trevelyan) or shows a character struggling with an "existential crisis" (Collison). Although these commentators are right to look at the "disintegration and rebirth" (Gillis) of protagonist Henry Hayward, many elements are left out of their considerations, including gender dynamics.

Protagonist Henry can only relinquish his guilt, and gain a more thorough understanding of himself as a man, when he moves to the aptly named Renew. This rural community—a place which the narrator overtly calls a “frontier” (188)—is located about an hour outside of St. John’s. The novel follows Henry after he is dumped by his girlfriend, Nora, with whom he lives in St. John’s. Desperate to escape from the city that he now associates with his broken heart, Henry first moves to Kabul, Afghanistan, to work as a contractor servicing the Canadian Armed Forces; he later moves to Alberta, where he works as a heavy equipment operator. In Afghanistan, Henry witnesses (and is partly responsible for) the death of his friend, soldier Patrick “Tender” Morris; in Alberta, he similarly witnesses (and is wholly responsible for) a devastating accident that leaves one of his co-workers with two broken legs. Finally, Henry decides to move to Renew, believing that in the outpost, he can live a less destructive, and somehow more authentic, life.

In Renew, Henry learns to provide for himself, and take care of his neighbours, a tightknit group he refers to as “his hundred people” (129). While there, he becomes intimate with Tender’s former fiancée, Martha, and the two eventually decide to live together in the old house that Henry is rebuilding. Henry escapes from the influence of industry, war, and consumerism, all elements of globalization that the novel implicitly denounces, while becoming an active member of a community.<sup>119</sup> Finally, and perhaps most importantly, he, much like Michael in Bowdring’s *The Strangers’ Gallery*, becomes a surrogate father to a child. He therefore satisfies all of the goals of ideal Newfoundland

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<sup>119</sup> For example, Henry states that he is “disappointed” (93) that a lighthouse has become automated.

masculinity that the text establishes: physical competence and strength, fatherhood, a rejection of technology and other modern conveniences, and an ability to conquer the natural world.

*Minister Without Portfolio* brings together many significant moments of Newfoundland's history and attributes them to one place to suggest that it is every Newfoundland outport's legacy to be rooted in the past. Echoing a similar chapter of *Gaff Topsails*, which I discuss in Chapter 1, Part 2 of *Minister Without Portfolio* begins by outlining the history of Renews:

Renews was an old place ... [The] locals speak of the Mayflower coming into port in 1620 to take on fresh water and slaughter animals before continuing on to Plymouth ... [The] pirate Peter Easton operated from here and buried his treasure beneath ... peculiar rocks. The native Beothuck were driven inland early on, terrified of the European destruction. The masterless men followed, living illegally along the riverbanks. (160)

Although some of these events *could* have occurred in this particular community,<sup>120</sup> what is more important is how this section ties Renews' past to Newfoundland's past more broadly, situating it as a microcosm for the island. It reminds the reader of the island's rich, valuable history, one that Newfoundlanders should always strive to remember.

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<sup>120</sup> The Mayflower did stop in Newfoundland in 1620, but there is no evidence that it docked in Renews. Likewise, although the pirate, Peter Easton, spent time in Newfoundland, there is no record of him specifically spending time in Renews; historians have evidence that he was in Harbour Grace and Ferryland, but not Renews, which is farther south (E. Hunt). There is no evidence that the Masterless Men, a legendary group of outlaws, actually existed.

In this same chapter, the novel goes on to argue that any technological, industrial, or political advances strip the island of its sense of authenticity. Winter's third-person narrator claims that "the invention of refrigeration and the majority vote for confederation with Canada tore away any sustainable fishing practice that made sense to a small community" (161) causing Newfoundland to become "the only independent country in the history of the world to voluntarily give up self-rule" (161). Echoing the sentiments and style of Miles Harnett in *The Strangers' Gallery*, the narrator adds a sharp "damn you England and to hell with you Canadian wolf" (161). These statements condemn changes in industry (the advent of refrigeration) and politics (Confederation). Many of the novels I study in this dissertation, including *Minister Without Portfolio*, view such a willing concession of power as emasculating, and they have their characters return to spaces that are seemingly beyond the purview of national control. Once free from the urban spaces that remind them of their impotent condition, they are able to become the men that they should be.<sup>121</sup> Winter's novel therefore condemns those forces of society that, it contends, both strip Newfoundland of its autonomy and deny men their experience of "real" masculinity.

Near the beginning of *Minister Without Portfolio*, the narrator states that "Henry had visited Renew's a few times, but living in a small place was not something that had appealed to him" (12). Instead, Henry "appreciate[s] a city giving you a movie to watch, rather than having to constantly make your own movie" (13). Rural areas are strictly "for excursions" (13), not daily living, and Henry conversely values the modern conveniences

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<sup>121</sup> It is ironic that the majority of people from St. John's voted against Confederation with Canada.

that a city provides. When Tender shares his plan to “fix up” the old family home in Renew with his girlfriend, Martha, Henry hears something more: he “listen[s] to [Tender] betray a spirit of making a family and owning something old, of cherishing the past and digging your feet into soil that other generations had also been digging in” (38). Henry admits that he is nervous about “commitment” (38), asking himself (not irrelevantly) “was he a strong enough man to pull it off” (38). Although Henry decides at this time that he has “none of this attachment to the past or to old things” (38), his attitude gradually begins to change.

After months of an unsatisfying existence, living outside of Newfoundland, Henry decides to buy the late Tender’s house, thus making the decision to move to the outport, “own something old,” “cherish the past,” and “dig in” his feet.<sup>122</sup> This project, which occupies the majority of the text, becomes an important symbol for Henry’s own spiritual renovation. The narrator describes Henry’s actions throughout the novel: “Henry stripped the house to the studs, then wired and insulated it and stapled in a six-millimetre vapour barrier” (135). He climbs onto the roof and “[tears] off the old felt ... [and rams] the shovel under the head of a nail” (218). He even makes his own toilet: “He drew a plan and cut the board with a hand saw and screwed the boards together and recessed the front panel so that it angled in as it fell to the floor” (178). Henry often gets help from his neighbours and friends, and works with them to construct his home. Instead of visiting

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<sup>122</sup> Henry’s actions are also likely inspired by guilt: he feels responsible for Tender’s death in Afghanistan and feels like he is, in part, finishing what Tender started.

large building supply stores, Henry buys from the local small hardware store. When he describes living in Renews, he lists various activities that are all completed by hand:

There were many ways for a family to stitch together a living in Renews and a substinence living included moose-hunting and turre-shooting and rabbit-snaring and berry-picking and troutng and the planting of root vegetables and the cutting of firewood and the selling of rails and posts for fences by way of a handpainted sign in your driveway (161).

Henry keenly appreciates this style of living.

As he builds his home, Henry becomes more attached to the land: “Henry stepped down into the cellar that pointed out to sea. My secret place, Henry said aloud—so it wasn’t a secret that he kept from the land. He wanted the land to know” (137).

Psychologists Leila Scannell and Robert Gifford state that “place attachment [is] the bonding that occurs between individuals and their meaningful environments” (1). They argue that “person-place bonds have become fragile as globalization, increased mobility, and encroaching environmental problems threaten the existence of, and our connections to, places important to us” (1). *Minister Without Portfolio* actively works against this threat, showing how Henry’s move to Renews creates these bonds and strengthens connections.

The narrator eventually informs the reader that, for Henry, “the past is making a comeback” (195). However, it is not so much that the past is “coming back” as Henry is making an overt effort to live his life without modern conveniences in an effort to feel more connected to the outport and its history. This return to the past presents



Newfoundland culture as cyclical: everything that existed in the past exists again in the present, as ideologies that were historically important become essential once again.<sup>123</sup> For example, everything that Henry owns or purchases to complement his home is both new and old. The text describes Henry's boat, left to him by Tender, as "brand new [but] built traditional" (240). Rick describes Henry's house as "more a thing from the past than a dwelling to be inhabited now" (241). The stove Henry and Martha buy is "old fashioned" (253) with "nothing ornate about it" (253), yet as they drive it home, the wind cleans out its firebox, leaving it "as though a junk of wood had never been burned in it" (254). Although they must purchase some things for their home, they make sure that whatever they buy is connected to the past, and therefore less associated with modern capitalism.

As I state above, Henry values the ability to resist certain modern ideologies in *Renews*. For example, when he digs up plants that he finds growing along the coast, planning to bring them back to his garden, he considers how:

he did not understand, truly, why he did this. Why didn't he just spend a hundred dollars at the gardening centre in the Goulds and get an instant backyard in easily transferable potted shrubs and perennials. Something, he knew, was happening to him (164).

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<sup>123</sup> James K. Hiller argues that "today's Newfoundland nationalism is haunted by the past and by dreams about an imagined world that has been lost – a world encapsulated in widely popular images of idealized outports complete with mummers and of an old St. John's where poles and wires have miraculously disappeared and every house is newly painted ... [The] role of culture, history and heritage ... become all the more important in cementing a sense of purpose, place and identity" (132).

Henry's change is a movement away from consumerism and materialism, often associated, as I argue earlier in this chapter, with femininity.<sup>124</sup> While digging up the plants, he considers how they were "the children of the children of the bushes and plants that used to service the families of Kingmans Cove" (164). Henry appreciates the plants for the way they join together generations and let him be a part of this history. It is while he is sourcing plants that he sees a strange, orange horse. When he meets Martha at the house later, she, too, has seen this horse, and Henry considers this a sign: "they had been waiting for an image or a conversation and the horse comment had made Henry take her hand and she agreed to climb the stairs" (165). Ultimately, this shared sighting of the horse leads to their lovemaking in the old house and Henry is thus rewarded for avoiding consumerist activity. If he had visited the gardening store instead, he and Martha never would have shared this moment. Thus, successful heteronormative sexuality becomes entangled with living in a rural area and experiencing nature.

We receive other signs of Henry's spiritual transformation. For example, when ending their relationship, Nora tells Henry that "she wanted to live a dangerous life" (4). It is important that Henry did not personally believe he needed to live a dangerous life, but rather, was encouraged to do so by a woman. Nora thus becomes an Eve-like figure, one who causes a "fall" from grace. After listening to Nora, Henry finds himself removed from the "Eden" of Newfoundland. The second time this phrase—"live a dangerous life"—appears is after his friend, John, tells Henry about the job opportunity in Kabul,

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<sup>124</sup> See Greig and Martino, and Peiss.

working for Rick Tobin and his company, who take care of water, wiring, and waste management for the overseas Canadian Armed Forces. Significantly, the phrase leads into a discussion of Rick's wife, Colleen, who is likely having an affair with her neighbour in *Renews*. The reader is told that Rick is a brilliant business man, but he is frequently away from home, and that Colleen has "taken up" (15) with "that spiritual American" (15), Noyce, who lives in the lighthouse, a dwelling that is not only an obvious phallic symbol, but is connected to Newfoundland's fishing history. Henry considers how:

You sign on for a year with one trip home and four-day stints touching down in the United Arab Emirates. Health, dental, a seven-hundred-thousand-dollar insurance policy ... Security provided by her majesty's government. Tender Morris will take care of us.

Live a dangerous life. The one unsmooth element in the story of Rick's life around the bay was the rumour that his wife was having an affair ... On financial matters Rick has life solved and he wanted to share that solution with his friends. (15)

Here, the text uses the phrase ironically, at least in hindsight. Henry feels compelled to take this job to show Nora that he can "live dangerously," yet the immediate connection of this type of work to a "cuckolded" man suggests that this job is not what Henry actually needs to prove his own masculinity. This moment can be read as a type of foreshadowing: Rick loses a piece of his own manhood through this job, as it forces him to abandon his wife for long periods of time, an activity that the text suggests leads to her

affair. *Minister Without Portfolio* suggests that a man's identity can be undermined by his decision to focus on making money abroad—and his decision to take a woman's advice.

Rick's experience also prophesies Henry's own loss of masculinity while working outside Newfoundland. During his time in Kabul, Henry's desire to live dangerously, while profiting from war, backfires, as his inexperience and fear lead to Tender's death. Henry's role in Afghanistan is not as a soldier, but as a subcontractor for the Canadian forces. When a man in Canada sees Henry in uniform and thanks him for his service, Henry feels like a "fraud" (103). Henry respects soldiers, and is all the more ashamed of his own role in Kabul. This moment highlights one of the main reasons Henry leaves the war in Afghanistan to return home: although war is typically considered one of the most masculine activities a man can engage in, Henry's role in this war is to make a profit. The novel distinguishes sharply between praiseworthy military service and shameful profiteering. When Henry decides to leave Afghanistan, it is not that he is choosing to leave the war, but rather that he is refusing to financially benefit from this conflict.

The final phase of Henry's change occurs after he falls into an incinerator, and is symbolically rendered as garbage—he moves from being a waste manager to being waste himself.<sup>125</sup> Many contemporary American novels, such as Don DeLillo's *Underworld* (1997) or Jonathan Franzen's *The Corrections* (2001), use literal waste as a metaphor for American society: they condemn waste as the inevitable by-product of a capitalist

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<sup>125</sup> In *The Ecocriticism Reader*, Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm write that "most ecocritical work shares a common motivation: the troubling awareness that we have reached the age of environmental limits, a time when the consequences of human actions are damaging the planet's basic life support systems" (xx). Waste is an overt symbol of the way that capitalism's excess is damaging the natural world.

culture.<sup>126</sup> Todd McGowan argues that the proliferation of waste in literature often corresponds to another dramatic change in the structure of society, “the turning away from the Other and toward narcissistic self-absorption” (124). When two men from the community help pull Henry out of the incinerator, he is both literally and figuratively saved from being waste:

They ran down to the incinerator ... They found a boulder and together the three of them knocked out two of the hinges [on the large iron doors] ... [They] swung wide the doors and peered in. A figure in motion. A shape running around ... The man who fell in. ... He ran out ... and kept running until the shoes fell off him ... Then he saw the men and resumed being a cared-for citizen. (224)

With this movement away from the “by-products” of “capitalist culture,” Henry symbolically leaves the world of consumerism behind and instead becomes a part of the idealized community of Renewals.

That night, at home, Henry sees a ghost standing on the stairs above him, “a girl in a white dress” (230) that “was not ... a real person” (230). Henry considers how:

his sense of the world was drifting away. He was not in a house now but some larger place, some fathomless atmosphere that was not of any time or location ... He phoned Martha and told her about the girl in the stairs. It felt like a reaction to

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<sup>126</sup> This theme exists in a substantially larger literary field. Some examples, from the nineteenth century to the recent past, include: Charles Dickens’s *Our Mutual Friend* (1865), Eugene O’Neill’s *The Hairy Ape* (1922), and David Hare’s *Behind the Beautiful Forevers* (2014). In all of these works there is an intimate link between waste and wealth, where the dump is frequently figured as a site of regeneration.

the incinerator. Somehow this small ghost ... was a retreating wave from the high tide of the incinerator. (230-1)

Here, Henry connects his sighting of the ghost to his near-death experience in the incinerator (and this moment also anticipates Sweetland's haunting). Literary critic Méira Cook argues that, in fiction, "ghosts materialize at moments of crisis, at the incurable break between a traditional past and an unstable present, between cultural loss and ethnic reinvention" (134). That Henry sees a ghost after escaping from the incinerator, symbolic of his movement away from capitalism, is significant: as a "carrier of tradition" (134) the ghost signifies the importance of the past, showing that certain social bonds have relaxed.

This "girl in a white dress" also symbolizes a particular iteration of the past: in this book, she is the "Angel in the House," a passive, purely domestic female figure. Taken from the name of Coventry Patmore's poem, published in 1854, the "Angel in the House" symbolized the "perfect woman" in middle-class British society at that time. For literary critic Sarah Schoch, the poem suggests that, "without a female subject over whom to wield his masculine power" (13) the male will lose his innate sense of superiority and dominance, "upon which his masculine identity constitutes itself" (13). Here, Henry returns to a home where a feminine figure from the past is waiting to welcome him, the masculine subject, back to his domain.

As I state above, the house is an obvious metaphor for Henry's transformation: as the house is rebuilt, or renewed, so is Henry. As something that was once old and crumbling is restored, in an effort to celebrate and maintain history, Henry is also able to develop a sense of self that was earlier denied him. The text suggests that the same is true

for Newfoundland: that it is only through an embracing of the outport, with all its history and traditions, and a rejection of modernity that the island can maintain its unique identity. Ultimately, this way of thinking promotes a romantic ideology, where technological, economic, and political change is viewed as something negative and not progressive. Positioning the island's outports as an escape from modernity and consumerism, and a haven for tradition, ultimately establishes the island as a region where alternate expressions of manhood are not welcome. Any man who expresses his masculinity in a way that the text dismisses as inauthentic is led to fear being excluded from the community, just as the cosmopolitan businessman Rick Tobin is ultimately rejected. By implying that Newfoundland society will only succeed if it eschews anything urban or modern, the novel situates Newfoundland as a space where progressive or alternate masculinities are not always sustainable.

### **The Death of the Newfoundland Man in *Sweetland***

In *Minister Without Portfolio*, the male protagonist is shown repairing an old house. As he rebuilds this house, he also slowly rebuilds himself. This restoration reflects the novel's desire to show how important maintaining the outport is for contemporary cultural and personal identity. Yet, we see the opposite process in Crummey's *Sweetland*. Old houses are not rebuilt, but rather, abandoned.

We see evidence of this reversal in Crummey's own body of work, too. As I explore earlier in this thesis, Crummey's *Galore* (2009) suggests that the loss of certain elements of Newfoundland culture—from oral storytelling to the presence of

mythological father figures—needs to be stopped. The novel directly connects the island with prominent male characters, from Father Phelan to Judah, and finally Abel, whose dive into the ocean closes the cyclical path created by the text. Yet, while *Galore* is a celebration of the island's history, *Sweetland* is much less hopeful and much more elegiac. Written only a few years after *Galore*, *Sweetland* (2014) suggests that the end has come for Newfoundland, and the novel's exploration of both physical and metaphysical death provides a sort of epilogue to *Galore*, as the spectres Crummey conjures in that novel take solid form in *Sweetland*.

*Sweetland* is not subtle in its presentation of these themes. The structure has the narrative constantly move between the present and Moses's memories, revealing how Moses, much like Michael in *The Strangers' Gallery*, continues to live in the past. The novel uses Moses's death to reflect the ultimate death of the Newfoundland outport, and arguably the death of Newfoundland culture; an important element of this culture is the ideal form of Newfoundland masculinity. Like *Minister Without Portfolio*, *Sweetland* contrasts experiences of manhood inside and outside of Newfoundland, and juxtaposes the version of masculinity possessed by the younger generation with Moses's own, idealized, iteration.

Crummey's novel has an important cultural context. Earlier in this thesis I noted former Premier Joey Smallwood's plan to resettle approximately two hundred Newfoundland outport communities (equaling fifty thousand people) in the 1950s and 1960s. The Smallwood government wanted to ensure that all residents of the province had access to government services, and decided that reducing the number of small



communities and increasing larger centres would facilitate this. Perhaps more importantly, the government was also concerned with attracting more industries to the province, and believed that an urban population would best accomplish this goal. More than sixty years after the first centralization program began, resettlement continues, (Jones), still accompanied by controversy (Cadigan, *Newfoundland* 246).

Readers quickly learn that Sweetland the man depends on Sweetland the island, and Newfoundland's cultural identity depends on both. At the age of 69, Moses—who is a descendant of the Sweetland family from whom the village takes its name—still spends his days hunting and enjoying the wilderness that surrounds his hometown, often visiting with family and friends in the evenings. These activities mark Moses as the ideal Newfoundland man from the beginning of the novel. It is the eventual loss of these activities that *Sweetland* laments. The novel suggests that as the island is abandoned Moses loses the most important aspects of his personal identity. Unfortunately for Moses, his neighbours mostly turn against him—his friend, Duke, even tells him that “there’s some saying they’ll burn you out” (22)—as he remains one of three “hold outs” in the referendum for resettling the community.

In his lifetime, Sweetland experiences much economic and social change. We can trace this partly through his work history. As a middle-aged man, Sweetland worked as a lighthouse keeper, ensuring that his people were protected from danger. The light that he maintained served as a literal and metaphorical beacon, drawing attention to the island's humanity. However, over time the lighthouse became automated, and then eventually, as fewer people were travelling to and from the island, the light diminished altogether. The

lighthouse's trajectory foreshadows Moses own trajectory: industry and modernization eventually cause his "light," his existence, to be diminished. In Winter's *Minister Without Portfolio*, this outcome is reversed: Noyce, the American man with whom Colleen Tobin is allegedly having an affair, moves into a previously abandoned lighthouse and simultaneously brings life back into the community; he opens up the lighthouse for "spiritual gatherings," bringing together members of the community to practice, amongst other things, meditation. Thus, while *Minister Without Portfolio* insists that the outport can continue to prosper if the right efforts are made, *Sweetland* despairs of any such possibility.

The novel consists of many flashbacks, the majority of which reveal Sweetland's time living and working away from the island. Specifically, the second part of the novel moves from the present day to Moses's time working in Ontario, over four decades earlier. As young men, Moses and his friend, Duke, take jobs at a steel mill in Hamilton to earn some extra money. The narrator describes the factory:

The steel mill was a city unto itself. Massive coke ovens, storage tanks and elevators, engine rooms, stock houses the size of city churches, miles of train tracks and gas lines and elevated piping that criss-crossed the blackened acres. ... [The] unremitting noise of the place was a physical thing, hammering against them. ... Men darting among the machinery like rats, their faces grimed with soot. (251-2)

Following this depressing description of the "rat race" is a brief account of how the men worked "seventy hours a week" (252). The text states that these men "couldn't drink

enough in the off-hours to wash the taste of the mills from their mouths” (252) and the narrator compares working at the steel mill to “some evangelical’s vision of hell” (252). The novel thereby distinguishes between the hell of industrial Ontario and the paradise of rural Newfoundland, foreshadowing what awaits Moses in the future if he is forced to leave his outport home.

The physical and emotional oppression Moses and Duke experience in Ontario can be seen in the way that the grime consistently attaches to their faces, and the way that “the unremitting noise of the place was a physical thing, hammering against them” (252). This description of the grime is also important for the way that it reflects the history of racialized English and American working classes, as seen through tropes of race popular in the Victorian era.<sup>127</sup> For example, Charles Dickens’s description of Coketown in his book, *Hard Times* (1854), compares the colour of the various factories located therein—their red bricks caked in smoke and ashes—to the “unnatural red and black” (60) of the “painted face of a savage” (60).<sup>128</sup> Industrialization, Dickens’s work seems to suggest, transforms white working-class men into colonial subjects, as they are both literally and symbolically rendered “black” by their poor working conditions. *Sweetland* suggests the same outcome here: the grime on Moses face, resulting from working in a factory, obscures his whiteness; in Ontario, Moses is yet another colonial subject. In Newfoundland, however, Moses is able to be an independent, privileged white man. The

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<sup>127</sup> For more on this topic, see Anne McClintock’s *Imperial Leather* (1995) and William A. Cohen and Ryan Johnson’s *Filth: Dirt, Disgust, and Modern Life*.

<sup>128</sup> See also William Blake’s two chimney-sweeper poems in *The Songs of Innocence and of Experience* (1789) and Charles Kingsley’s *The Water-Babies* (1863) (where dirt, class, and race are all entangled, and one of the working-class characters is actually called ‘Grimes’).

juxtaposition of chapters highlights the way that forces of industrialization and economic change have finally reached Newfoundland: though, as a young man, Moses was eventually able to return to his home after so much time on the mainland, the end of *Sweetland* shows the reader that this home no longer exists.

Just as Part 2 uses flashbacks to divide the narrative between present-day events and Moses's experience in Ontario, Part 1 divides the narrative into present-day events and the past experience of a group of Sri Lankan refugees who were discovered off the coast of Sweetland in 1986.<sup>129</sup> As a result of this parallel structure, the novel suggests that the type of cultural displacement experienced by Moses equals that of those fleeing civil war in the 1980s. The discovery of refugees off the coast of Newfoundland is based on a true story. In an article for *Maclean's*, journalist Bruce Wallace writes that "most of the lifeboat passengers found drifting off the Newfoundland coast ... lived in constant fear of [the] increasingly indiscriminate violence by the Sri Lankan military" (n.p.) and so they left their homes, where their families lived for generations, in a desperate attempt to find safety. They needed to leave to escape torture from the Sri Lankan government, which was accusing innocent young men of conspiring with Tamil militants.<sup>130</sup>

Instead of focusing on the personal experiences of these refugees, however, the novel focuses on Sweetland's role in saving men. Moreover, with its parallel flashback structure, the novel uses this event to emphasize Moses's feelings of displacement in

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<sup>129</sup> In reality, this event occurred outside of St. Mary's, NL, not the fictional Sweetland (Boone, "Emotional").

<sup>130</sup> For more, see "Anti-Tamil Riots and the Political Crisis in Sri Lanka," by the Social Studies Circle of the Sri Lankan Worker-Peasant Institute.

Ontario. The novel makes this connection—between the Sri Lankan refugees and Moses—explicit when it labels Moses, and his friend, Duke, “economic refugees” (235), mourning the world “they’d abandoned, the squat saltboxes that housed three generations” (235). Moses and Duke miss the comforts of home, and lament the type of work they must undertake in Ontario.<sup>131</sup> However, they were not forced from their homes in fear of their lives. These flashbacks ultimately reveal the novel’s problematic engagement with race. By comparing Moses and Duke to the Sri Lankan refugees, *Sweetland* (like *The Shipping News*) suggests that Newfoundlanders are their own “race,” and that the displacement they feel as a result of industrial change somehow equals that felt by people of colour who have had to abandon their countries and families for safety.

These scenes also draw attention to the complex sociological relationship between masculinity and work. In *Men and Masculinities*, Chris Haywood and Martin Macan Ghaill suggest that “middle-class men “becom[e] sexually impotent” (26) as their ability to be “breadwinners” (26), or simply to be employed, decreases. However, both *Minister Without Portfolio* and *Sweetland* suggest that only certain *types* of male work contribute to successful masculinity (often marked by heterosexual achievement). *Sweetland* seems to agree that manual labour, or harsh, physical work, is what “makes a man.”<sup>132</sup> It is,

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<sup>131</sup> The type of work done in Ontario is greatly contrasted with these types of tasks performed in Newfoundland, such as fishing, chopping wood, and farming: instead of the artisanal nature of the work they do at home, the steel mill consists of “conveyor belts shifting pellets to the blast furnaces, coal cars shuttling from the battery to the ovens, sheets of heated strip steel rolling through rotating cylinders” (252). The workers do not feel like they are an important part of their work, but rather are distanced from the tasks they perform.

<sup>132</sup> Though we might not think of lighthouse keeping as particularly dangerous or demanding, a pamphlet published by the Ponce de Leon Inlet Light Station states that “being a lighthouse keeper was one of the hardest jobs [before automation]. Keepers worked long grueling hours and had to be willing to put their

however, work that takes place in a man's hometown, preferably in a rural setting, which provides the *greatest* sense of masculine identity. That is, when a man is working for himself, he is both manly and fulfilled; when he is working at an alienating factory, or profiting from war, he becomes depressed and dissatisfied; or, like Rick Tobin in *Minister Without Portfolio*, he loses his heterosexual partner.

The novel further dramatizes its disapproval of industrialization and, more specifically, Newfoundlanders being made to work outside of the island, with its depiction of Moses's accident. We are told that, while working at the mill in Ontario, the men often sneak into the "noisiest, most inhospitable crannies to pass a joint" (252). It is during one such break that Moses's clothing gets caught in "the contraption" (252) and he is "sucked into that vortex, his pants and underwear ripped clear of his body" (252), which is dragged along for only a few seconds before the alarm shuts down the machine (252). However, the accident leaves Moses with considerable damage to his genitals, which ultimately renders him infertile. This is an overt symbol of irrevocably damaged masculinity. Though the doctors assure Moses that he will be "perfectly capable of having sexual intercourse" (289) once his wounds have healed, he will never be able to father a child. Like *The Strangers' Gallery*, *Galore*, *Minister Without Portfolio*, and *Gaff Topsails*, *Sweetland* uses fatherhood as an important function of hegemonic masculine identity. If Moses is unable to father a child, he is unable to contribute to his island's successful flourishing in the future. Moses also refuses the final surgery that will help

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own lives in danger in order to keep others safe. They had to work in all kinds of weather...[and] could not call in sick...Lighthouse keepers were mechanics, construction workers, and sailors" ("A Lighthouse" n.p.).

with the scarring and discolouration of his face and neck; these scars become, in part, a visible manifestation of the problems with industrialization. If Moses had been able to remain at home, he would never have become injured. Thus, political and industrial changes essentially prevent him from living a full, masculine life. Moses, named for a patriarch, cannot become a father; he is literally castrated during his time working on the mainland.

As a result of Moses's sterility, he breaks off his engagement to his girlfriend, Effie. We are led to believe that Moses felt it would be cruel to deny Effie children and so he makes this sacrifice for her. Queenie's daughter, Sandra, says to Moses after meeting him at her mother's funeral: "It's a sin you never had youngsters of your own. ... You know what Mom used to say about you? She'd say, that's a good man going to waste, that is" (103). Apparently, the island's inhabitants, including its women, consider a man's inability (or refusal) to produce offspring "wasteful," as not fathering a child prevents the continuation of patrilineal tradition. The text laments the ending of such a prominent lineage. Significantly, the narrator describes Moses's great-nephew, Jesse, as "the last of Sweetland's blood" (84). Moses shares a great bond with Jesse, and the young boy's tragic death in the novel is what leads Moses to stop resisting the resettlement plan. Moses no longer feels as if he needs to prevent the loss of the community; with Jesse's death, he has already experienced a potentially even greater loss, as he faces, for the first time, the fact that his family – and the community which was named after it – will die

with him.<sup>133</sup> This is especially ironic, given the biblical origins of Moses name: instead of leading his people to the “promised land,” Moses’s people leave him, and their promised land, behind.

*Sweetland* includes a caricature of hypermasculinity—in the form of the brash and boorish Priddle brothers—which further delineates its understanding of ideal Newfoundland masculinity. The distinction between this caricature and Moses is important. After all, if not for his accident, Moses would be the model of perfect Newfoundland manhood (as evidenced by everything from his stoicism to his prowess with a fishing boat). Significantly, then, the novel’s characterization of the Priddle brothers serves to further heighten the authenticity of *Sweetland*’s masculine identity. Though they work in Alberta for most of the year, the brothers return home regularly, flush with cash and cocaine. The text implicitly and explicitly criticizes the Priddle brothers’ overt performances of hypermasculine behaviour; it suggests that there is such a thing as “the right way” to be masculine.

The Priddle brothers are Effie’s children, fathered by the man she marries after *Sweetland* ends their relationship; if *Sweetland* had not been injured in that factory in Ontario, he would have most likely married Effie himself, and these two men would never have been born. Readers can view Barry and Keith as demonic parodies of the unborn *Sweetland* sons. The men are quite literally a manifestation of changes wrought

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<sup>133</sup> The construction of a childless Moses as “waste” should also remind readers of how Henry, in *Minister Without Portfolio*, was also, temporarily, positioned as waste when he fell into the incinerator. Henry, however, was rescued from this experience. Moses, left alone on the island, no longer has a community to save him.



on the island, and their poor behaviour is a sort of omen of what these changes will continue to produce. Furthermore, the novel suggests the brothers are “feral” (55) because their father, Ned, neglected them after Effie’s death; they are therefore also victims of a failed paternal figure.

The novel also paints this portrait of contemporary manhood as the result of economic changes. If Keith and Barry Priddle had been able to remain in Newfoundland, instead of having to go to Alberta for months at a time to find work, then perhaps they would not have become such men:

They were hard men, the two of them...

Six years now they’d been working a see-saw contract in Fort McMurray, three or four weeks on the job, two weeks off to fly home and drink and smoke and snort all the money they’d made ... They settled on cocaine as their recreational drug of choice, and the manic high added a nasty flavor to their recklessness ...

[Everyone] was on edge when they came home. It was like setting a couple of wild dogs loose in a hotel room. (55-6)

This description of the Priddle brothers as violent, ignorant—almost animal-like—substance abusers echoes similar descriptions of male characters in novels by Joel Thomas Hynes, Jamie Fitzpatrick, and Edward Riche, which I explore in Chapter 3. As I argue in that chapter, these characters embody the fear that contemporary society can no longer sustain particular iterations of manhood, nor can it provide the elements that men need to maintain their “authentic” masculine identities.

Through the Priddles's plan to make money, *Sweetland* also includes a satirical look at tourism in Newfoundland. However, it does not do this to suggest that there is no authentic Newfoundland. Instead, it despairs of the way present generations are taking advantage of the island's natural resources to simply make money. *Sweetland* connects these relatively young men's obsessions with the destruction of the island's authentic culture. While Sweetland is a "real" Newfoundland man who lives permanently in an outport, and works at occupations that were popular in the past, the Priddles are a caricature of what will become of island masculinity if capitalism continues to impact Newfoundland: selfish and concerned with the island's past only in terms of how it can best be exploited to provide for themselves. They explain their plan to Moses:

Paints the whole place up with ochre and whitewash, puts out a couple of dories behind the breakwater. And we sells package tours to a vintage Newfoundland outport. It'll be like one of them Pioneer Villages on the mainland. Only, you know—

Authentic, Keith said. ...

The real McCoy. We could have people dressed up in oilskins, take the tourists fishing, show them how to split and salt the cod. (67)

Sweetland points out to the Priddles that "no one knows how to salt cod anymore" (67), but they talk over him, exclaiming: "Experience the Sweet Life in Sweetland" (67). Their obliviousness to Sweetland in this moment highlights their disregard for the island's traditions. They only want Sweetland to be involved in their plan so they can "fit him out in a sou'wester, put him on display for the tourists" (68). These younger men do not

lament the loss of their island home or anything connected with it—they are already too busy planning on how to profit from the resettlement plan.

In the second half of the novel, Sweetland fakes his own death in order to remain on the island after the resettlement plan goes through. Laurie Brinklow argues that the novel “becomes a Robinsonade, where Moses follows the pattern of castaway narratives begun with the novel, *Robinson Crusoe*” (137). Rebecca Weaver-Hightower argues that castaways in fiction were able to “control the naturally bounded space of the island as they control the naturally bound space of their bodies” (xi). This is not true for Sweetland, however, whose inability to survive as a castaway reflects his inability to control the land: his increasing lack of control over his body, as he suffers hallucinations and various illnesses, foreshadows the ultimate loss of his island home. However, what has changed for Sweetland is not his location, but the way that place is experienced. Paul Chafe writes that, “void of a larger human presence or stewardship, [Sweetland’s] community ... becomes uncanny, the wilderness of the surrounding island becomes threatening and unfamiliar” (“Entitlement” 10). Moses is therefore unable to remain on the island because it has radically altered.

In *Gaff Topsails*, the society of Newfoundlanders is just beginning: the castaway Tomas Croft endures the wilderness alone, but only as long as he has to. As soon as he meets a woman, they populate the shores, as a place is not complete without a society. Sweetland’s experience reverses Croft’s: already situated and happy in his outport home, he is unable to find the strength to carry on when the rest of the community leaves. At the end of the novel, Moses joins a parade of ghostly figures walking along the shore. In

*Canadian Gothic*, Cynthia Sugars describes how the frequent presence of ghostly progenitors in Canadian fiction often gestures towards “a desire for haunting” (15). Newfoundland’s ancestors take on a visible form in *Sweetland*, and their presence is not, the novel suggests, something to be feared, but embraced; it is only through these spectres that the history of the island can be preserved.

## Conclusion

*The Shipping News*, *Minister Without Portfolio*, and *Sweetland* present the outport as integral in the present-day development of an ideal masculine self. All three novels suggest that spiritual and physical regeneration, or masculine growth, can only occur away from the damaging influence of urbanization, and that to remove the Newfoundland male from the outport is to strip him of what makes him a real man. The novels of this chapter reflect those I study in Chapter 1, as all of them are influenced by the past. However, while *Galore*, *Gaff Topsails*, and *The Strangers’ Gallery* all focus on historical time, *The Shipping News*, *Minister Without Portfolio*, and *Sweetland* all emphasize place. By having men return to rural spaces in the present day, the novels of Chapter 2 provide a material way for contemporary Newfoundlanders to enact the sort of celebration of the past that is present in the novels of Chapter 1.

The novels that I study in the following chapter, including *Rare Birds*, *Down to the Dirt*, and *You Could Believe in Nothing*, do not suggest that such movement is beneficial. Instead, they pessimistically submit that there is no way for Newfoundland men to experience traditional masculinity. While *Rare Birds*, *Down to the Dirt*, and *You*

*Could Believe* initially appear to propose that no “ideal” form ever existed, their critique of contemporary society hints at a desire for something more.

### Chapter 3

## The Newfoundland Novel's "Crisis of Masculinity"

Although white men still have most of the power and control  
in the world, [they] feel like victims.

—Michael Kimmel, *Angry White Men*

In a 2016 article for *The National Post*, novelist Jay Hosking notes a “recent surge” in Canadian fiction of “men behaving badly” (“Redefining” n.p.).<sup>134</sup> This is certainly true within a Newfoundland context. Instead of celebrating the outport, Joel Thomas Hynes’s debut novel, *Down to the Dirt*, grapples with the potentially claustrophobic environment of contemporary rural Newfoundland. This place strongly influences the identity of Keith Kavanagh, the novel’s young male protagonist, resulting in a visceral and often uncomfortable portrait of dysfunctional masculinity. The novel follows Keith from a reckless 13-year-old to a destructive and alcoholic 20-year-old, presenting us with the frustrations he faces as he struggles to make some sort of life for himself on the island. Though set in St. John’s, Jamie Fitzpatrick’s *You Could Believe in Nothing* provides a similarly unapologetic look at masculinity in Newfoundland, introducing readers to Derek Langdon, a middle-aged man who resorts to alcohol and drug use while bemoaning the recent departure of his girlfriend, Nicole. Derek’s prominent problems

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<sup>134</sup> Though he goes on to suggest that this “newest incarnation of CanLit masculinity” (n.p.) is actually a “subversion” of the narrative of masculinity in Canadian literature, when one looks closely at the examples he provides, the irony in this assertion becomes clear. Hosking quotes Canadian author Kris Bertin, who suggests that “[male characters in Kevin Hardcastle’s fiction] behave badly because they’re poor, [Naben Ruthnam’s] because of an underlying sexual dysfunction, mine because of their mothers, and [Sullivan’s] because of toxic waste” (n.p.). By suggesting that there are specific reasons why the men in these texts are behaving badly, Bertin’s comment echoes the rhetoric of supporters of the “crisis of masculinity,” implying that these masculine characters are victims of their circumstances.

with his father should remind the reader of concerns in Chapter 1, yet this novel does not offer any similar solutions. Derek simply must accept his aging body, dissatisfying job, and disappointing relationships as features of Newfoundland's contemporary masculine reality. Edward Riche's *Rare Birds*, meanwhile, portrays its protagonist, Dave Purcell, as a Newfoundland man whose only recourse is self-destruction: though on the surface a satire of Newfoundland's cultural stereotypes, the novel ultimately suggests that the island's contemporary culture is unable to provide the sort of environment needed for men to succeed. Even as it criticizes stereotypes of the Newfoundlander, it laments changes on the island that discourage a particular iteration of masculinity.

The main reason for this proliferation of "men behaving badly" in recent Newfoundland fiction relates to a point David Savran puts forward in his book, *Taking It Like a Man: White Masculinity, Masochism, and Contemporary American Culture* (1998). Savran argues that there exists an abundance of all-male groups, from "extreme Christian evangelicals" (4) to "avowed white supremacists" (4), which are populated by "white, heterosexual, working- and lower-middle-class men who believe themselves to be the victims of the ... economic and social progress ... [of] racial, ethnic, and sexual minorities" (4). Twenty years after Savran first put forward his argument, evidence of this movement continues to be found in American society, such as the protest in Charlottesville in 2017, where an angry mob, composed mainly of white men, carried torches through the street and chanted "you will not replace us" (Spencer and Stolberg).

The nihilistic actions of the main characters in *Down to the Dirt, You Could Believe in Nothing*, and *Rare Birds* could be interpreted as a rebellion against normative

masculinity. Yet, the dissatisfaction the male protagonists feel at the end of each novel should prevent readers from understanding these texts as wholly subversive. Instead, these portraits of wounded masculinity suggest that present-day society is no longer able to uphold certain versions of manhood. Whereas *Galore*, *Gaff Topsails*, and *The Strangers' Gallery* suggest that the ideal version of Newfoundland masculinity exists in the past, and while *The Shipping News*, *Minister Without Portfolio*, and *Sweetland* suggest that this ideal manhood can be found in outports, *Rare Birds*, *You Could Believe in Nothing*, and *Down to the Dirt* suggest that contemporary society, both urban and rural, is entirely unable to help them become “real” men.

In part, I read these three novels as reminiscent of texts belonging to the “Angry Young Men” movement in Britain in the 1950s. Mid-twentieth-century British playwrights and authors—who were mostly white, male, and heterosexual—“fulminate[d] against the society in which they [found] themselves, criticizing its politics, morality, jobs, women, and ... widespread complacency” (Kalliney 92). Critic Alice Ferrebe notes that “the definitive position of [this group of] writers [including Kingsley Amis, John Osborne, and Colin Wilson] ... emerged ... as that of the involved observer, who harbours simultaneously a sense of exclusion resulting from the disruption of national, or class, or racial identity, and a lingering belonging that provokes a responsibility to represent a particular community, time and place emphatically” (224). She submits that their writing came at “a time of faltering national confidence, of looking inward and looking back, and finding wanting” (224). Ferrebe also notes how many of the novels by this group of writers overtly use “the influence of free indirect discourse in



a third-person voice that foregrounds a fawning partiality towards the eponymous anti-hero” (41). These writers ensure that their texts are read as sympathetic portrayals of alleged “outsiders.” And yet, instead of focusing on marginalized groups—women, people of colour, queer folks—these novelists wrote about seemingly disenfranchised white men, positioning them as society’s latest victims.

In *Lad Trouble: Masculinity and Identity in the British Male Confessional Novel of the 1990s*, Andrea Ochsner sets out to analyze how “Angry Young Men” were still to be found in the 1990s. Instead of “Angry Young Men,” however, Ochsner calls this genre “ladlit” (31), a term first coined by Elaine Showalter in 2002.<sup>135</sup> Ochsner argues that many British novels published in the 1990s feature a male protagonist who struggles with adulthood, with regards to both his professional and private life. These men express a distinct fatigue with what Ochsner calls “postmodern ontological insecurity” (32), and they—like the Newfoundland male protagonists that I discuss in this chapter—offer an implicit critique of present-day consumerism. Most of these male anti-heroes have failed in some way and are attempting to find a place where they fit in, although, Ochsner argues, most of the novels do not offer any clear solutions for their perceived problems.

As I argue in this chapter, there is a similar trend in contemporary Newfoundland fiction. *Rare Birds*, *You Could Believe in Nothing*, and *Down to the Dirt* were also produced during a time of “faltering national confidence, of looking inward and looking back, and finding wanting.” These three texts showcase male anti-heroes who express dissatisfaction with economic and cultural changes in Newfoundland, and position

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<sup>135</sup> See Showalter’s “Ladlit,” an essay in Zachary Leader’s *On Modern British Fiction* (2002).

Newfoundland's men as the primary victim of these changes. They do not offer any solutions, but remain cynical about the possibility for men to possess a satisfying masculine identity on the island.

*Rare Birds*, *You Could Believe in Nothing*, and *Down to the Dirt* can also be described as the anti-*bildungsroman* because their characters' attempts at self-realization are thwarted.<sup>136</sup> Franco Moretti argues that the *bildungsroman* is "the symbolic form of modernity" (*The Way* 15). If the *bildungsroman* is marked by its youthful protagonist, one who "accentuates modernity's dynamism" (15) and looks to the future to find "meaning" (15), the anti-*bildungsroman* suggests that its protagonist is resistant towards the modernizing project—or at least has a lack of faith in it.<sup>137</sup> Instead of presenting stories of personal growth, *Rare Birds*, *Down to the Dirt*, and *You Could Believe in Nothing* express dissatisfaction with economic or political changes on the island. Even though Dave, in *Rare Birds*, makes the decision to leave Newfoundland at the end of the novel, he remains single and unemployed, much like he was at the start of the text. In *You Could Believe in Nothing*, Derek ultimately reunites with the girlfriend whose so-called

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<sup>136</sup> Stanley Trachtenberg defines the *bildungsroman* as "the record of personal experiences leading to self-realization ... [that] ends with the abandonment of naïve idealism for more realistic goals, often a reconciliation with society" (2). Consider the novels of Chapter 2: Quoy's physical transformation in *The Shipping News* and Henry's psychological change in *Minister* suggest that men are able to use their personal experiences to influence their self-actualization and improve their relationships with their environment. This is not true for *Down to the Dirt*, *You Could Believe in Nothing*, and *Rare Birds*.

<sup>137</sup> The novel *Hold Fast* is an example of a Newfoundland *bildungsroman*. Author Kevin Major follows the experiences of fourteen-year-old Michael, who moves from rural Newfoundland to a nearby city to live with relatives after the death of both his parents. Major's story—which literary critic Robert Fulford has compared to works by Mark Twain and J.D. Salinger—shows how the young man struggles to survive in his new world. Michael grows emotionally, mentally, and physically as he learns how to adapt to his new surroundings; most importantly, he maintains his regional identity, something which the novel consistently praises.

abandonment is the inciting incident of the novel, while the men around him similarly present a lack of development. His father, for example, finds himself, for the second time in his life, at the centre of a scandal related to his adultery, while Derek's half-brother, Curtis, unintentionally reveals that he harbours the same resentments towards his stepfather that he did as a young teenager. Finally, at the end of *Down to the Dirt*, Keith remains a drug-abusing youth unable to maintain a relationship or retain a job.

Resistance to change is a typical response to crisis-of-masculinity rhetoric. Connell argues that any version of masculinity currently honoured is always, in a way, under threat, as the parameters of what it means to be a man are constantly changing, alongside culture. Connell states that “challenges to hegemony are common, and so are adjustments in the face of these challenges” (“Hegemonic” 835). Within a contemporary Western culture, critics have perceived various responses to this threat. I explore some—a celebration of the past and an endorsement of the “Frontier Myth,” respectively—in Chapters 1 and 2. Two more closely connected responses emerge in the novels I discuss in this chapter: hypermasculine over-compensation, and an embrace of the position of “loser” (Messner, “Male Consumer”), or “wounded male” (Robinson 6-8).

In their psychological study, “Overdoing Gender: A Test of the Masculine Overcompensation Thesis,” Robb Willer, Christabel L. Rogalin, Bridget Conlon and Michael T. Wojnowicz provide an example of the kind of masculine behaviour one can anticipate at the height of a “crisis of masculinity.” Willer's team examines what they call the “masculine overcompensation thesis” (980), arguing that men react to perceived threats against their masculinity with “extreme demonstrations” (980) of masculinity. For

example, one section of the study shows that men who believed that social change threatened their status as men also reported more homophobic attitudes, support for war, and a general belief in “male superiority” (980). The hypermasculine overcompensation, including self-destructive and aggressive behaviours, enacted by the majority of male characters in *Rare Birds*, *You Could Believe*, and *Down to the Dirt* can be read as a critique of contemporary culture, emphasizing the suffering of men to show how society has failed them.

The “male loser” has inspired much scholarship.<sup>138</sup> Michael Messner argues that this figure provides white men with a “symbolic avenue of escape from the ‘hidden injuries’ of a destabilized or insecure masculinity” (“On Patriarchs” 85), while also ignoring the concerns of women, and other minorities. Messner notes the particular prevalence in the media of the “lovable happy loser” (Green and Van Oort 696). Almost a decade later, Kyle Green and Madison Van Oort expand on Messner’s earlier argument with their claim that, rather than appearing “humorous and endearing, [male] losers are portrayed [in the media] as delusional dopes—lost and pathetic figures who are oblivious to the supposed decline in their social standing” (696). Green and Van Oort argue that these messages are the result of broader anxieties about recent economic problems.

It is this latter understanding of the male loser that prevails in contemporary Newfoundland fiction. *Down to the Dirt*, *You Could Believe in Nothing*, and *Rare Birds* all present dysfunctional or defective men as the norm, suggesting that the majority of

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<sup>138</sup> In *Survival*, Atwood connects the struggle of Canadians to survive the harshness of the terrain and climate to the construction of masculine “heroes” in fiction as “victims” (34) and “losers” (35).

Newfoundland men now belong to the category of “loser.” *Rare Birds* ultimately undermines its own satirical approach by suggesting that there is something “real” about Newfoundland that has been lost, and so we view Dave’s struggles as the inevitable result of cultural changes on the island. *You Could Believe in Nothing* deconstructs myths of fatherhood and sports to convince the reader that Derek’s problems stem from the breakdown of patrilineality, revealing what happens when the beloved father-figure of Chapter 1 is no longer viable. From the first chapter of *Down to the Dirt*, the text portrays Keith as a male victim of sexual abuse, making his future malaise worthy of sympathy. Despite differences in these characters’ ages—Keith is in his late teens/early twenties while Derek and Dave are both in their late thirties or early forties—the crisis rhetoric impacts all of them; age, it appears, does not matter when it comes to proving masculinity.

### Searching for the “Real” in *Rare Birds*

Initially, Riche’s *Rare Birds* appears to be primarily concerned with problematizing the perception of Newfoundland as an unchanging province, populated only with innocent, nature-loving individuals. The novel suggests that this stereotype is largely perpetuated through empty performances for the purpose of attracting tourists.<sup>139</sup> *Rare Birds* exposes

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<sup>139</sup> In “Living the Authentic Life at ‘The Far East of the Western World’: Edward Riche’s *Rare Birds*,” Paul Chafe argues that “the artifice of the culture industry and the dubiousness of island intimacy are most artfully and comically displayed in Edward Riche’s *Rare Birds*” (175). Herb Wylie, in his essay “Going Out of Their Way: Tourism, Authenticity, and Resistance in Contemporary Atlantic-Canadian Literature” (2008), similarly writes that *Rare Birds* “underscores how Newfoundland culture is reduced to a humiliating pantomime” (173) as tourism causes the region to “cannibalize its own culture” (174).

Newfoundlander stereotypes in an effort to reject any notion that clichés can serve as a foundation for a viable cultural identity. However, as Jon Parsons argues, “Riche’s satire is fundamentally conservative” (*Resistance* 217): because it “often cuts both ways and criticizes or attacks with abandon, [Riche’s satire] rests on and reinforces normative values” (217). At the end of the novel—and despite its best efforts to satirize, mock, and critique—there remains an insistence that there is something real, or valuable, about “traditional” Newfoundland which is simply lost, or hidden beneath a touristic veneer. Furthermore, Riche’s effort to expose tropes and clichés of Newfoundland culture does not extend to gender. The novel’s attempted critique of cultural biases therefore serves the additional purpose of ironically highlighting *Rare Birds*’s uncritical look at the way that masculinity is performed in contemporary culture. Instead of celebrating the possibility of men and women expressing their gender identities in a multiplicity of ways, the novel arguably mocks its male protagonist for not fulfilling those elements required to satisfy what it presents as a hegemonic masculinity. In the end, the novel fails to distance itself from the “generic conventions” (Parsons 210) of both place and gender.<sup>140</sup>

The ways that the novel attempts to dismantle Newfoundland mythology are pronounced. For example, early in the novel, Dave tells the reader that “there was nothing quaint about the upper road” (22), a point emphasized when a tourist’s car is stolen, and the victim proclaims “You don’t expect it here” (223). Dave considers these sort of beliefs to be evidence of “the hollow myth of Newfoundland” (22):

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<sup>140</sup> Parsons notes that the novel’s concluding message is that “the world should be precisely as it is, that what is familiar is best, and that nothing really needs to change” (257).

The people were all supposed to be so sweet and colourful but never dangerous,  
 the good poor ... I'll introduce you to some of the car cannibals, thought Dave.  
 They'd club you like a seal pup and sell your organs for the price of a dozen beer.  
 (22)

Here, the novel includes both the clubbing of seals and excessive alcohol consumption to remind readers that, in addition to the romantic depiction often propagated in other parts of the country, Newfoundlanders are also well-known for things other than being "sweet and colourful."<sup>141</sup>

Yet, even as Dave works to demolish the rosy stereotypes of Newfoundland, he lambastes tourists for fetishizing the less palatable moments of the island's history. For example, *Rare Birds* refers to the child abuse scandal at Mount Cashel, a St. John's orphanage operated by the Roman Catholic Church in the decades leading up to 1975, when a police investigation was opened. The narrator states: "Dave met tourists all the time now and the site that most interested them was 'that orphanage where all the little boys were abused by those priests'" (149). Here, instead of critiquing tourists for their inaccurately positive view of Newfoundland, Dave criticizes them for the inordinate attention they give to this particular site. Dave claims that visitors would choose to visit "a ghastly waxworks of hiked black cassocks and splayed ivory limbs, a national bum-fucking museum" (149) over enjoying a meal at a nice restaurant. Although the reader

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<sup>141</sup> From CBC News: "According to a 2012 study, people in Newfoundland and Labrador are more likely to exceed low-risk drinking guidelines than in any other province" (Barry). Sheryl Fink calls the seal hunt "inhumane [and] outdated" on the *International Fund for Animal Welfare* website, where she talks at length about the province's "infamous" history of hunting seals.

should not be surprised that Dave scorns tourists for this, it seems to be an abrupt change from his earlier complaint that all tourists think Newfoundland is welcoming and somehow innocent.

Moreover, the language used here does not focus on pedophilia, specifically, but rather is just generally homophobic. This reaction is another evocation of a specific form of virile, heteromascularity (what Willer and his team would call “overcompensation”). It is not surprising that Dave would condemn the priests’ actions, but calling it “bum-fucking” focuses on one particular aspect of the abuse, that it was men abusing boys, and not on the general abuse of power, or the pedophilic aspect of the crime. In *Down to the Dirt*, Keith does the same, conflating homosexuality and pedophilia. I elaborate on this topic later in this chapter.

Dave’s ambivalence regarding Newfoundland’s cultural identity gestures towards the novel’s innate desire to be appreciated for its “authenticity.” Instead of simply criticizing tourists for their overly positive views, the text also criticizes them for focusing on particularly unpleasant events; it generally denounces tourists for their opinion, no matter what, implying that only the “native” Newfoundlander understands the island’s identity. For example, the narrator states:

The peculiar little city groping the steep sides of a small harbor seems magical on first sight ... [and] the people, the Townies, seem friendly, generous with colourful opinions. ... [The] charms of St. John’s were undeniable, irresistible ... [but] the people that really lived in St. John’s ... knew better. They could see the old-world weariness in the new, but still smell the wood smoke of the frontier.



They knew that St. John's was, beneath the pink and powder blue paint, the political capital of a four-hundred-year legacy of misery and deprivation, a desperate colonial outpost of missed opportunities. (24)

In addition to highlighting how the people “that really live” in Newfoundland “know better,” the narrator also draws attention to Newfoundland's political past in the above passage, alluding to the island's loss of independence in the first half of the twentieth century and echoing the concerns of Michael and Miles in *The Strangers' Gallery*. In Bowdring's novel, Michael connects the impact his absent father has had on his identity to the detrimental effect Newfoundland's loss of “fatherland” status has had on the island's cultural identity. *Rare Birds* similarly connects Dave's identity, as a man of “missed opportunities” (24), to the island's failures. Dave's failed masculinity therefore becomes connected with the island's inability to be an autonomous, self-governing entity. The reference to the “frontier” (24) in this passage is also telling. Evoking the ideology examined in Chapter 2 of this thesis, the islanders described here can still smell the “wood smoke of the frontier,” and they can still remember what it “used to be like” when Newfoundland was less civilized and less concerned with positioning itself as a place popular for tourists. Ultimately, then, in its race to discredit certain myths of Newfoundland, the novel ironically laments the loss of certain, ostensibly real, cultural elements.

Dave's thoughts on contemporary academia are also relevant here:

Dave understood that students no longer studied real things. ... These days they studied previous studies. ... It was no longer the meaning of all the words written

about birds that mattered, but the words themselves. ... This was either a brilliant stroke by the academics ... or a fatal miscalculation—dissecting each dissection over and over again until there was nothing left worth looking at, just a bunch of endlessly worked-over frog guts (75).<sup>142</sup>

It appears to Dave that content is becoming less important than description—representation is becoming more important than the original—and the result of this is regurgitated, metonymic frog guts. Dave takes issue with the fact that students do not read old books, but rather read “books dedicated to the discussion and reinterpretation of the old books” (75). It is the old books that are of interest to Dave, and his dismissive attitude towards contemporary academia ultimately reflects his subconscious belief that there is something important about the original. Namely, he believes that, though there *is* an original, valuable, and unique quality to Newfoundland, layers of commodification and appropriation have made the real seem ridiculous (like “worked-over frog guts”). It is, he posits, hard to see the value that was once there because it has become a parody of itself.

This way of thinking can also be applied to the novel’s construction of masculinity. Dave’s friend and neighbour, Phonse, is everything Dave is not: he is “lean” (14); he possesses “the impression of youth” (14); he has “unwavering optimism” (15),

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<sup>142</sup> Dave’s speech evokes Ralph Waldo Emerson’s complaint in his essay, “Nature,” published in 1836. Emerson writes: “Our age is retrospective. It builds the sepulchres of the fathers. It writes biographies, histories, and criticism...Why should not we have a poetry and philosophy of insight and not of tradition, and a religion by revelation to us, and not the history of theirs?...The sun shines to-day also. There is more wool and flax in the fields. There are new lands, new men, new thoughts. Let us demand our own works and laws and worship” (1). This similarity positions Dave as a fellow Romantic.

“boundless” (12) energy, and an active sex life with his wife, Debbie; he has no desire to sample the cocaine he finds in the bay; and he manages to outwit the government officials who come to confiscate his submarine. Phonse embodies a modified version of Tomas Croft in *Gaff Topsails* and Judah in *Galore*. He has been updated for the contemporary age: while he is, like the “traditional” male Newfoundlander, one with the land, he also has an ability to adapt to technological change. Phonse is proof that the Newfoundland man could thrive if it were not for negative influences outside of his control, and his death at the end of the novel can be read symbolically as the death of the real Newfoundland man, much like the eponymous Sweetland of Crummey’s novel (and unlike Jack, in *The Shipping News*, who is eventually revived).

The novel ultimately blames Dave’s failed masculinity on the changing way of life in Newfoundland. This is sometimes explicit, such as when Dave comments on his previous job at DFO: “What was the alternative to [his restaurant] the Auk? Going back to the fisheries, overseeing the dismantling of the way of life that had defined Newfoundland for four centuries and coming home every day to the yet harder job of being an adequate husband?” (185). Here, the text openly critiques a federal department for destroying a historical way of life of Newfoundlanders, while also commenting on the difficulties of being a man. The sentence’s construction connects Dave’s disappointment with his former office job not only to his belief that he was an inadequate husband, but also to the notion that his work somehow contributed to the destruction of the original

Newfoundland identity.<sup>143</sup> Though, as outlined at length above, the narrator mocks the belief in any Newfoundland traditions or stereotypes, here the novel conversely suggests that it is changes in work or the economy that have led to the breakdown of an important, authentic culture.

In addition to his fraught work life, Dave satisfies all of the other requirements of wounded masculinity. For example, the narrator disparages Dave's physical appearance:

Dave is confronted by his rapid decline. His thinning hair, gluey with slumber, was swept up in a cockeyed cowlick. ... [There] was five days' growth on his face, foxy patches on his cheeks, thick white spikes around his chin. (3)<sup>144</sup>

Dave believes that he looks like "a villain worthy of challenging Batman" (3), an alter-ego he names "Fuck-Up Man" (3).<sup>145</sup> We also learn of Dave's loss of sexual virility: "For a time [he and estranged wife Claire] fucked often. They fucked anywhere. They fucked in any way they could" (5). Now, however, even masturbating "[takes] Dave ages to perform" (5). Dave can no longer arouse himself, and he informs the reader that "his imagination could no longer conjure any delicious pictures to hasten ejaculation" (5).

This account of erectile difficulty (which is paralleled in *You Could Believe in*

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<sup>143</sup> This is also true for Wayne Johnston's autobiographical book, *Baltimore's Mansion*. Johnston's own father was a fisheries officer and, according to Johnston, he hated himself for it.

<sup>144</sup> This closely echoes the scene in *The Shipping News* where Quoye looks at himself in the mirror and considers his own physical changes. Here, however, the outcome is reversed: while Quoye has become stronger, and more viable, during his time in the outport, Dave has become weaker and more ineffectual. Riche is probably aware of Proulx's text, and is possibly directly parodying it here. Yet, even as *Rare Birds* suggests that the outport is not the mythical space for proving manhood that *The Shipping News* suggests it is, there remains a belief in *Rare Birds* that something is missing in the lives of contemporary Newfoundland men that is no fault of their own.

<sup>145</sup> Again, this reverses what happens in *The Shipping News*: in Proulx's text, Quoye's transformation is that of weakling to "super hero."

*Nothing*) leads us into a deeper examination of Dave's failed heterosexual relationship. Dave often compares himself to Claire, seeing his "failure in the face of his wife's success" (18) as an "emasculatation" (18). Messner writes that "when members of a superordinate group are even partly nudged from their positions of social centrality, they often experience this as a major displacement, and respond defensively" ("On Patriarchs" 74), and this "is why men have so often resisted the movement for women's equality" (74). This seems an apt description of Dave's feelings toward his wife.

To elaborate, *Rare Birds* tells the reader that Claire has found success working as a propagandist for a right-wing "think tank" (3) in Washington, and she often appears on political television shows. Echoing the anti-capitalist rhetoric of the novels of Chapter 2, Dave condemns Claire for being someone whose "career as an economist had taken precedence" (3) to starting a family and operating a business with her husband. She "was now ensconced at the helm of the Palmer Institute" (3), a "plum" position that enables Claire to earn much more money than Dave. When Dave watches Claire onscreen, he thinks about how "her appearance was changing" (4), how "her face has grown taut, her eyes ... lifeless" (4). He connects their non-existent sex life to Claire's growing career success (inversely related to his own failures), stating that she has "grown more sexually inhibited over their last few years" (4). It does not seem to be a coincidence that Dave connects her seeming inability to fulfill the stereotypical role of a wife and mother with his own subsequent masculine failure; moreover, the text in general considers her to be a neoliberal sell-out as a result of her position as spokesperson for political conservatives.

The reader also eventually discovers that Dave and Claire were unable to have

children (26). This is yet another strike against Dave's masculinity, according to both the scholarship surrounding this topic and the novels I discuss in Chapters 1 and 2. *Gaff Topsails*, for example, is replete with "seed" imagery which emphasizes the importance of fertility and ancestry; in *Sweetland*, Moses feels unable to be a real man following his near-castration; and both Henry and Michael, of *Minister Without Portfolio* and *The Strangers' Gallery*, are only able to find satisfaction, as men, when they become fathers.

The novel quietly mocks what Newfoundland men—with the exception of doomed Phonse—have become in general. For example, Larry, Dave's former co-worker at DFO, is someone who, Dave argues, "relished a good snowstorm so he could jump in the Four Runner and take a spin across town for a pack of gum" (10). In other words, Larry's masculinity is a caricature of traditional hegemonic masculinity: though he has the "tools" men once needed to survive the rugged landscape, he does not have any need for them. Similarly, Dave criticizes the group of men in Push Cove who simply stand around, "scrutinizing ... cars while enjoying a bottle of beer" (23), not in the hopes of repairing them, but taking "perfectly good vehicles" (23) and disassembling them "to display their skeletons in their yards" (23). This, Dave mocks, is a "holdover from their recent hunter-gatherer phase" (23). Men living in both the city (like Larry) and the outport (like Dave and his neighbours in Push Cove) are worthy of censure; unlike the novels of Chapter 2, *Rare Birds* suggests that inhabiting a rural area will not "save" men. Rather, in either location, existence is now much easier for them, and so they find other, menial tasks to make them feel better about themselves.

In contrast with the men he observes in his daily life, Dave reminisces about

visiting St. John's as a child with his father to buy seal meat: "The sealers were big, strapping men—ice-dancing giants, stained-blood filthy and scented-fat rancid from hundreds of kills. Young Dave thought these men a superior breed, the perfect measure of courage and dignity" (45). Here, Dave echoes what Willeen Keough argues about the dangerously idyllic mythology surrounding Newfoundland sealers. Yet, he does not mock this romantic ideology, nor does he say that he presently thinks otherwise, which is unusual for a character who criticizes and mocks everything and everyone he comes in contact with. He does not deride the sealers like he does Larry, or himself, or any of the "men of Dave's generation" (19) who have "bungled the attempt to become more sensitive, more nurturing" (19), and have, "in the end, merely disappointed" (19). With this statement, the text acknowledges the construction and promotion in recent decades of what sociologist Tim Edwards calls the "New Man" (something I look at again in Chapter 4). Edwards argues that the "New Man" is partly "about nurturance and caring" (61) and he posits that an ambivalence exists around this version of contemporary manhood as some "unease" (62) still surrounds any form of masculinity that "might be seen to be a bit 'soft'" (62). *Rare Birds* suggests that alternate forms of masculinity are unattainable and contemporary men are therefore condemned to failure. The "New Man" is fundamentally threatening, the hardy sealer is no more, and the novel offers no other solutions for its men. Instead of embracing the failure of masculinity to encompass all men, the novel simply suggests that Newfoundland men are doomed to experience unsatisfying lives. And, as I argue earlier in this chapter, Dave's resistance to modern changes emphasizes the way that this novel is an anti-*bildungsroman*: here, we can see

how his resistance to changes in contemporary society reflects his own lack of emotional or mental growth.

Arguably the most critical moment in Dave's efforts to prove himself a worthy, Newfoundland male occurs near the end of the text, when federal government agents arrive in Push Cove in an attempt to apparently apprehend the submarine that Phonse has recently built. Dave and Phonse sequester themselves in Phonse's shed, hiding away from the armed agents as they plan their next moves. The narrator states:

This was the moment when the men were separated from the boys, the critical moment when the caper succeeded or failed, it was make or break. Would Dave be remembered as one of thousands of phantoms in the federal bureaucracy, a failed restaurateur, or a bandit, an outlaw? To go down in flames, in a blaze of glory, was the ultimate revenge against his former colleagues at Fisheries. They would see the picture of his bullet-riddled corpse in the papers and say, we never guessed for a second that he was involved in that sort of thing. ... Dying at the hands of the Canadian government was the only way Dave could square things up with Newfoundland. It would be a grand gesture of resistance, a former collaborator going over to the other side, betraying the colonial master. (238)

What is perhaps most significant about this passage is the way that Dave considers death-by-Canadian-government to be a way to "square things up" with Newfoundland. Despite their differences, the same ideology exists in *The Strangers' Gallery*, *Galore*, *Gaff Topsails*, and *Minister Without Portfolio*: these novels connect Newfoundland



nationalism with masculinity, suggesting that the former is necessary for the maintenance of the latter (and the latter, concomitantly, integral to the former). They all overtly critique Confederation with Canada as something that irreparably harmed Newfoundland's identity. In *Rare Birds*, Dave's resistance towards Canada thus proves his attachment to both the island and his manhood.

The conclusion of *Rare Birds* ultimately indicates that the "real" will be missed if society continues to celebrate imitations; or, as Paul Chafe posits, the novel provides "Riche's warning that the real is being lost while the re-enacted is being fetishized" ("Living" 188), something which "points towards a future Newfoundland devoid of meaning" (188).<sup>146</sup> This warning is primarily symbolized by the appearance of a Tasker's Sulphureous duck at the end of the novel, unnoticed by the masses who were earlier photographing a wooden decoy. This special duck is central to the plot of the novel, which involves Dave and Phonse fabricating the presence of a rare bird in the area in an effort to draw oblivious tourists to Dave's failing restaurant. This situation is an analogy of Newfoundland's current situation—that Newfoundland tourism has "transformed the island in profound" (Overton 4) ways.

When Phonse becomes frustrated with Dave's anxiety over the wooden decoy, he says to him:

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<sup>146</sup> Chafe quotes Daniel Boorstin, who argued in 1961 that the greatest threat of "pseudo-events" (39) is that they "overshadow spontaneous events" (39). Chafe states that "Boorstin's lament proves true in the novel's final paragraph, as the actual, the authentic, the real swims by unnoticed" (187).

Everybody but you wants the duck to be out there, Dave. I don't understand it. I want it to be there, of course I do, but the real thing. That's not possible, is it, Dave? The bird is extinct. This is the next best thing. (205)

In a way, it might initially appear that Phonse is trying to convince Dave (and the reader) to let go of any notion of the “real thing”—the real thing is extinct, so the “next best thing” involves, in part, performing what used to exist. However, on the final page of the novel, the reader learns that this rare duck, the Tasker's Sulphureous, is *not* extinct:

Dave walked up the hill and back to his rented truck, failing to notice among the other ducks on the water that day a particular bird, a bird with its wing lifted, its head tucked underneath ... a peculiar bird, a wildly coloured bird with its ridiculous white tuft on its head. A rare bird. (259)

This humorous ending manages to suggest that there *is* something real and beautiful and rare about Newfoundland that is begging to be noticed, but that, as a result of the influence of tourism, capitalism, and other unfavourable forces, Dave—and the rest of Newfoundland—is unable to see it. Chafe argues that, “concerned with creating and consuming empty signifiers whose *raison d'être* is that they can be easily and opportunely (re)produced, the tourists and hosts of Newfoundland culture are starving even as they gorge themselves” (188). Like Newfoundland itself, the Newfoundland man becomes the latest victim of economic and social change, someone for whom the performance of Newfoundland masculinity will never quite “measure up” to the “authentic” masculine experience held by Newfoundland men in the past.

### **Disappointment and Blame in *You Could Believe in Nothing***

Like *Rare Birds*, *You Could Believe in Nothing* critiques supposedly unfounded stereotypes of Newfoundland culture. However, this critique is once again unsettled by an equally condemnatory appraisal of the island's contemporary condition, represented in part through the novel's exploration of the negative circumstances that face today's men.<sup>147</sup> *You Could Believe* deconstructs masculine myths about hockey and fatherhood to show how Newfoundland's modern men have nothing left to believe in. I argue that the novel's treatment of Derek as a wounded male (which largely involves blaming women) incites a lament for a place that is better able to foster Derek's masculine identity. Through its subversion of patrilineal mythology and complicated relationship to sport—often an important factor in the maintenance of hegemonic masculinity (Kidd)—the novel denounces the island for being unable to provide an environment for men to positively experience their manhood.

Throughout *You Could Believe in Nothing*, Derek censures any romanticized conceptions of the island. He believes that “there [is] something arid and tyrannical in [the island's] ongoing romance with its history” (95) and, like Dave in *Rare Birds*, he rejects the notion that all Newfoundlanders are sweet and colourful. Derek listens to a news report on the radio which describes how a “girl had been found in the basement, shotgun behind the shed, and boyfriend hanging inside” (217). Closely echoing the

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<sup>147</sup> Critic Susie Decoste writes that, “as much as [*You Could Believe in Nothing*] actively resists the kind of regionalism that would see Newfoundland in light of what one character calls the ‘rhetoric of Newfoundland transcendence, in which a people of mighty spirit prevail through shit weather and blundering history to find a deeper level of consciousness,’ the novel is equally interested in entertaining the idea that Newfoundland might be such a place” (167).

sentiments of the tourist whose car is stolen in *Rare Birds*, Derek's neighbour, Mrs.

Ennis, comments that "you never expect something like that, here" (217). Like Dave,

Derek considers:

How could you not expect it? Dead girl in the basement? You know it goes back to the boyfriend. House burns down with Mom in it? The oldest son must be off his meds. Woman kills her husband? She'll kill the baby too, if they don't catch her quick. Fucked-up Newfoundland turning on its fucked-up self" (217).<sup>148</sup>

In much the same way that Dave labels himself "Fuck-Up Man" in *Rare Birds*, here Derek refers to the whole island as "Fucked-up." The book therefore suggests that Newfoundland, far from being fundamentally good, actually plays a negative role in the formation and influence of contemporary masculine identities.<sup>149</sup>

In the book, Allan, a CBC reporter, interviews Derek's amateur hockey team. When watching the documentary later on television, Derek's girlfriend, Nicole, mocks the final product, proclaiming: "We poetic souls ... clinging to this hard and unforgiving rock in the sea" (145). Here, Derek notes that "it was a favourite target of hers, the rhetoric of Newfoundland transcendence, in which people of a mighty spirit prevail

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<sup>148</sup> Though the last example is about a woman, the narrator and Derek both seem focused on male violence here. This could be because violence committed by men is statistically more prevalent (in Newfoundland and beyond) than violence committed by women (Mahony). The paragraph's concluding comment—"Fucked-up Newfoundland turning on its fucked-up self"—supports this argument. However, the novel could also be making a commentary on contemporary male behaviour, bemoaning the way that "fucked-up" Newfoundland has "turned on" its men.

<sup>149</sup> Various members of Derek's community hockey team share his opinion. Derek's teammate Murph, for example, states: "I don't know about the whole Newfoundland thing ... [We] all know there's just as many pricks and cunts and assholes in Newfoundland as anywhere else" (107).

through shit weather and blundering history to find a deeper level of consciousness” (145). Derek is also disappointed with the documentary, but for different reasons. While Derek is upset that the documentary is so overtly fabricated and sentimental, he is not angry that it exalts a particular group of Newfoundland men. He wishes he *could* believe in what the documentary has to say about his teammates, the island, and their masculine identity, but he no longer trusts these concepts. This lack of belief is something which the novel’s title gestures towards: as one of the players states earlier in the text, “you could believe in nothing and [hockey] could [still] be your game” (111). I go on to explore the mythical nature of hockey in Canada below, but for now it is important to note that neither Derek nor his teammates view hockey as able to inspire or preserve any sort of masculine or national identity. After watching the documentary, Derek thinks about “the brotherhood of hockey players” (225), asking “what fucking good was it?” (225). His anger escalates as he watches a group of young men walking down the street immediately following the documentary, “young arseholes who don’t give a shit” (225). He yells at them to “wake up” (225). This response suggests that Derek has a problem with the attitude of contemporary young men, particularly with how they seem to be unaware of the dire situation Newfoundland men ostensibly find themselves in.

Thus, although *You Could Believe in Nothing* insists that any romantic story about Newfoundland is grossly exaggerated, it simultaneously expresses disappointment with contemporary Newfoundland. Characters struggle with both dissatisfying employment opportunities, the result of economic change in the province, and frustrating family lives. For example, Mrs. Ennis despairingly describes her son, Phillip, to Derek: “He won’t

even finish his Marine cooking diploma up to the college. I said, ‘Phillip, for once in your life, finish something.’ On the internet all day” (219). When Derek sees Phil smoking outside his mother’s home, he thinks

[Phil] would own the house when his mother died, and eventually die there himself. By then he ought to have a son of his own smoking on the front step and waiting to take over. But Derek had never seen him with a woman. (36)

This description suggests that Derek considers Phil a failure as a result of both his lack of work ethic and his inability to produce an heir. This point is complicated as Derek also implicitly critiques Phil’s hypothetical heir, suggesting that he, too, would be just as much a “loser” as Phil. Thus, patrilineal traditions in contemporary Newfoundland are shown to be fraught instead of fruitful. Phil’s attention is focused on the internet, the result of relatively recent technological advances coming to the island, and there seems to be little hope for any future generations to be an improvement.

Derek similarly describes today’s “typical” Newfoundland man:

[They] were nomads who disappeared for months at a time and returned with pots of mainland money, and foragers, happy to cobble together a few substitute teaching days or government funded scraps. ... [There] was Lenny, who didn’t do much of anything. His charmed, idle youth was declining to seedy middle age. He would soon be the neighbourhood weird man, going to the store for a six pack in the morning and sitting on his front step in an undershirt. (142)

In the passages quoted above, both Mrs. Ennis and Derek mourn the changes in masculine identity that they have witnessed in recent years. Instead of being hardworking, dependable producers, Newfoundland men have become lazy, ineffectual drifters, unconcerned with supporting their families or even themselves.

Derek's reference to "mainland money" seems particularly significant here, as it suggests that the reasons, in part, for these changes are economic. This worry is connected to ideas of outmigration, as Derek reminds the reader that many men must leave Newfoundland to find any work. Since Newfoundland men are no longer able to find work in their home province, they must go away, living a sort of transient life that essentially forces them to be idle for half of the year, when they are laid off from their seasonal jobs outside the province.<sup>150</sup> Derek's friend, Kevin, describes his time working in Ontario as "slogging it out" (106)—recalling *Sweetland*—showing the reader how the men are dissatisfied with their necessary movement away from the island.

In its portrayal of work, the novel establishes three choices for Newfoundland men: to either leave the province to find employment, accept a position that may not

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<sup>150</sup> This differs from the kind of forced, seasonal 'idleness' sometimes experienced by Newfoundland men in the past, when they had to remain on land during the winter months. These men found other activities to occupy their time: after spending their spring and summer months fishing, they spent the winter cutting wood and making the barrels that they would use to store and ship their fish, or they would use the wood to repair and build wharfs. They would also spend a large amount of time cutting firewood. Some men worked at lumber mills, or at mines, during the winter, or else they spent their time repairing fishing nets, hunting, and trapping. The seal hunt often began in March, while the waters were still frozen, and this further provided them with an extra two months of work before the fishing season could begin again in earnest. Thus, even though seasonal work was something that Newfoundland men had to contend with in the past, they dealt with it in very different ways. The men of Derek's generation have no reason to enact the activities once done by Newfoundland men, and the text suggests that they are worse for it (Darren Hynes).

satisfy them, or remain unemployed. Derek falls into the second category. Immediately after graduating from university, Derek takes a job at Ennis Communications:

[He] joined as the 'media monitor,' clipping the papers and taping newscasts.

Paltry work for paltry wages. ... At five o'clock every afternoon the brick building emptied, leaving him in a tiny video room to catalogue the six o'clock news, with its traffic accidents, municipal squabbles, broken sewer mains, break-and-enters, and other petty inhumanities of the grey day. (58)

The narrator explains how "the EnCom building was his introduction to the working world. A flat brick structure on Torbay Road, designed to strangle all hope at the beginning of the day" (57). Derek's description of the building reflects his deep-seated resignation and disappointment. He feels utterly hopeless, and blames his office job for emasculating him.

We also see this through his description of his office wardrobe:

He went to Tip Top and spent nearly a week's salary on slacks and dress shirts ... Rather than confer an air of tidy confidence, the fresh clothes only enhanced a growing squeamishness about his body. His in-turned feet. The hairy shins poking from his pant legs, skin imprinted with the grip of ribbed dress socks. He came to hate those socks, the sight of them crumpled on his bedroom floor, soiled and flaccid. ... Embarrassment lurked everywhere, in the sound of his ass on the leather chair, a spot on his tie, the persistent damp inside his salt stained winter



boots. Back in university, when he played hockey, his sweat was vital and urgent.

Now a tired odour of decay from his crevices at the close of a working day. (58)

Derek's growing "squeamishness" and general unease with his maturing body parallels the way that Quoye feels while living in New York, in *The Shipping News*, and the way that Dave feels throughout *Rare Birds*.<sup>151</sup> As their physical bodies age and fail them, their sense of masculinity is decreased. What is particularly significant in this passage is what Derek believes marks his failure as a man; namely, the clothes that he must wear to his office job. The description of his dress socks as "flaccid" seems to overtly connect his work life to his perceived loss of virility. Ultimately, these descriptions suggest that one of the most emasculating things a man can do is work in an office. And, unlike the male characters I discuss in Chapter 2, Derek never escapes this lifestyle.

Derek's penis and groin, in particular, suffer from a number of ailments, which can be read as symbolizing his damaged manhood.<sup>152</sup> When Derek reconnects with an ex-girlfriend, Kelly, with the hope of regaining a sense of his youthful virility, their meetings are ultimately unsatisfactory. For example, while having sex, he has to stop when he feels one of his testicles withdraw, causing him a great amount of pain (170). Furthermore, Derek often thinks about his past experience with gonorrhea when he is experiencing new, unrelated groin pain. This sexually-transmitted infection was passed on to him by

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<sup>151</sup> While walking outside of a diner, the narrator describes how "the ache in Derek's hips—potentially arthritic, according to Nicole—reached through the buttocks and seized his hamstrings" (14). The narrator also explains how, despite "the euphoria of binge drinking" (2) being "one of the great revelations of Derek's youth ... he couldn't drink anymore" (2) as, "at forty-one ... hangovers were crippling" (2).

<sup>152</sup> Decoste describes *You Could Believe* as "a plot-driven character study about an early-middle-aged man obsessed with his penis" (167).

Nicole a number of years ago, early in their relationship. While checking his groin and testicles after hockey, Derek thinks about “that awful summer morning” (101) when he woke to find “green pus oozing” (43) from his penis. Because it is Nicole who has given Derek this ailment, the novel establishes Derek’s diseased masculinity as partly the fault of a woman—arguably, the fault of a promiscuous woman, a symbol of the way contemporary society has allowed women to become more like men.

Women are blamed for many of Derek’s problems in *You Could Believe in Nothing*. For example, Derek thinks that it is Nicole who is mostly responsible for his own “bad behaviour” (35), arguing that “a better woman would not have let him get away with it” (35). Derek informs the reader that he “missed [Nicole] ... [but] mostly, he wanted to fuck her, reassert his authority, give her a good going-over ... [It] wasn’t a rape fantasy, exactly” (4). This is the bulk of information we receive about Nicole, who is absent during most of the events of the text. Her move to Toronto does not seem to impact Derek on an emotional level; her absence merely draws attention to the importance sexual performance—and sexual domination—plays in the formation of Derek’s masculine identity.

In general, Derek categorizes women using the Virgin/Whore dichotomy, and the narrator does not complicate his image of women.<sup>153</sup> Jonathan Gottschall, Elizabeth Allison, Jay De Rosa and Kaia Klockeman write that the “virgin/whore dichotomy has

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<sup>153</sup> Derek’s sister, Cynthia, is arguably the most nuanced female character, but, as Derek’s sister, she occupies a unique space: she is neither a maternal figure for Derek nor a sexual interest

been a mainstay of literary criticism and theory for the last several decades” (2). They argue:

Men and/or societies divide women into two binary types: virgins and whores.

The former type encompasses characters who are nurturing, ‘good,’ and who express their sexualities within culturally sanctioned bounds. ... Women who fail to embody this idea are ‘whores’: they are explicitly or symbolically immoral and dangerously concupiscent” (2).<sup>154</sup>

Derek conceives of women only in relation to himself, and not as autonomous individuals. Though the novel is not written in first person, the narrator only provides access to Derek’s thoughts; we have no other perspectives to contrast with his, and, as Ferrebe states is also the case for fiction from Britain’s “Angry Young Men,” this narrative structure foregrounds “a fawning partiality” (41) towards the protagonist. Derek applies the virgin role—nurturing, asexual—to his mother, and other older women in the community, and is disappointed when these women fail to satisfy what he believes this title should entail. For example, Derek is unable to reconcile his late-middle-aged mother, Elizabeth, with her impregnated, teenage self: “[the] Elizabeth he knew, level and hardheaded, was not one to expose herself to ruin. She was not a teenager dropping her skirt for an American soldier” (21). He is unable to consider the idea that the woman he sees as his modest mother might have had a rich sex life, and instead relies on sexist

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<sup>154</sup> Similarly, Lean M. Wyman and George N. Dionisopoulos state that “feminist critiques regarding media representations of women have noted that female sexuality is often depicted within the boundaries of two opposing categories; one encompassing characters who are moralistic, nurturing, and asexual, and the other consisting of those who are unethical, dangerous and erotic” (209).

clichés (“dropping her skirt”) to criticize the behaviour of sexually “promiscuous” women. Other mothers in the novel, including Ruth, the radio station’s receptionist, and Mrs. Ennis talk only about their children, wear flowery clothes, and are generally asexual; they, like Elizabeth, may also have sexual histories that Derek simply ignores, or wants to avoid thinking about. The reader is never given this information.

If Derek does not view a woman as a mother, then he tends to view them as a “whore.” For example, Derek is often unable to see beyond a woman’s physical appearance. Derek describes his co-worker, Kate, thus:

She rowed in the regatta every year and had a beautiful—truly beautiful—rear end. [Their colleague] lusted after Kate in a comical sort of way. But something about her suggested a woman with no inner life. She was just a beautiful ass. (58)

Though these opinions are Derek’s, the text never offers its reader an alternative perspective nor does it condemn Derek for this judgment. Kate is not given the opportunity to show that she is more than just a “beautiful ass.” Though only a minor character in the text, Derek’s treatment of Kate is representative of how the text treats women in general.<sup>155</sup>

The same is also true for Derek’s thoughts on Kelly when he meets her as an adult. He primarily comments on her physical appearance, and remembers their sexual relationship in high school:

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<sup>155</sup> In addition to those female characters I have mentioned, the novel introduces prostitutes, with whom Lou has his many affairs, and characters in porn: “Derek wanted to sit at the computer and watch the bit of jumpy video he had found a few days ago, an Asian woman narrating her way through a hand job, tugging and cooing and murmuring gorgeous foreign words” (36).

Her bloodless face was improved by age, by its deep lines and the folds around her mouth. Bristling red hair fell in great bundles, and the body stretched across the futon was round and abundant, more so than he remembered. Here was a breeder, an adult. (169)

Derek's description of Kelly as a "breeder" should remind us of the importance of reproduction and fatherhood to masculinity. Here, Kelly is attractive to Derek for this quality. This further emphasizes Derek's struggle to see women as anything other than mothers or whores.

Some readers may be tempted to read these various descriptions of women as ironic, because they are so overtly caricaturized and reliant on stereotypes or tropes. However, as Linda Hutcheon notes, "irony is dangerous and tricky—for ironist, interpreter, and target alike" (33). Just as the satire in *Rare Birds* is ultimately conservative, any potential moments of irony in *You Could Believe in Nothing* fail to actually expose any overt reversals of expectations. That is, if Derek's critique of women is something which the text wants the reader to find problematic, then the irony should be much more obvious and convincing. Writer s.e. smith calls this blend of irony and gender roles "ironic sexism," a term which she describes as follows:

There's something that happens behind the ironic veneer of [ironic] sexism, and that's actual sexism. It's a great front for people to use: 'we're just joking around, no one actually thinks this way.' It allows people to express actual sexist ideas, and maintain sexist social structures, without having to be nakedly open about it.

It's just as harmful for everyone involved as ... classic sexism, but it's more insidious, because it's harder to pin down and challenge. (*xojane* n.p.)

The problem with this sort of irony is that it potentially assumes all readers will recognize Derek's descriptions and opinions of women as ridiculous. However, creating caricatures of men and women, and reinforcing stereotypes of gender, can only be ironic and subversive if no one believes in these stereotypes. The way that Derek perceives women is still a reality in contemporary society.

The use of "ironic sexism" is perhaps most notable in *You Could Believe's* description of local journalist, Jill Gelately, who thoroughly condemns the CBC hockey documentary for being full of stereotypes. Reviewer Tom Sandborn notes that the novel's act of "creating an angry feminist newspaper columnist who attacks the show and the team is surprisingly clumsy and clichéd" (n.p.). Jill expresses her "chagrin when [the] local news show ... [devoted] a lengthy segment of last Friday's 'newscast' to male-only jock culture" (Fitzpatrick 161). In her column, "Jill Off," she talks about the loving portrayal of "cock-fighting, chest-thumping, show-us-your-tits glory" (162) associated with hockey in Newfoundland. This makes Derek angry: "For fuck's sake ... who is this slut? ... fucking bitch" (162).<sup>156</sup> Derek's violent language suggests that Jill is acting in

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<sup>156</sup> The novel's presentation of Jill reflects Marcia, a character in Phillip Roth's novel, *American Pastoral*. Ian Gregson argues that "Marcia, the feminist academic ... is a caricature in all the bad senses, being the simplistic object of the author's anger" (343). Marcia is a caricature of pro-feminist thought: "a difficult person" (Roth 339) and a "nonconformist of staggering self-certainty" (339), the narrator describes her as being the opposite of her husband, Barry, who is thoughtful, kindly, "a diligent, upright gentleman" (340). The narrator of Roth's novel adds that "it looked as though just observing the phenomenon of an opinioned old man, fettered still to his fantasy of the world, was all that was prompting Marcia to persist. To bait and bite and draw blood. Her sport" (361).

ways that she should not, at least according to his own masculine sense of the world, and he insults her for challenging the tenants of hegemonic masculinity. However, when Kelly tells Derek to calm down, she describes the column as “hilarious” (162) and tells Derek he “should be proud” (162). Thus, in a moment where the novel could be seen as self-aware and critical of its own presentation of men, Kelly’s dismissive nature—her urge, not to defend Jill’s writing, but placate Derek—and the text’s general approach towards the column (as it is quickly forgotten and not mentioned again), seems to ultimately mock Jill’s feminist attitude and writing.

Without sex to satisfy him, or to ensure his masculine identity, Derek often turns to hockey as a way to prove his manhood still exists. Early in the novel, after playing hockey with the other men, he considers how the “buzz lifted them, weightless, to an earlier time, back when the body was a rubbery instrument of delight, made for speed, agility, sweat, drink, sex” (3). Bruce Kidd, historian and Olympic athlete, argues that “modern sports reinforce the sexual division of labour, thereby perpetuating the great inequality between the sexes” (554). Historically, Kidd notes, sports were regarded as “education” (555), preparing boys and young men for careers in business and government by “instilling physical and mental toughnesss, obedience to authority and loyalty to the ‘team’” (555).<sup>157</sup> Yet, *You Could Believe in Nothing* goes on to deconstruct any

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<sup>157</sup> Kidd goes on to note how “the men who developed and promoted sports in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries were careful to ensure that only males were masculinized in this way. They kept sports as male preserves by actively discouraging females from participating” (556). Moreover, he adds that the “effect of sports is also to perpetuate patriarchy by reinforcing the sexual division of labour. By giving males exciting opportunities” (556)—for example, Kidd notes that there are “still more than twice as many events for men as for women” (556) in the Olympic Games—while “preventing girls and women from learning in the same situations, sports confirm the prejudice that males are a breed apart” (556).

favourable conceptions of hockey—and lament this loss.

Cynthia Sugars argues that hockey is often specifically associated with “father/son bonding and bloodline” (“Notes” 159).<sup>158</sup> She quotes former Canadian NHL player and writer, Ken Dryden, who describes this process in gendered and genealogical terms in his book *Home Game: Hockey and Life in Canada* (1990): “It is the Canadian cycle of life — the boy becomes a man, the player a fan, a coach, a father, a player again — and the game goes on” (274).<sup>159</sup> Following this, it seems significant that *You Could Believe in Nothing* introduces hockey as eleven-year-old Derek’s way to *escape* his father, Lou:

Derek spent almost every afternoon at the rink that year. He was eleven years old and his father had left home. Dad had to go because he had been screwing other women. ... So after school [Derek] went to the rink, sinking himself into the cold smells of coffee, exhaust, and damp. (1-2)

The text immediately subverts the myth of hockey as connecting son and father, presenting it instead as something that a son does to avoid even thinking about a failed father. Derek’s youthful decision to play hockey finds significance in the present day, as a middle-aged Derek, upon learning that Lou has been unfaithful to Derek’s mother, heads to the rink in an effort to distract himself from his disappointment.<sup>160</sup> Through the

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<sup>158</sup> Similarly, in “Notes on a Mystic Hockey Puck: Death, Paternity, and National Identity in Wayne Johnston’s *The Divine Ryans*” (2004), Sugars argues that Johnston’s novel “offers a profound meditation on the ambivalent connection between paternity, death, and national identity, all interwoven and infused within an extended and hilarious metaphor of hockey — pucks, games, myths, celebrities” (151).

<sup>159</sup> Women are entirely excluded from this dominant Canadian myth.

<sup>160</sup> Derek’s friend, Joey, defends Lou’s actions, describing for Derek his experience working in Alberta, where he “hardly ever saw a woman” (226) except when they would throw large parties and pay



laws of patrilineality, Lou's troubled masculinity (for though he is clearly virile, he has nevertheless overstepped the bounds of ideal masculinity by failing in his role as husband or father) ensures that his son's masculinity will be similarly troubled.

Derek's relationship with his father is further complicated by the presence of Derek's older half-brother, Curtis, with whom he shares a mother. Curtis has an especially tumultuous relationship with Lou, resenting him for replacing his own father, John Ogilvie. Lou has a favourite story—which has become “the family foundation myth” (232)—that he likes to tell about the day he reconnected with his estranged wife, who returned to Curtis's father after the first time Lou had an affair, over twenty years prior to the novel's action:

It was still rich in [Derek's] imagination, the story his father had shared ... How Louis Butt and Elizabeth Fonteyne had travelled to Detroit in the spring of 1965. How they had married there, and then gone to a hockey game, to see Bobby Hull ... beat the Detroit Red Wings. As he grew up and pieced together the details, Derek understood that it wasn't Bobby Hull who drew the newlyweds to Detroit. They had gone to retrieve Curtis, to reunite the boy with the mother who had given him up at birth. It was their first night together, the three of them sitting in the Detroit Olympia, watching Bobby Hull. (18)

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hundreds of dollars for prostitutes to attend. Joey states that “there's only so much a man can take. I mean, my balls were busting” (227). Though Derek and the text treat Lou and Joey's behaviour as distasteful, Derek's own actions are no better, marking him as a hypocrite; in fact, one could argue that Derek, who also treats a large number of women as sex objects, is only upset with his father because he has internalized a chivalric code of manhood which continues to place certain women, including maternal figures, as fragile objects deserving of protection.

This story consumes Derek. As a child, he “would ask to hear the Bobby Hull story” (18) every time his parents were arguing. This story reassures a younger Derek, and he learns to associate hockey with familial reliability. As an adult, he asks Lou to tell him this story again, after Lou admits to Derek that he is “in trouble” (this time, for including the cost of prostitutes on travel claims he made through work decades ago). Derek needs to hear this story to reassure himself that his father is still a good man, and that their family will survive this scandal. These two contradictory experiences of hockey—firstly, using it as a way to escape thoughts of his disappointing father, and secondly as the foundation of an important family narrative—emphasize the tension that surrounds the hockey myth.

As an adult, Derek even goes to the trouble of locating a DVD copy of this special hockey game, believing that understanding this moment will help him understand his father. While watching this DVD, he hears a voice coming from the arena speakers announcing “John Ogilvie, please report to the main office” (230). When he asks Curtis about this, Curtis tells Derek a different story. He tells Derek that their mother had left Lou and was living with Curtis and John until Lou came to “get her back” (231). Lou and his mother took Curtis to the hockey game, but he ran away when they were seated in the stadium. As Derek listens to this new version of the story that has been so important to him for most of his life, he considers:

How many times in the last few weeks had [he] sat listening while somebody stuck daggers into the things he thought he knew? The progress of his anxiety was becoming routine. First the oily, trickling sensation in his stomach, then the sweat, followed by the stiffening muscles and some kind of attack on the groin. (231)

As stated above, Derek has problems with his groin throughout the novel, often feeling pain in this area when he is experiencing stress. An “attack of the groin” can quite easily be read as an attack on Derek’s masculinity, on what “makes him” a man. Here, Derek’s pain specifically suggests that his troubled experience with patrilineality—and sport—denies him a positive experience of masculinity.

Derek thinks of this moment as “his brother ... violating the family foundation myth” (232). However, he also realizes that, “as much as he wished to, [he] couldn’t dismiss his step-brother’s [*sic*] reading of events. It rang with a forlorn plausibility that was missing from his own account, with its foolish investment in an old hockey hero, as if Bobby Hull were a deity, directing [the family] fortunes from on high” (235). As I establish in Chapter 1, Newfoundland fiction frequently connects the public loss of sovereignty with the private loss of fatherhood. As the island loses its sense of identity, so do its male inhabitants, primarily as they feel separated from their fathers. Whereas *The Strangers’ Gallery*, *Galore*, and *Gaff Topsails* celebrate both myths and fathers, *You Could Believe in Nothing* deconstructs both the expected role of the father and mythology, suggesting once again that life in the present day is no longer able to preserve either.<sup>161</sup>

*You Could Believe in Nothing* often blames forces and structures outside of the men for their current circumstances, from the island’s current economic reality, to the disappointing actions of women and fathers. Newfoundland men are, undoubtedly, in

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<sup>161</sup> One of the important ways in which the novel departs from *Rare Birds*: while Riche’s novel provides the reader with Phonse, a model of ideal masculinity who is also a casualty of a changing Newfoundland, *You Could Believe in Nothing* offers no such paragon of manhood.

crisis in this novel. They are, literally and figuratively, wounded losers. Derek becomes the novel's primary victim, and the reader is encouraged to sympathize with him. The text blames Derek's job for destroying his physically fit body, Nicole for his diseased groin, and Lou for Derek's emotional turmoil and inability to trust. Derek, the novel's protagonist and antihero, is simply a victim of contemporary society, a casualty of women's sexual liberation and the city's inability to provide a working environment in which men can succeed. Various elements of society have come together to deny Derek the life he ought to be living. The novel's treatment of women, and its dismantling of the myths of fatherhood and hockey, suggest that the present-day culture of Newfoundland—which is frequently blamed for being unable to maintain these myths—is unable to provide the environment that men need to successfully prove and maintain their masculinity.

### **Masochism and Victimhood in *Down to the Dirt***

*Down to the Dirt* amplifies the portrayal of white male victimhood we see in *Rare Birds* and *You Could Believe*.<sup>162</sup> However, rather than presenting Keith as merely a victim of circumstance, like Dave and Derek, the novel begins with a depiction of Keith as a victim of overt abuse. The story opens with 13-year-old Keith engaging in sexual intercourse

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<sup>162</sup> Hynes's sophomore novel, *Right Away Monday* (2007), echoes the plot and thematic concerns of *Down to the Dirt*: "Clayton Reid, the booze-besotted, drug-addicted ne'er-do-well at the center of Joel Thomas Hynes's second novel, bears a striking resemblance to Keith Kavanagh ... Both are selfish, self-destructive young men who use alcohol, drugs, and casual sex as a means of keeping the harshness of the world at bay, and both find their lives of reckless excess called into question by the appearance of a strong woman" (Beattie).

with 26-year-old Glenda, and though this prearranged event is something that Keith is initially excited about, the reader witnesses it transform into something disturbing:

I can feel the bone of her pelvis grindin' against me and I suddenly wants to get off of her, out of this room, out of this house. I nearly wishes I was over in the yard playin' dinkies ... This is not my friend Glenda, if she ever was in the first place. I don't recognize her no more. (10)

Keith becomes deeply upset when Glenda calls out her ex-boyfriend's name when she orgasms, and he runs out of the house. In the following weeks, Keith admits that although it has become "the ultimate of fantasies" (11) to relive their time together, it also makes him "all pissed off" and he "[feels] like runnin', hidin' away out of it" (11). He goes on to connect his subsequent bad behaviour with this incident:

That winter I had a few scraps with Andy, fistfights, over the stupidest things. My father caught me swipin' twenty bucks out of his bedroom. I was suspended from school for writin' shit about the teachers on the bathroom wall. Suspended from hockey for the last three games of the season. (11)

Though Keith insists that he is not "tryin' to say that that stuff had anything to do with Glenda" (11), his protestations do little to distract the reader from the fact that he has experienced statutory rape. This opening section thus not only encourages sympathy for Keith, but also positions women as threatening, an idea I return to later.<sup>163</sup>

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<sup>163</sup> As critic Jim Bartley argues, "Keith ... [is] a mesmerizing mess [but he] is not a bad guy. He's full of tender impulses" (n.p.).

Keith's subsequent behaviour further complicates this image of him as a victim: throughout the novel, an older Keith knowingly seeks out situations that will result in bodily harm. He often revels in this type of destructive behavior. For example, as I describe below, he giggles during his fight with his friend, Andy, and visits the Careen house despite knowing he will be beaten if he goes there. Keith's speech about the "laziness" of his generation, which I examine below in greater detail, provides us with another possible explanation for his behaviour: he invites physical pain because he believes it makes him more of a "man." For Keith, violence becomes a way to assert his masculinity while living in a society that denies him any other avenue to successfully experience his manhood.

Various moments in *Down to the Dirt* further validate this man-as-victim perspective. Masculinity, in general, becomes Newfoundland society's most recent casualty of cultural and economic change. This is not to say that these Newfoundland men do not have real problems, but, as I argue at the beginning of this chapter, and in my Introduction, positioning the white man as society's latest victim ignores the fact that women and people of colour continue to suffer even greater disenfranchisement.

For example, Keith draws the reader's attention to the closure of the fish plant in Chapter 8, reminding the reader of the influence the cod moratorium has had on this community:

When I was growin' up, the Careens' place was forever teemin' with hooligans ... but, aside from the two youngest brothers, the place is pretty much empty these days. The whole clan scattered when the plant shut down. ... All the two b'ys

does these days is drink and sell and smoke dope. ... I started buying dope from the youngest brother, Gerald, when I was around fourteen. ... He's got a reputation from Bay Bulls to Trepassey for bein' the fastest, toughest son-of-a-whore on the go. He don't look like much. He's only skin and bones ... but I'm after seein' Gerald Careen take down fellas twice his size with one smack. (99)

Keith draws a direct connection between the two Careen brothers' substance abuse and the plant's closure. Through no fault of their own, these men have lost their jobs, and they now have little else to do with their time; perhaps they even need to sell drugs to make a living.

It is significant that Keith admires Gerald for his ability to "take down fellas ... with one smack" (99). Christopher E. Forth, whose work on masculinity I introduce in Chapter 1, states that "excessive passivity, and over-sensitivity to pain, is among the most obvious hallmarks of weakness and effeminacy" (115), adding that there exists "a notable trend towards periodic renewal of masculinity through controlled violence or measured doses of pain" (115). This reflects Derek's obsession with his weak body in *You Could Believe in Nothing*, and also appears relevant in *Down to the Dirt*, as we see Gerald's physical strength is a sort of consolation prize: he may be out of work, and he may be a drug addict, but he also possesses a form of physical strength that satisfies the requirements of masculinity. His violence provides him with a valid masculine identity despite his forced idleness. Within this template, Keith's response to his experience with Glenda—which he arguably understood as emasculating, as it caused him much distress—appears compulsory: if he is to maintain his hypermasculine identity, he must

execute whatever actions necessary to maintain a respected form of masculinity.

*Down to the Dirt*'s portrayal of Keith echoes other elements of crisis rhetoric that suggest contemporary men are denied an environment in which to prove their manhood. In *Manhood in America*, Kimmel comments on how many men believe that, for example, they "require war to masculinize them" (241). Here, he quotes General Homer Lea, who wrote in 1898 that "the greatest danger that a long period of profound peace offers to a nation is that of creating effeminate tendencies in young men" (241). Halfway through the novel, Keith gives a speech which echoes a number of these sentiments, as he blames a lack of adventure and an "easy" life for "ruining" his generation. After he and Andy, find an abandoned flatbed truck, outside of the fish plant where they are working for the summer, the two proceed to destroy this truck for seemingly no particular reason:

I found a hammer under the seat in the cab. Next thing you know the glass to the speedometer was broke out and we were roarin'. Then it was the gas gauge.

Bustin' our guts laughin'. The rearview mirror ... Andy, slashin' up the seats with an old guttin' knife ... I s'pose we really lost it. Tears streamin' down our faces.

Then Andy made an odd sound. I had a glance at him. His face was wet with tears but he wasn't laughin' no more ... Pure rage runnin' down his cheeks as he drove the knife into the seat cushions over and over. I guess I'd stopped laughin' sometime back too. (150)

Keith's explanation for this behaviour, this "pure rage," appears on the following pages:



Because no one believes in adventure anymore ... I tell you, my generation is numbed and ruined by the modern convenience of mind-blowing entertainment.

Who in their right mind is gonna open up a bookstore this day and age?

Hollywood and prime time gibberish has got my crowd by the balls. No one has a sense of adventure anymore 'cause there's no need for one. You can go and rent the grand adventure at any old time and experience it risk-free. Eat your fuckin' Doritos and drink your goddamn Pepsi and fuck off to your bloated bed. Get up and go to school or go to work. No cuts or bruises. No scars. (152)

Though he doesn't specifically reference war, Keith blames many societal and economic forces for his generation's problems, believing that they "have it too easy" in the present day. His anti-consumerist rant accuses "modern conveniences" and the entertainment industry as ruining men, taking away their "sense of adventure"—men are no longer tough or rugged, evidenced by their lack of "scars," but are "bloated," rendered lazy and useless by snack food and television. This reaction gestures back to my earlier argument about the *bildungsroman* and modernity: here, Keith makes it clear that he is resistant to these kind of modern changes, and his lack of personal growth can ultimately be connected to these views.

David Fincher's film, *Fight Club* (1999), based on the novel by Chuck Palahniuk (1996), provides an infamous example of this type of rhetoric. The film follows a group of men who start their own fight club as a response to living in what they view as an emasculating consumer culture. About halfway through the film, the protagonist gives the following speech:

Man, I see in *Fight Club* the strongest and smartest men who have ever lived. I see all this potential, and I see it squandered. Goddammit, an entire generation pumping gas, waiting tables, slaves with white collars. Advertising has us chasing cars and clothes, working jobs we hate so we can buy shit we don't need. We're the middle children of history, man; no purpose or place. We have no Great War, no Great Depression. Our Great War is a spiritual war. Our Great Depression is our lives. We've all been raised by television to believe that one day we'd all be millionaires and movie gods and rock stars. But we won't; and we're slowly learning that fact. And we're very, very pissed off.

The parallels between *Down to the Dirt* and *Fight Club* are revealing for a number of reasons. Lynn M. Ta argues that *Fight Club* offers a “problematic portrayal of late capitalism’s obsessive push for profits and excessive consumerism, and, more importantly, the latter’s damaging effects on an American masculinity gone soft” (265). The characters in this film “cannot seem to escape the feminized trappings of corporate oppression” (265) until they start “an underground world of rebellion and hyper-masculinity” (265) where men can reclaim their lost manhood simply by making each other bleed.

Characters in *Fight Club* feel victimized by a culture that has somehow stolen their manhood. The film alludes to other moments in contemporary society that have influenced this perception. Ta writes: “Recent images of victimized white men include such phenomena as Norman Mailer’s “White Negro” ... the bombings of a paranoid Timothy McVeigh, the angry tirade of Michael Douglas’s character in *Falling Down*, the

Ben Folds' anthem "Rockin' The Suburbs" that laments being 'all alone in my white-boy pain,' and more recently, the agitated and arguably homophobic and misogynistic rhymes of Eminem" (266). Ta's argument is clear: there is an increasingly popular move to imagine white men as victims since advances have been made by many marginalized groups—people of colour, women, LGBTQ groups—in recent decades, and this rhetoric appears in Newfoundland's contemporary novels.

Keith grows up in a small community, and yet (opposing what the novels of Chapter 2 postulate) he is not untouched by capitalism's reach. This setting therefore serves two purposes: firstly, keeping with the trend expressed in *Rare Birds*, it shows that the outports in Newfoundland are not the havens from modernization promoted by *Galore*, *Gaff Topsails*, *Sweetland*, *Minister Without Portfolio*, and *The Shipping News*. Secondly, though initially this choice of setting may seem to prove that the novel is actively working *against* those who make romantic claims, positioning Keith and other men in the community as victims suggests that there is, ultimately, something "wrong." That is, even while the text implicitly deconstructs the stereotype of Newfoundland as an idyllic respite from consumerism, there is an overarching belief that contemporary culture is harmful towards men. With its references to past eras, the novel gestures towards a time when life in Newfoundland was better for men. However, instead of offering a solution (i.e., the novels of Chapter 1 suggest a return to modes of masculinity popular in the past and the books of Chapter 2 suggest a return to the outport; both recommend fatherhood), *Down to the Dirt* cynically suggests that men can only continue to fight (quite literally) for a return to power.

In *Down to the Dirt*, the violent actions of the men in the community anticipate their attempts to regain some sense of power or control. For David Savran, the “masochistic male subject” (36) is “both a function of the rise of capitalism and a necessary cog in the process that reproduces patriarchal heterosexualized relations” (36). Although the male subject may believe himself to be a victim, he is also actively working towards regaining some sense of patriarchal control, and various forms of violence are often the result. Sally Robinson, whose work on whiteness and masculinity I introduced in Chapter 1, takes up this argument at length in her book, *Marked Men: White Masculinity in Crisis* (2000). Here, she looks at *Time* magazine’s cover story, “Men: Are They Really That Bad?” (1994), stating that “*Time*’s answer to its own question posed images of mutilated and wounded white men against feminist claims of women’s victimization, demonstrating that white men can most persuasively claim victimization by appealing to representations of bodily trauma” (3). She adds that “white masculinity most fully represents itself as victimized by inhabiting a wounded body” (6). We see many wounded male bodies in *Down to the Dirt*, most notably Keith’s, which is constantly being beaten, burned, or otherwise damaged.

For example, during one visit to Gerald’s place, Keith gets drunk, smokes some hash, and taunts Gerald, even though he knows it means he will be abused:

Don’t know what I was thinkin’ to go and say [go fuck yourself] to Gerald Careen on a drinkin’ night. He draws back his arm and lets me have it square into the face. He hits me so hard that I bounce off the wall behind me. ... Then I says it again ... My nose is bleedin’ and I starts bawlin’. Fuck. Tears and blood and

drool and snots runnin' down my face ... I wraps myself around the toilet bowl and vomits some more. ... I lies there for a while, tryin' to stop from sobbin' ... I don't know, sometimes I bawls for no real reason these days. (102-103).

In *In a Time of Fallen Heroes: The Re-Creation of Masculinity* (1993), William Betcher and William Pollack—who challenge popular notions of masculinity by showing how they can be harmful to men—state that masculine violence may “be a result of feelings and ideas of shame and honour” (368) and that “refusing to fight or not knowing how to fight is considered disgraceful or unmasculine in this view of masculinity” (368). In *Down to the Dirt*, Keith considers how “some says that too much anger is a bad thing, that it cripples you and it eats you alive and all that shit. I say it's the one feeling that makes me feel ... whole” (139). The text suggests that Keith uses physical aggression, masochism, and property destruction to hide any shame or feelings of inadequacy he may be experiencing with regards to his masculinity. This shame is something that, the reader is led to believe, is the result of society's inability to provide him with a space in which to fully experience his manhood. Moreover, it is noteworthy that Keith is “bawling” in the scene I describe above, as men are often expected to hide their emotions. Keith's display becomes yet another sign of his failing masculine identity.

The novel increases Keith's reliability (and his likability) by providing two chapters from the point-of-view of Keith's childhood friend, Andy, whom the text presents as someone trying to resist the version of masculinity enacted by Keith and their

peers, and one chapter from the point-of-view of Natasha.<sup>164</sup> The narrative structure of the former allows the reader to witness how the seemingly passive Andy is, in fact, as troubled and as aggressive as Keith.<sup>165</sup> The novel's use of first-person narration provides us with Keith's personal thoughts and opinions; with the inclusion of chapters told from both Andy and Natasha's perspectives, the text reassures us that Keith is not an unreliable narrator. The stories that these two narrate ratify what Keith tells us in his own first-person chapters.

For example, in Natasha's chapter, Keith has an altercation with Natasha's father, Stan. Though Natasha is certainly not objective—these are the two men with whom she is closest—her relationship with both men at least suggests that she is not favouring either individual in their altercations. She describes a particularly violent scene:

There they were ... [Dad's] hand gripped around Keith's throat ... There was a dent in the wall behind his head and I guessed that to be the source of the big thump I'd heard. His face looked like it could burst under the pressure of Dad's beefy hand ... [Dad] had a seriously psychotic look in his eye, a vacancy, like he didn't know where he was or who it was he was tryin' to kill. I didn't care what it

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<sup>164</sup> Keith explains how "Andrew the Psychology Major" (139) likes to pretend he "understands just about everything under the goddamn sun these days" (139).

<sup>165</sup> In Chapter 2, while the police are looking for Keith to question him about the fire that is presently burning down the forest surrounding their community, Andy encounters Keith, hiding in a tree (21). Making a joke, Keith tells Andy to calm down, asking him "where's the fuckin' fire?" (22). In response to this, Andy tells the reader that he "can't stand the look of 'im and I drives the lit cigarette into his chin with the full force of my fist, burnin' my knuckles in the process ... Knees and elbows colliding with ribs and balls. Heads crackin' together hard with spite" (23). In response, Keith "giggles" (23), seemingly enjoying their fight.

was all about, but I didn't want Keith dead and I'm sure no one wanted the scandal of Dad going off to jail. (76)

When Natasha attempts to free Keith from her dad's grip, Stan "[catches her] full in the chest and the force of it [sends her] sailin' across the kitchen floor" (76). When she starts to cry, he "seemed to come back to his senses for a second" (76) and he lets Keith go.<sup>166</sup> Here, in comparison to Stan, Keith appears meek and mild. This moment creates sympathy for Keith, again positioning him as a victim. It also furthers the argument that contemporary society provides no other outlet for men to express themselves than physical violence.

*Down to the Dirt* also introduces queer relationships, presenting sex between men as a deterrent to manhood. Stan, for example, becomes inordinately angry when he realizes that a sex toy—a dildo—is missing from his room. It is made clear that Natasha's mother does not know about this toy, and so the dildo must be something that Stan uses himself. In an effort to deflect blame, Natasha hurls the toy at her father and yells, "Get out! You're a pervert!" (78). Immediately, she notes an "embarrassed, shaken expression" (78) on his face as he sits down with her, "all sheepish lookin'" (78), and says "my trout, listen to me. That was something for adults" (78). Natasha considers how "this was serious" (78) since he has not called her "trout" in years. Stan's sudden change

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<sup>166</sup> Stan quickly regrets his behaviour and, as a reader, his remorse is expected to make us more sympathetic; it also makes the whole situation appear somehow less threatening, as if presenting us with a repentant character can lessen the severity of his actions. This is dangerous, because in no way should Stan's violent behaviour be considered normal. Yet, both Natasha and her mother take her father's behaviour for granted and they are never surprised at the ferocity of his acts. Their easy acceptance directs the reader into feeling the same way.

shows how deeply Natasha's comment ("you're a pervert") affects him. He is embarrassed to be found with a sex toy, especially one endowed with homoerotic connotations.

Michel Foucault argues that the idea of phallic penetration is important to masculinity, as "much more than the body itself ... much more than pleasure ... the act of penetration appears as a qualifier of sex acts, with its few variants of position and especially its poles of activity and passivity" (*Care* 29). Active and passive are highly gendered here, and Foucault quotes Aristotle, who claims that "the female ... is passive, the male ... is active" (*Pleasure* 46). Therefore, he who is penetrated is viewed as a passive object (i.e., a woman), while he who does the penetration is active, or the subject. Though these comments come from Foucault's work on, respectively, Classical Greece and Classical Rome, his reading of the gender politics of penetration is not restricted to these contexts, but has a transhistorical meaning; they remain extremely relevant within a contemporary context. For example, writing forty years later, Jonathan Allan, in his book, *Reading from Behind: A Cultural Analysis of the Anus*, similarly notes how "surrender[ing] the penetrative act in favour of being penetrated is to renounce one's masculinity" (38). Allan explores the idea that to be penetrated is to abdicate power, noting how it is this fear that motivates so much of the "moral taboo" (38) around anal pleasure and queer men: "the penetrated male uses his anus as if he were a woman; he allows his body to be feminized by another" (38). Though Allan notes that this logic is "reductive" (38), he maintains that this is the prevailing, popular myth for the majority of contemporary Western society. Stan's reaction to Natasha finding his dildo exemplifies



this way of thinking, and the text presents it as conventional; Stan is to be laughed at or criticized for his abnormal sexual predilections.

Furthermore, the introduction of pedophilic priests in *Down to the Dirt* reveals the novel's prejudicial connection of homosexuality with pedophilia, both of which it seems to blame for man's alleged loss of masculinity and current victim status.<sup>167</sup> Keith informs the reader that his Grandmother never "set foot in the church again" (83) after "all that shit came out about child abuse and drugs and pornography and homosexuality" (83). Here, Keith references the scandal at Mount Cashel (something Dave refers to in *Rare Birds*); he also has his own personal experience later in the novel. In Chapter 9, Keith must travel to St. John's weekly to participate in court-mandated counseling with Reverend Shane. At first, Keith states that his counselor is "someone who actually understood what he was goin' through" (115-6). However, after a few weeks, Keith claims that "all [Shane] wants to know about was sex" (117). Though at first the reader is led to believe that Keith is overreacting about what appears to be typical psychoanalysis, Natasha later receives a phone call from a detective who wants to speak with all of Shane's former clients; the Reverend was being investigated for "his suspected involvement with some child pornography ring on the mainland" (126). This moment validates Keith.

Significantly, Keith has a dream about "them faggot priests" (82) that also

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<sup>167</sup> Clyde W. Franklin II argues that "there is a tendency on the part of many to confuse pedophilia with homosexuality" (166) and this is one of the reasons why homosexuality has often been associated with criminality in popular culture.

involves Natasha.<sup>168</sup> In his dream, he is leading Natasha by the hand to the Grotto, a clearing in the forest where, he informs the reader, Catholic priests used to hold secret services (84). In the dream, Keith states that he “feels ten times stronger” (84) but Natasha is “whimpering and scared” (84). In fact, “the more upset [Natasha] gets ... the more powerful [Keith] gets” (84). However, after a while, dream-Keith “becomes overwhelmed with love and compassion” (84). They reach a door in the forest, and while Keith resists entering, Natasha “insists on goin’ in” (84), moving “with a real confidence” (84) as Keith’s body “grows weaker” (84). This role reversal is important: while Keith is the powerful leader at the beginning of the dream, which takes place in a yonic symbol—the Grotto—Natasha assumes her commanding position once they leave the grotto and enter what appears to be a dilapidated church. Natasha takes Keith by the hand, reversing their earlier position as she pulls him through the room: Keith “feels like a child bein’ drawn away by a stranger, far away from all things familiar and warm” (85). While Natasha is able to exit the room, closing the door behind her, Keith remains, and finds himself in front of an open coffin that, to his “sheer horror” (85), holds himself.

Keith’s dream suggests various emotions. Firstly, it implies that he fears being “led” by Natasha, an activity which suggests that she has more control than he in their relationship. Secondly, his nightmare highlights his fear that he will be “stuck” behind while Natasha manages to move forward in the world, and he blames Natasha for stifling him. Keith’s fear of Natasha moving on, or moving forward, is reflective of the general

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<sup>168</sup> Echoing Dave in *Rare Birds*, Keith emphasizes the priests’ behavior not as pedophilia, but homosexual, linking queer relationships with child molestation.

fear that women will somehow replace men in a contemporary society that is moving towards being less patriarchal.

Furthermore, that the dream is set in a church gestures towards Keith's negative feelings towards the priests, and he seems to be blaming both Natasha *and* the church for his inability to thrive. He is comfortable while penetrating the Grotto, a symbol of female sexuality, but this comfort dissipates when he enters the church, symbolic for the abuse of boys. His descriptions of the priests abusing young boys colour his dream, and although he himself was not abused by these priests, the shared trauma is something that deeply affects him. Keith becomes a victim simply by being a man and sharing vicariously in this history of abuse. According to the text, as a woman, Natasha is spared this abuse. The novel's decision to position Natasha as stronger than Keith suggests that, whereas women are now somehow able to avoid becoming victims, today's men are not.

## **Conclusion**

In a recent article entitled "White Men Behaving Sadly," Jack Halberstam reviews the recent Oscar-nominated film, *Manchester by the Sea* (2016), describing it as a culmination of "all the laddy behaviours that make up the repertoire of white masculinity" (n.p.). It is, he argues, a film where "we finally understand why the white man is sad, why everyone else is bad and why despite being sad because everyone else is bad, he learns to be a dad." Though darkly comedic, Halberstam's article is quite serious in its desire to reveal how the film lets us see how powerful, heterosexual white men see the world. Namely, that:

the film sees the world only through the eyes of working class white men. It sees such men as tragic and heroic, as stoic and moral, as stern but good. The film knows that the tragedy from which the white man suffers is of his own making but nonetheless the film believes that the tragedies that they have created happen to them and not to other people.

The “white world of *Manchester by the Sea*,” Halberstam concludes, is elegiac, and overwhelmed by a sense of tragedy. This tragedy encourages the belief that “it is time, apparently, to make America great again” (n.p.), to ensure that the sad white man is lifted up and made to feel better. This idea, of making American great *again*, gestures towards an attachment to the past. As I argue in the introduction to this chapter, *Rare Birds*, *You Could Believe*, and *Down to the Dirt* are all examples of the anti-*bildungsroman*: as characters in each resist modernity (eschewing certain features of capitalism and changes in masculinity), they also resist any emotional or mental growth or development.

As members of the transnational, Western genre of sad- or mad-white-man-fiction, *Rare Birds*, *You Could Believe in Nothing*, and *Down to the Dirt* present, again and again, an environment that no longer endorses masculine identity, positioning their male characters as wounded victims. Yet, these texts enact a particular regionalism as part of their interpretation and presentation of this genre. These novels not only bewail the current state of masculinity, but also imply that this dismal situation is somehow both the result and cause of the island of Newfoundland’s own diminished condition. As Newfoundland culture sacrificed its traditions and myths for an economy based on tourism and performance, it became a place that denied men the opportunity to work as

producers. The men who grow up in such a society continue to suffer, as the island offers them no space upon which to prove and maintain their masculine identities.

In the following chapter, however, I argue that certain Newfoundland novels are trying to *make* this space, or at least encourage others to help the island develop into a more progressive or accepting place. *This All Happened*, *Annabel*, and *Come, Thou Tortoise* all offer versions of masculinity that we have not yet seen in contemporary Newfoundland fiction, and their efforts to present masculinity on the island as something a bit more complicated are welcome.

## Chapter 4

### Alternate Masculinities?

To build feminist dwellings, we need to dismantle what has already been assembled; we need to ask what it is we are against, what it is we are for.

—Sara Ahmed, *Living a Feminist Life*

I am a gender failure. I failed at the gender binary, unable to find a place in being either a man or a woman ... But ultimately I believe that it's the binary that fails to leave room for most people to write their own gender stories.

—Rae Spoon, *Gender Failure*

In July 2015, Kyra Rees, a transgender activist from St. John's who identifies as a woman, won her court case against the provincial government and was granted permission to have her birth certificate reflect her gender identity. In an interview with the CBC in December 2014, Rees commented on the “anxiety, humiliation, or worse” (“Kyra Rees Fighting”) that she experienced every time she had to present a government-issued ID that introduced her as male. Alongside the embarrassment she felt at being routinely “outed” and having to “constantly explain” herself, Rees worried for her safety, knowing that transgender individuals face an inordinate amount of gender-based violence.<sup>169</sup> Until Rees won her case, Newfoundland and Labrador law only allowed the changing of sex-designation on a birth certificate if an individual had undergone gender reassignment surgery, something which is not only expensive, but can result in a loss of

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<sup>169</sup> Advocates state that “trans Canadians face higher rates of violence than other groups” (Paling).

sexual pleasure and fertility, or have other dangerous complications (Dreger). However, because of Rees's efforts, the Newfoundland and Labrador government decided to change the Vital Statistics Act and allow all transgender individuals to modify their government identifications to match their gender identities. More recently, in April 2017, local activist, Gemma Hickey, who identifies as neither male nor female, applied for a new birth certificate that identifies them as non-binary (Boone, "Seeking").

Rees's and Hickey's stories highlight two different things. First, their experiences reveal the type of struggle anyone who possesses what society considers an atypical gender identity must face daily. Secondly, and more optimistically, the success found by these individuals suggests that such struggles may not be as necessary in the future, as the change these two, and others, are enacting now will make the experience of alternate gender identities more accessible for future generations. Although Rees's battle was not easy, it was legally successful, and it gestures towards the potential for society on the island to embrace identities that exist beyond the binary of male and female. Hickey, too, won their battle: in December 2017, they were allowed to change the information on their birth certificate to read "X," instead of "M" for male or "F" for female.<sup>170</sup> The efforts and successes of these two individuals underline the ways that traditional binary classifications can be dismantled at a legal level. Moreover, their activism reveals a desire for a space in Newfoundland that accepts alternate gender identities.

This concept of space is a complex one. In *Space, Place and Gendered Identities*:

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<sup>170</sup> Moreover, in October 2018, they received their gender-neutral passport in the mail, one of the first to be issued in Canada ("N.L. Activist").

*Feminist History and the Spatial Turn*, editors Kathryne Beebe, Angela Davis, and Kathryn Gleadle argue that, throughout the 1980s, space became more clearly recognized as not only a product of social processes, but was, once established, “a tool in the creation, maintenance and transformation of relations of domination, oppression and exploitation” (2).<sup>171</sup> Physical and mental spaces are regulated by the norms that surround them, and therefore location becomes important in the construction of identity. Michael Winter’s *This All Happened*, Kathleen Winter’s *Annabel*, and Jessica Grant’s *Come, Thou Tortoise* want Newfoundland to be a space that encourages alternate gender identities to thrive. However, both *Annabel* and *This All Happened* are sceptical about this possibility; these two novels suggest that the island is not yet able to support alternate gender identities. Despite this, these three novels remain unique for their nuanced look at masculinity on the island, as they offer various portrayals of manhood that differ from the popular iterations found in this project’s other nine texts: *This All Happened* explores metrosexuality, *Annabel* looks at the role intersexuality plays in breaking down gendered classifications, and *Come, Thou Tortoise* embraces homosexuality as a welcome element of a new Newfoundland masculinity. Together, these novels suggest that a constructive reaction to the “crisis of masculinity” is possible: *This All Happened*, *Annabel*, and *Tortoise* embrace the idea that the binary of gender is starting to collapse, and that this so-called crisis can be understood as an asset, or even something to be celebrated.

To elaborate, the protagonist of Michael Winter’s *This All Happened*, Gabriel

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<sup>171</sup> In *The Production of Space*, Henri Lefebvre writes: "The spatial practice of a society secretes that society's space; it propounds and presupposes it, in a dialectical interaction; it produces it slowly and surely as it masters and appropriates it." (38)



English, possesses an alternate masculinity in that he does not satisfy the various requirements presented in the other novels of this thesis. Gabriel is a “metrosexual,” or a “New Man,” concepts I explore at greater length in this chapter; he is more concerned with his emotions and the arts than he is with developing his physical strength or becoming a father. The novel follows Gabriel as he wanders the streets of St. John’s, writing in his diary and worrying about his relationship with his seemingly distant girlfriend, Lydia. However, Gabriel decides to leave Newfoundland after acknowledging his inability to find a space on the island, urban or rural, in which he feels he belongs. His inability to find happiness in Newfoundland suggests that, although alternate masculinities can be found on the island, they are unable to flourish in such an ostensibly repressive environment.

Winter’s *Annabel* ultimately suggests the same thing—that Newfoundland is not quite ready for alternate expressions of gender—though it does argue that such a space exists elsewhere. The novel deals directly with issues of gender and identity through the presentation of Wayne, an intersex individual who grows up in Labrador in the 1970s and relocates to St. John’s at the age of seventeen. Alongside a thorough examination of the difficulties intersex people can experience in Newfoundland—as those around them use violence and coercion to force them to conform to a binary of gender—Winter’s novel first establishes and then begins to deconstruct and resist certain gendered traditions of Newfoundland by transforming the character of Wayne’s father, Treadway, from a man who initially refuses to acknowledge his son’s atypical masculinity to one who openly embraces all facets of his child’s identity. The novel compares and contrasts rural and

urban spaces, imbuing each with prescriptive qualities: while the city of St. John's refuses to allow Wayne to embrace his androgynous identity, the novel suggests that the forest—a “natural” space that the text connects with Indigenous peoples in problematic ways—is one of the few locations where alternate gender identities can flourish. However, at the end of *Annabel*, Wayne moves to Boston to attend university.<sup>172</sup> Here, for the first time, Wayne observes people who are “the same as him” (457). This ending suggests that Newfoundland is not yet ready to accept multiple and varying gender identities—or, at least, Newfoundland in the 1980s is unable to do so, as the novel takes place a number of decades in the past. As Rees's and Hickey's cases show us, this situation is not inevitable, and so there remains hope that this situation could improve.

In its exploration of fatherhood, homosexual relationships and identity, Grant's *Come, Thou Tortoise* provides a more optimistic look at the reconstruction of gender in contemporary Newfoundland fiction by reversing the endings that we see in *Annabel* and *This All Happened*. Grant's novel explores family dynamics in present-day St. John's, presenting a gay couple who, in their movement from England to Newfoundland, suggest that the island can potentially provide a space where allegedly atypical behaviours or identities can be accepted. Although the death of one of these men satisfies the popular “Bury Your Gays” trope, which I examine in greater detail below, Grant's novel still provides the first positive representations of gay characters in this thesis: up until his

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<sup>172</sup> I use “he” when referring to Wayne, as this is the pronoun that the text uses for him. However, it should be noted that Wayne, who is intersex, was raised as a male child only on the advice of his pediatrician. As the arbitrary nature of gender is one of the novel's primary focuses, my use of “he” may be troubling, as it perpetuates the idea that Wayne is more a man than a woman, despite his ultimate desire to be viewed as neither.

death, Walter Flowers is an intelligent and devoted father who finds happiness with his male partner, Thoby. For this reason alone, this novel is an invaluable addition to contemporary Newfoundland fiction.

### ***This All Happened* and Newfoundland Fiction's "New Man"**

By constructing *This All Happened* as a diary written by a man who is more introverted and observant than he is active and effectual, Winter's novel challenges expectations and presents alternative ways of looking at masculinity in Newfoundland. Domna C. Stanton argues that, historically, the female has been associated with "personal and intimate concerns, the male with professional achievements—a replication, it seem[s], of the private/public, inner/outer dichotomies that mark genderic differences in our symbolic system" (11). Though Valerie Raoul writes that "whether or not certain literary genres can be defined as 'masculine' or 'feminine' is problematic" (58), she notes a historical context that positions the private journal, or diary, as the expected genre for women writers. In the nineteenth century, women were discouraged from writing for the public—they were allowed to engage in "non-productive private writing" (58) as long as "it did not interfere with the business of being a woman" (58).<sup>173</sup> Raoul goes on to describe how modern women writers have "rediscovered and reappropriated" (63) the diary-form as a

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<sup>173</sup> Raoul writes: "In addition to its private nature and the usual motivation (a malaise based on a questioning of selfhood), the conditions necessary for diary-writing are a third element making it apparently suitable for women. ... Any event or non-event may be considered worthy of comment. ... What is normally considered marginal in a man's world becomes central and the flow of anecdote plus comment [is] typical of women's discourse" (59).

“specifically feminine experience” (63). Winter’s text stands alone in this thesis as the only novel to adopt the form of a diary; that his novel is also this project’s only male-authored text to offer an alternative version of successful masculine identity does not seem coincidental.<sup>174</sup> Rather, Winter’s use of genre, which allows the reader to encounter the protagonist from an intimate perspective often associated with women, immediately frames the protagonist as someone who subverts the expectations of masculinity.

There are many gendered aspects of Gabriel’s identity that disrupt the so-called norms of Newfoundland manhood. Terry Goldie argues that *This All Happened* presents both the Newfoundlander and the heterosexual man as “rather more complex than is often suggested” (“Angel” 185). As a professional writer, Gabriel is neither physically powerful, nor does he exhibit any signs of virility. He does not perform any manual labour. He is introspective rather than active. As I state above, Gabriel’s masculine identity corresponds more closely with the recently constructed category of the “metrosexual,” or what has been referred to by British scholars as the “New Man.”<sup>175</sup> In his study of the metrosexual, Edward Peitsch states that the term was used at the

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<sup>174</sup> An exception to this trend of women-authored diaries can be found within the genre of exploration writing. In her essay, “Literature of Exploration: Canadian Travel Books of the 1870s,” Elizabeth Waterston writes that “books written to report on voyages across [Canada]” (n.p.) were prolific in the late nineteenth century, as explorers—who were predominantly male—documented their journeys and shared their experiences with the public. Literary critic Eva-Marie Kröller writes that “one of the most problematic ideological uses of exploration literature is the ways in which such writing asserts the invader’s claim to ownership, by stipulating that he and the metropolitan power he represents are the first to survey and therefore claim the place” (83). Within this context, Winter’s text once again subverts expectations: Gabe’s journal explores an established city and focuses on his emotional excavations.

<sup>175</sup> Rowena Chapman and Jonathan Rutherford suggest that the “New Man” acted as a “potent symbol for men and women searching for new images and visions of masculinity in the wake of feminism and the men’s movement” (226). They suggest that the figure of the “New Man” developed as a reaction to traditional notions of “hypermasculinity” and “a breadwinner ethic” (226). The “New Man” was set apart by his “enthusiastic embrace of female roles and qualities” (226), including being “emotionally aware” (226).

beginning of the twenty-first century to describe “a new breed of straight-identifying men who possess a heightened aesthetic sense” (5). Metrosexuals are characterized by “an interest in so-called ‘feminine’ activities, such as shopping and the arts” (5).<sup>176</sup> According to Peitsch, the metrosexual adopts traits that have been “coded as feminine” (6), thus leading to his portrayal in the media as “representing a softer, pro-feminist version of masculinity” (6), including a “greater sensitivity” (6).

Gabriel’s general behaviour seems to be similarly, stereotypically, feminine, as he cares more about finding “real love”—what he describes as a “deeply entrenched togetherness in some kind of alchemical bond that is inseparable” (Winter 49)—than satisfying his sexual needs. Gabriel spends the majority of his time writing “passion poem[s]” (52) for his girlfriend, Lydia, and declaiming about heartbreak: “Heartache is something you can have without ever having your heart broken” (63). It is, furthermore, odd that, in a two-hundred-page journal, Gabriel never describes his physical desire for Lydia, nor mentions their sex life. Gabriel thus expresses Peitsch’s “greater sensitivity,” a softness that is often restricted to descriptions of female characters in the majority of Newfoundland fiction.

Further evidence of Gabriel’s alternate masculine identity can be seen when he compares himself with his father:

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<sup>176</sup> Although Gabriel may not seem as preoccupied with his appearance or with fashion as the “typical” metrosexual, there are moments where the text notes this interest. For example, while shopping at a thrift store, Gabe notes that he is “learning to choose clothing” (46). He also consistently describes what people are wearing, and is concerned about his own appearance, wanting to look attractive and stylish.

[My father] understands the physical world: electricity, plumbing, capillary action. He has built all the furniture in the house, and the copper ornaments contain his planishing. He has opinion and decisive comment whereas I am hampered by the acceptance of multiple views. (214)

It is likely unsurprising to the reader that Gabriel's father, a man who grew up in rural Newfoundland, would be so handy. This is the image of successful masculinity expressed by almost every other novel I study in this dissertation. From Michael in *Gaff Topsails* to Henry in *Minister Without Portfolio* and Phonse in *Rare Birds*, "real" men in Newfoundland have typically been viewed as physically strong and spatially competent. Gabe distinctly separates himself from his father with this description, noting that he is more comfortable with the metaphysical world. The reference to Gabe's ambivalence suggests a mind that welcomes alternate possibilities and unexpected outcomes. While his father is firm in his opinions, Gabe is willing to view things from multiple perspectives.

Though Gabe's self-congratulatory tone, and his overall sense of arrogance, here and elsewhere in the novel may frustrate the reader, it is this very tendency towards self-satisfaction that sets Gabe apart from his peers in contemporary Newfoundland fiction. Gabe is not troubled by the knowledge that he does not correspond to the older generation of Newfoundland men; rather, he seems to commend himself for this difference. He does not think he resembles his father, nor does he think he *needs* to resemble his father. Gabe's self-characterization shows that he—unlike, for example, Quoye in *The Shipping News*, or Derek in *You Could Believe in Nothing*—is not

dissatisfied with his masculine identity; instead of gazing into a mirror and feeling like he does not “measure up,” Gabe is content with his form of manhood.

For example, throughout *This All Happened*, Gabriel is often found within the domestic sphere, performing activities and jobs that have, historically, been associated with women. In *Women’s Work in Newfoundland Fishing Families*, Ellen Antler argues that, prior to the 1970s,

men would bring their catches ashore and with women would head, gut and split the fish. The man then would return ... to the fishing grounds while the women remained in the fishing rooms ... salt[ing] and stack[ing] the fish. ... [Women] tended gardens, carded and knitted wool, sewed, picked berries, and performed the everyday services necessary for the maintenance of the family. (107-9).

Simply stated, while men were often away, fishing or hunting seals, Newfoundland women remained at home. Though they were just as actively involved in preparing the fish, they did not often leave the home, and from this gendered division of labour comes the popular image of the “waiting woman.” But Gabriel and Lydia invert this. Goldie suggests that “Gabriel is less the fisherman in his boat than the fisherman’s wife, within the home and looking toward the water” (179). While Lydia is active and “animated” (87), Gabriel is passive, someone who “love[s] solitude” (22). Gabriel overtly compares himself with Lydia, describing his “contemplative” (103) movements, and his inability to “loosen up” (103), as contrasting with Lydia’s “passion” (103) and her many “acts of will” (103). Significantly, however, and as I state above, Gabriel does not struggle with his gender identity, nor does the novel encourage the reader to consider Gabriel aberrant

in any way. Gabriel's qualities are not presented or viewed as failings but simply aspects of his unique masculine identity.

It often appears that Gabriel is not so much a participant in his own life as he is an observer. Paul Chafe notes that Gabe is "amongst the crowd, but not part of it" ("Beautiful" 119), a "roving reporter who maintains critical distance even as he threatens to melt into the masses" (119).<sup>177</sup> The novel's title echoes Gabriel's conclusion on the final page of the text that "all that can happen to me here has happened" (286). Such a passive statement suggests that things happen *to* Gabe, and not that he *causes* them to happen. This is a model of masculinity not seen in many examples of Newfoundland fiction. Characters in the novels I explore in earlier chapters are all marked by their actions: it is their physical bodies and their activities that define them as men. Both Quoye, in *The Shipping News*, and Henry, of *Minister Without Portfolio*, for example, become men when they build their homes with their own two hands; characters in *Galore* and *Gaff Topsails*, such as Abel and Michael, respectively, become men through daring adventures. Gabe, however, likes to sit by his attic window and watch things happen, or else stroll around town and watch other people doing things.

Such behaviour can position Gabe as a voyeur, someone who gains sexual pleasure from watching others (particularly those who are naked or engaged in sexual activity), and usually in a secretive manner. When Gabe visits the nearby community of

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<sup>177</sup> Although Peter Thompson argues that Gabe uses his writing as a form of surveillance, to gain control over his friends and family (76), Thomas Halford disagrees, stating that, while "surveillance functions from a position of authority" (113), Gabe's "allegiances are to his craft and his aesthetic sensibilities, not to his government or to a corporation" (113).



Heart's Desire, he writes in his journal that what he specifically misses is "watching [Lydia] do things" (21). Yet, the reader quickly learns that Gabe does not experience any sexual satisfaction when watching Lydia. In "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," Laura Mulvey argues that, "in a world ordered by sexual imbalance, pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female" (837). Mulvey writes that, on-screen, women are "displayed, with their appearance coded for strong visual and erotic impact" (837). Specifically, she describes how, in many films, the woman is, at first, isolated and sexualized, but, "as the narrative progresses she falls in love with the main male protagonist and becomes his property" (840). This, however, is not the case for Gabe and Lydia. When Gabriel describes Lydia, he often comments on her attitudes and behaviours, but avoids treating her like a sexual object. Moreover, Lydia is shown to have much agency and subjectivity—she is an assertive, complicated character that possesses unique desires and motivations, and the trajectory of their romance directly opposes the one that Mulvey describes in her essay: instead of falling in love with Gabriel and becoming his property, Lydia leaves Gabe towards the end of the novel.

Perhaps of greater importance is how Gabe's gaze is not only directed at women. When considering, at one point, the possibility of moving to a different house, it is his "view" (5) that Gabriel claims he will miss the most about his current home, as he tells the reader that his "house is the windows, the eyes that study the downtown" (5). He often pulls out his binoculars to see what is happening around the harbour:

I love my binoculars. Watching a roller blader tack down Signal Hill Road. Then I see it's Craig Regular. Cars brake, weave around him ... Craig wears an orange

traffic vest. He's zipping, dippy-doodling, turning down Battery Road. He has no idea I am watching him ... I hadn't realized I can see his house. I turn to a coast guard vessel, to read its name on the bow, but can't steady the binoculars—my excited heartbeat is moving them a fraction. (92)

Gabe expresses more excitement watching Craig than he does watching Lydia. When such descriptions appear in the text, the object of Gabe's gaze is just as likely to be a man as a woman. Though we assume that Gabe is heterosexual (because of his relationship with Lydia and the other relationships with women that he writes about), this moment can be read as homoerotic. It therefore further separates Gabe from literary representations of the hegemonic Newfoundland man, who is only ever firmly, and aggressively, heterosexual.

Gabe is not only the subject, watching and judging others; he is also often the object of these actions, specifically someone who longs to be recognized and to belong. Chris Armstrong states that:

Winter's *This All Happened* underscores [the] human need for a certain kind of surveillance, a recognition that the Gaze is internalized in our very being; that the self is constructed under the gaze of another, bringing about not only a desire for communal belonging as knowing and being known but also exposing the fundamental theatricality to all presentations of the self. (41)

Judith Butler argues that recognition and belonging are connected with gender policing. Winter's novel therefore reveals the ways in which society can influence identity,

particularly if, as we know is true of Newfoundland, this society has rigid rules, or strict traditions. What the novel also suggests, however, is that these rules and traditions are foundationless, as there is no “real” Newfoundland upon which to base them. Gabe’s experience in the outport proves this. For example, although Gabe informs the reader that he has grown tired of the insular life he and his incestuous group of friends lead, he also craves recognition.<sup>178</sup> While Gabe is visiting the small community of Heart’s Desire after Christmas, he joins his neighbour, Josh, and his family while they are mummering.<sup>179</sup> However, he quickly abandons the activity as “no one knows who I am” (282).<sup>180</sup> This scene immediately precedes Gabe’s final decision to leave not only St. John’s—what he often refers to as “this claustrophobic city” (91)—but the whole of Newfoundland: “I gotta leave this place. I gotta start over. I’ve used up everything here ... I will head west and look for a desolate, foreign place” (285). Chafe suggests that:

[Such] incidents of unhomeliness force these characters to look outside the city for a sense of place and in doing so question their own conflation of St. John’s and Newfoundland identities ... [These] characters move outside the city and

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<sup>178</sup> Almost everyone has been sexually involved with one another, or wants to be, and they are constantly running into each other around town. Gabe states: “I know everyone in this town ... which is frustrating” (152). This is also how he and Lydia both explain the sudden fascination with the recently arrived Craig: “everyone lurches towards him ... it’s such a relief to meet someone you don’t already know” (151).

<sup>179</sup> Mummering is a traditional Newfoundland pastime that involves dressing in homemade costumes and visiting the homes of friends and family sometime after Christmas. Mummers must hide their faces, and those they visit try to guess who they are. Here, Gabe is disappointed that no one can guess his identity.

<sup>180</sup> Characters throughout the novel struggle with their desire to both be seen and to possess some sense of privacy. For example, Gabe’s friend, Wilf, describes how he feels walking into a bar: “When you open the Ship Inn door all by yourself. You’ve walked downtown alone. You dont [*sic*] want to be alone ... Well, you open that door and you steel yourself ... [and] you make your way to the bar. And all the way there ... youre [*sic*] hoping ... there’s someone in there who knows you” (142). Gabriel shares similar feelings, and vocalizes his ambivalence when he writes “I’m the kind of man who craves being alone, but once alone, I crave company” (284).

realize what they have been deferring through their leisurely meditations is the knowledge that the Newfoundland they have called home may never have existed anywhere but in their own imaginations. (“Beautiful” 137-8)

Here, Chafe also reminds the reader that St. John’s and Newfoundland identities are often considered separate, despite St. John’s being a part of Newfoundland. Moreover, he highlights how various myths of Newfoundland are often inaccurate, and can cause a crisis of identity for those who initially believed in such myths.

*This All Happened*’s portrayal of masculinity is not, perhaps, wholly dissimilar to the portrayals of Dave and Derek in *Rare Birds* and *You Could Believe in Nothing*, respectively. Yet, while it is true that all three men often find themselves preoccupied with women and relationships, it is only Gabe whose identity is not situated in its respective novel as a sort of failure (despite, ironically, the fact that he would likely be viewed as one by Newfoundland society). Peitsch argues that the metrosexual has the potential ability to cause “progressive advances in the norms of hegemonic masculinity” (7), stating that such advances could mean “[eroding] the inequitable distributions of social power that have resulted from patriarchal structures, and thus diminish[ing] the oppression experienced by women and gay men” (7). While *Rare Birds* and *You Could Believe* both problematize the ostensibly effeminate behaviours of their male protagonists—mocking their failed attempts at, amongst other things, conquering the physical worlds of nature and sports—*This All Happened* does not criticize Gabriel’s behaviour. Yet, in one way, *This All Happened* does echo the thematic underpinnings of the books of Chapter 3: Gabe’s “gender failure” is shown to be not his personal failure,

but rather, a failure of Newfoundland. The island fails him in a way much different than it fails the protagonists of Hynes's, Fitzpatrick's, and Riche's novels, who, echoing crisis rhetoric, bemoan contemporary culture as somehow damaging for men. Instead, it is Newfoundland's insistence on adhering to past iterations of manhood that causes Gabe such frustration.

Although Gabriel may not fit the exact mould for Newfoundland masculinity, he remains a straight, white, educated cisgender man, and for these reasons alone he is still afforded a high level of privilege and power. This grants him access to spaces often denied to those whose gender identities further diverge from the norm. *Annabel* and *Come, Thou Tortoise* explore the experiences of characters who struggle not with a masculine identity that lies slightly outside the parameters of hegemonic masculinity, but with identities often viewed as dangerously aberrant, as directly "Other."

### **Resisting the Gender Binary in *Annabel***

Born in the remote coastal village of Croyden Harbor in 1968, *Annabel*'s protagonist, Wayne, child of Jacinta and Treadway Blake, has a complete set of both male and female genitalia. Jacinta and her neighbor, Thomasina, who is present for the birth, instantly embrace Wayne's dual identity. However, Treadway wants to raise Wayne as a boy, and forbids both of the women from telling anyone (including Wayne) about the child's "difference" (29). It is only with the onset of puberty that they are forced to tell Wayne the truth. It is with this knowledge that an 18-year-old Wayne later moves to St. John's, hoping to gain greater control of his body and his identity, though he is often met with

resistance and violence. Wayne's movement from Labrador to St. John's can be read as a geographical reflection of his own psychological journey. By crossing the border between these connected places, Wayne shows how he belongs entirely to neither. As I argue below, just as Wayne's gender identity rests in a liminal space, belonging to neither the male nor female categories that comprise the gender binary, he can be defined as belonging neither to Newfoundland nor to Labrador. In every way he resists easy classification, thus bringing into relief the arbitrary nature of such classifications.

Every other novel in this thesis (with the exception of *Tortoise*, which I discuss in the following section) is committed to the idea that masculinity can somehow, somewhere find perfect expression. These novels blame the failures of their protagonists (or attribute their successes) to place, or time. None of these texts consider whether it is the gender system itself that is the cause of the characters' malaise; that is, none of them bother to trouble, as Rae Spoon does in this chapter's epigraph, the confining rigidity of the gender binaries through which these characters understand themselves. *Annabel*, however, reveals how acutely these other novels subscribe to a profoundly confining gender ideology. Though I am including *Annabel* in a thesis about Newfoundland masculinity, Wayne's identity does not actually fall under the category of "masculinity," except agonistically. Masculinity is an imposition that the novel ultimately rejects.

The gender system, *Annabel* suggests, is harmful, and we, like Wayne, should all strive to undo it.<sup>181</sup> The problem is not masculinity, but hegemonic masculinity; it is the

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<sup>181</sup> In "Hegemonic Masculinity and the Position of Men in Kathleen Winter's *Annabel*" (2016), Lai Kit Tay and Wan Roselezam Wan Yahya explore the way that hegemonic masculinity negatively impacts Wayne and Treadway until they both make a decision to "let nature takes its course" (41).

expectation that an individual must achieve a dominant form of manhood in order to be accepted. The problem also lies within society's refusal to accept that masculinity should be "masculinities" and that both men and women can be masculine—or, more importantly, that they can be neither masculine nor feminine. In her essay, "Inventions of Sexuality in Kathleen Winter's *Annabel*," Mareike Neuhaus argues that Winter's novel testifies to "an alternative invention of sexuality that makes intersexuality a space of lived experience, grounded in a nonviolent reality" (123) and asks its readers to "accept difference as a necessary challenge to the dominant understandings of the human" (123). The aim of my project is similar: to expose masculinity as something performed, and to challenge dominant understandings of gender. Wayne serves as a case study here: whereas the other texts endorse masculinity as something worth maintaining, *Annabel* compels us to reconsider gender.

Though growing in number, contemporary representations of intersex or transgender individuals are still relatively rare in fiction.<sup>182</sup> In literary fiction, Virginia Woolf's *Orlando* (1928) and Gore Vidal's *Myra Breckinridge* (1968) are two earlier examples of novels that explore the fluidity of gender, while Jeffrey Eugenides's Pulitzer-prize winning novel about a Greek-American intersex child, *Middlesex* (2002) is perhaps the most well-known recent example. There are a small number of films, including Kimberley Pierce's *Boys Don't Cry* (1999), which follows the true story of Brendan Teena—an American trans man who was murdered by friends when they

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<sup>182</sup> Though these two categories, intersex and transgender, are quite different, they both disturb the traditional binary of gender; I provide examples of both to reveal, in general, how limited representations of alternate gender identities are in literature and film.

discovered he was born a woman—and Duncan Tucker’s *Transamerica* (2005), about a trans woman who discovers she has a teenage son. The popular, award-winning television show, *Transparent* (2014), similarly follows a family as they discover that their father is a trans woman.<sup>183</sup> Within Newfoundland, the theatre company Artistic Fraud recently collaborated with Gemma Hickey, the non-binary Newfoundlander whose fight to have their gender identity recognized legally introduces this chapter. Their play, *transVersing*, is written and performed by a number of trans individuals from the island. *Annabel*, however, remains the only Newfoundland novel to interrogate the binary of gender by introducing a character who is neither male nor female.

*Annabel* opens with a prologue that follows Thomasina’s husband, Graham, and their daughter, Annabel, as they fish on the Beaver River. When Annabel notices the rare white caribou on the river’s shore, she unthinkingly stands to reach out to the animal, causing the canoe to capsize, and she and her father to drown. Later, when Wayne is born, Thomasina secretly refers to him as “Annabel.” By connecting the actual physical death of Thomasina’s daughter to Wayne, the novel suggests that both Annabels are dead: Wayne’s female half must die to satisfy the requirements his family and society eventually demand of his gendered identity.<sup>184</sup> Of equal significance is the fact that both male and female caribou are antlered, which is unusual for the deer family. That Thomasina’s daughter dies while reaching for this androgynous creature foreshadows the

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<sup>183</sup> Despite these welcome examples, there has been much criticism of the hiring of cisgender actors to play trans roles, though some trans screen actors—such as Laverne Cox and Candis Cayne—have found success in their respective fields.

<sup>184</sup> Neuhaus makes a similar argument: “At the beginning of the novel, both Annabels are essentially dead: one because she has disobeyed her father’s warning, and the other because his parents have chosen to hide his intersexuality from the world” (124).



danger that the novel's other Annabel will experience when attempting to become androgynous. It also reminds the reader that intersexuality is "natural"—if male and female caribou can share certain physical characteristics, why can't male and female humans? For that matter, why must gender be divided into a strict binary in the first place? Not every intersex individual will decide to operate outside the gender binary, and Wayne's story should certainly not serve as representative for the entire intersex community. However, his experience reveals the conflict that can arise when one's internal experience of gender rejects the sex that is chosen for them by others.

Throughout the novel, Wayne consistently defies gender norms even as his own body is manipulated by those unwilling to accept his alternate form of gender identity. The irony of the novel is ultimately twofold: firstly, the surgeries performed on Wayne—ostensibly to ensure he leads a "normal" life—are revealed as the cause of the psychological and physical pain he endures throughout the novel; and secondly, despite protestations by various characters in the novel that intersexuality is "abnormal" or "unnatural," it is Wayne's constructed masculine identity that the novel ultimately exposes as artificial.

*Annabel* explores the ways that society can influence and directly alter an individual's gender identity: Wayne's parents, teachers, peers, and doctors all play significant roles in manipulating Wayne's sense of self. The novel specifically questions the authority granted to medical professionals in constructing gendered identities without any input from their patients, as the text presents the actions of these authorities as potentially psychologically and physically devastating. Wayne's doctor tells Wayne's

mother that “the point [of the operation] is to create a believable masculine anatomy ... to make the baby comfortable as a male in his mind and in the minds of other people who are in his life” (28). Though Jacinta describes this doctor as ultimately kind and understanding, she openly resists his statements. She denounces his use of the word “believable,” replying:

You think my child—the way he is now, the way she is—is unbelievable? Like something in a science fiction horror movie? And you want to make her ‘believable.’ Like a real human. (49-50)

Moreover, when the doctor tells Jacinta that his role is “to decide the true sex of the child” (50), she rejects his understanding of such concepts as objective, questioning his separation of “the true [sex] and ... the false one” (50). She is particularly disturbed by the doctor’s arbitrary description of what “makes” a male: “We use this phallometer, he says as he picks up a tiny silver bar from the trolley with black numbers on it, explaining that if the penis reaches or exceeds [1.5 cm], we consider it a real penis. If it doesn’t meet this measurement, it is considered a clitoris” (51). Jacinta is shocked that her child’s identity will be structured around such an insignificant measurement, but she proceeds with the doctor’s plans, feeling that if she does not, she will be subjecting Wayne to a life of exclusion and loneliness.

In her article exploring ethical issues in the treatment of intersexuality, bioethicist Alice Dreger elaborates on these concepts of gender and exclusion. Like Jacinta, Dreger criticizes the common use of alienating and subjective words, such as “atypical” and “abnormal,” in medical definitions of intersexuality. Dreger is quick to emphasize how

“ambiguous genitalia do not constitute a disease” (31); rather, they simply constitute a “failure to fit a particular (and, at present, a particularly demanding) definition of normality” (31). As a result, intersex individuals continue to endure, usually without consent, an onslaught of surgeries executed not to save their lives, but for primarily cosmetic reasons. In other words, their bodies are violated to ensure that they do not violate society’s expectations. In her book, *Sexing the Body: Gender Politics and the Construction of Sexuality*, Anne Fausto-Sterling makes a similar argument: she states that physicians who decide how to manage intersexuality “act out of, and perpetuate, deeply held beliefs about male and female sexuality [and] gender roles” (49). Fausto-Sterling draws attention to doctors who claim that they can “identify the ‘true’ sex that lies underneath the surface confusion” (51). Such language insists that there are only two possible identities based on biological sex and that anything found outside of this binary must be “fixed.”<sup>185</sup>

*Annabel* offers an argument which differs from *This All Happened*. Michael Winter’s novel depicts Newfoundland outposts as isolating, while presenting large cities as a welcoming space for alternate identities. Gabe finds that, after moving to Toronto, he is better able to express his “true” identity.<sup>186</sup> Phil Hubbard argues that, “historically, the city has been regarded as a space of social and sexual liberation because it is understood

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<sup>185</sup> In one of her other texts, *Sex/Gender: Biology in a Social World*, Fausto-Sterling writes that, by birth, an individual has “five layers of sex”: chromosomal sex, fetal gonadal sex, fetal hormonal sex, internal reproductive sex, and genital sex (4-5). Therefore, as she writes in “The Five Sexes: While Male and Female are Not Enough,” “there are many gradations running from female to male” (21).

<sup>186</sup> Though we do not receive this information at the end of *This All Happened*, Winter continues telling Gabe’s story in his later novel, *The Architects are Here*, which follows a much older Gabriel as he lives his (much more satisfying) life in Toronto.

to offer anonymity and an escape from the more claustrophobic kinship and community relations of smaller towns and villages” (xiii). Noting that rural spaces are often “conservative and even backward” (xiv), Hubbard states that the city continues to be widely regarded as “a site of sexual liberation” (xiv). Though in this last statement Hubbard focuses specifically on sexuality, his comments more broadly attest that the city can offer a respite from the potentially stifling assumptions about identity that one can experience in a rural area.

*Annabel*, however, resists this understanding of city spaces.<sup>187</sup> The novel argues that it is not the city, but the natural world that allows for self-expression. Significantly, Hubbard adds the following addendum to his earlier argument:

[This] representation of the sexually liberal city does not tell the full story, as while the metropolis has been a notable location of sexual experimentation, it has also been the site where sexuality is most intensely scrutinized, policed and disciplined. It is a location where ... ideas of the ‘normal’ and ‘perverse’ have been both instituted and contested. (xiv)

Calling cities “sites of governance” (xiv), Hubbard’s argument acknowledges the important role institutions have in regulating identity as “part of a project of maintaining social order” (xiv). This is the direction that *Annabel* takes, as it criticizes the way that both institutions and individuals in St. John’s attempt to regulate Wayne’s identity to fit their normative view of gender.

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<sup>187</sup> Wayne does finally feel like he belongs when he moves to Boston. However, his descriptions of his time here—which I explore towards the end of this section—focus on the university, suggesting that academic institutions are discrete spaces.

Wayne's first experience with strict gender guidelines, however, comes in Labrador, from his father, who discourages Wayne from enacting any of the behaviours normally prescribed to the women of their community, such as sewing or baking. Treadway believes engaging in these activities will somehow make Wayne more "womanly" or decrease his masculine authority. The narrator describes how people in Croyden Harbour have been conditioned to view men as "kings outside their houses" (39), while women appear as "queens of inner rooms ... and carpet cleaners" (39). While Treadway spends at least six months of the year hunting in the forest, working his trapline, Jacinta spends her time indoors, cooking and cleaning and, eventually, taking care of Wayne. Treadway, the text explains, "considered the house to belong to his wife, while the [river] belonged to him" (15).<sup>188</sup>

As a result of these distinct gendered roles and spaces, Wayne's adolescent life is a struggle. The narrator describes how, as a seven year old, "the child knew that a grim, matter-of-fact attitude was required of him by his father, and he learned how to exhibit such an attitude ... but it was not his authentic self" (71). Even at a young age, Wayne acknowledges that he has desires that his father would disapprove of, and he feels pressured to hide these parts of what he considers his true self. Treadway forbids Wayne

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<sup>188</sup> Though shifts have been made in ecofeminism in recent years, in his book, *Feminist Ecocriticism* (2012), Douglas Vakoch argues that "according to cultural ecocriticism, there is an innate connection between women and nature" (4). In Chapter 2, I explore this idea at length, particularly with regards to Kolodny's *Lay of the Land*, which examines how, throughout history, men have treated women much as they have treated the earth: as something to be dominated. Treadway's connection to the forest can be read in a similar way; it is while he is in the wilderness that he feels he is best able to express his manhood. Yet, *Annabel* also plays with this idea, as Treadway spends much of his time in the forest reading philosophy and talking to the animals—he engages with nature in a way that is different from the actions of characters I explore in Chapter 2. I explore this idea in greater length later in this chapter.

from watching synchronized swimming and he prevents him from spending time with his female friend, Wally. Treadway thus continues to endorse the binary of gender that he himself has been taught, forcing Wayne to “cut hide and shave wood and use the right screwdriver head” (68) instead of encouraging Wayne’s fascination with origami and interior decorating.

Treadway clearly sees such activities as somehow feminine. Jacinta, whose point-of-view structures the narrative for the first half of the novel, criticizes him for not letting Wayne experience the activities that he prefers, but it is less clear if the novel is critical of Treadway for having these opinions in the first place. It is dangerously reductive to suggest that because Wayne is not “really” a boy, he should show signs of having interests in more feminine-coded activities. The novel uses this series of events as a plot device of sorts, as these ostensibly aberrant interests of Wayne’s are meant to foreshadow his eventual discovery of his complete gender identity.

Ironically, at times *Annabel*—which purports to dismantle any problematic binaries—reveals its implicit adherence to binary logic. As I mention above, the novel presents a clear division between culture and nature, or city and country. In “‘Everyone is a Snake Shedding its Skin’: Identity Re/(de)formation in Kathleen Winter’s *Annabel*,” Ewa Urbaniak-Rybicka argues that:

Although in her debut novel, *Annabel*, Kathleen Winter attempts ... to show difference, identity, and gender as polymorphic and changeable rather than dichotomous or static, she does not avoid categorization with respect to gender identity. Wayne, an androgynous person, consists of a conventionally ‘rough’

masculine part and a 'soft' feminine identity. Thus, while undermining stereotypical gender perceptions, Winter seems to strengthen them at the same time. On the one hand, Wayne has an intersexual identity that is always in a state of becoming. On the other hand, toward the end of the novel the protagonist has become a mixture of two opposites which remain separate, one privileged by the outside world over the other. Therefore, Winter only to a certain extent partakes in the postmodern practice of destabilizing binaries because, rather than changing binary opposition into heterogeneity and plurality, she joins Wayne's male and female parts of gender identity like a bridge connecting two sides. (91)

As I elaborate below, *Annabel* views the natural world as wholly separate from the social world; the two are antagonistic. Whereas "civilization" is occupied by people who fear Wayne's alternate identity, the wilderness houses wise animals and open-minded Indigenous peoples. We must be cautious in our reading, as *Annabel* thus remains attached to this binary way of thinking.

The conflict between Wayne and his father reaches its climax when they decide to build a bridge together. Bridges are an important symbol in the novel, as they reinforce Wayne's liminality. Wayne becomes fascinated with both literal and metaphorical bridges at a young age. When Thomasina travels to Europe, she sends Wayne postcards of famous bridges. Wayne's favourite is the Italian Ponte Vecchio, a bridge that has "buildings on it" (97). As a twelve-year-old, he tells his mother that he wants to "live on a bridge like that" (97) and he approaches his father for help in building his own. Treadway, initially excited when Wayne tells him about his plans to build a bridge fort, is

disappointed when he learns it is for Wayne to spend time with Wally, and not to play “war games” (98) with “other boys” (98) as a young man should. These feelings eventually lead to Treadway’s destruction of the bridge:

[Treadway] did not mean to destroy anything. He wanted to dismantle what he saw as a deterrent to his son’s normal development. ... It wasn’t even a bridge: it was not what Treadway had envisioned ... The base was covered now in curtain material, flowers ... Treadway hated it. (126)

Treadway despises everything Wayne does that does not fit a carefully constructed masculine identity. And although Jacinta views Treadway’s actions here as “a kind of annihilation ... of some part of his own child’s soul” (140), she does not resist her husband’s decision, feeling that it is a father’s role to instruct his son.

However, as *Annabel* progresses, Treadway’s opinions slowly change. When Wayne is about twelve years old, he is rushed to the hospital when his abdomen becomes bloated with menstrual blood. After this event, Treadway finds himself deep in the forest, contemplating his son’s identity. It is here that Treadway questions his decision to force Wayne to live as a man. This is the first time in the novel that the reader is able to trace any indecision or doubt in Treadway. The text connects this location and Treadway’s growth, suggesting that society is to blame for any prejudiced and prescriptive opinions. The narrator states: “if [Treadway] had to talk to anyone about what was on his mind, he went into the woods, far from the community, and he spoke there ... to a boreal owl” (215). Treadway likes how the owl “asked nothing from him” (215) and he speaks to it about Wayne:



‘Everyone thinks,’ he told it, ‘that I know what I’m doing ... [but] I don’t have a clue what I’m doing. ... I should have let well enough alone ... What would have happened if I had let Wayne become half little girl?’ (215)

The narrator states that “the owl allowed Treadway to see Wayne as a girl child ... and Treadway loved her” (215). As nature encompasses Treadway, he feels, for the first time since his wife has given birth, “pain flow out of his heart and into the moss ... [becoming] part of the woods” (215). Treadway firmly believes that things would be better “if only [we] could live in here, deep in the forest, where there were no stores, roads, windows, and doors, no straight lines” (216). “The straight lines,” he informs the reader, “are the problem. Rulers and measurements and lines and no one to help you if you crossed them” (216). This reference to measurements gestures back to the phallometer used to determine Wayne’s gender as a baby. Thus, Treadway slowly starts to criticize the unyielding and unforgiving way society is structured, separating these constructs from the openness of the nature.<sup>189</sup>

*Annabel* uses the motif of “straight lines” to subvert the idea that androgyny is abnormal. “Straight lines” become a significant theme, symbolizing that which is man-made and unnatural. The novel again references straight lines when Wayne considers discontinuing his hormonal therapy as a teenager. He states that he is tired of asking

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<sup>189</sup> This theme continues when Treadway visits Wayne in St. John’s near the end of the novel. Walking through the busy city, Treadway considers how it is not “fruitful”: “Fruitfulness might be an old-fashioned concept...It might be something the land and the animals ... understood while a city...might not. Fruitfulness was a thing that came from seeds and plants and animal life. It was a thing that happened naturally in the wilderness. But it might be forgotten here” (429). Here, Treadway emphasizes how the city is a space of conformity and stagnancy, not one of nature or freedom.

himself “[how] much of his body image was accurate and how much was a construct he had come to believe?” (343). He considers how “years of hormones had made him angular, and it occur[s] to him that he wished he could stop taking them ... and having them alter his body from what it wanted to be into what the world desired from it” (343). Wayne rejects his angularity not only as a symbol of his compulsory masculinity, but as another straight line that seeks to classify and restrict him in any unnatural way. *Annabel* thus connects society, medicine, and straight lines as restrictive discourses of identity, pitting these against the natural world of trees and animals, which the novel establishes as a haven from boundaries and judgement.

Another example of *Annabel*’s division between nature and culture, and its veneration of the former, can be seen when Jacinta contrasts the hospital with its surrounding wilderness. Soon after he is born, Jacinta brings Wayne to the hospital in Goose Bay to talk to the doctors about his “abnormal” genitals. The novel describes the building as surrounded by a chain-link fence whose interlocking wire structure rises eight feet into the air: “beyond the fence was a ditch, then waste ground: rubble and corrugated pipes where men had dug to lay a new drainage system around the hospital” (42). This scene of man-made waste and destruction, adjacent to and therefore considered part of the hospital, contrasts with what Jacinta realizes is beyond the fence:

In the woods, Jacinta knew, if she managed to find a way around the fence, she would find Innu tents ... [Once] Jacinta had wandered into a camp like this when she was berry picking, and there had been a mother and small baby in one tent, and that baby had had something wrong with him. He had been born with a

genetic anomaly but his mother had held him and sung to him, a lullaby in Innuaimun, and no one had tried to take that baby to the Goose Bay General Hospital and maim him or administer some kind of death by surgery. No one had found fault with him at all. His family had cared for him as he had been born. (43)

In this scene, Jacinta contrasts how white Labradorians and the Innu of Labrador treat children who are considered different. However, the text's association of the Innu with the natural world is ultimately reductive and racially biased. As per Edward Said's arguments in *Orientalism*, Jacinta's view of the Innu is based only in her opinions and experiences, and not on a broader knowledge of their complex way of life. Said writes that Orientalism involves "dealing with [the Orient] by making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it: in short, Orientalism [is] a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient" (3). Jacinta—and the novel more generally—creates a similar dichotomy when she separates herself, as white Labradorian, from the Labrador Innu, othering this latter group and imbuing them with a certain kind of mysticism.

A complex history accompanies Jacinta's behavior. I briefly mention Rousseau's "Noble Savage" in Chapter 2, when I discuss the "Frontier Myth." This figure is a romanticized, idealized image of the indigene, an outsider or "Other" who has not yet been corrupted by civilization and therefore symbolizes all that is innately good about humanity. *Annabel's* presentation of Indigenous people as somehow more connected to nature, and therefore less "civilized," is meant to be a positive portrayal, but its lack of context or nuance means it succumbs to myths which are based in binary classifications.

As I state earlier, although *Annabel* makes a compelling case against society's rigid rules, in presenting society and nature as oppositional, it ironically maintains the type of binary system it otherwise works to deconstruct.

It is not only the doctors and Wayne's family that have a problem with his alternate gender identity. Butler's exploration of how transgender and transsexual people are subjected to pathologization and violence is something Winter explores in *Annabel*, when a group of young men in St. John's attack Wayne. Wayne is not transgender, yet this is how the young men view him, as someone who is "pretending" to be a gender other than the one they were assigned at birth. Led by Derek Warford, six men sexually assault Wayne, threatening him with a broken glass bottle, after they discover that he is what Derek calls a "little monster girl" (381). Sociologists Neil Chakraborti and Jon Garland argue that the "fear and hatred of anyone who contravenes gender norms cause [certain individuals] to 'lash out' at gender or sexual 'outsiders'" (87). During the attack on Wayne, Derek tries to get his five male friends to sexually interact with Wayne: "Hey, Broderick, you check out her hair. Play with it a little bit. Get the little girl going" (377). To this, Broderick replies, "Fuck off, man. I'm not touching its hair" (377). Derek's repeated use of "little girl" highlights his misogyny. He asks his friends "why would anybody want to be a little girl when they didn't have to, unless they wanted to get fucked?" (381). For Derek, anyone desiring penetration must be a woman or else an effeminate man. Broderick's use of the pronoun "it" similarly emphasizes how these men do not see Wayne as a real person. Using "the" and "it" denies Wayne his humanity—and points to the limitations of our language to work outside of the binary.

Wayne is completely silenced in this scene. The reader receives all information from Derek's point-of-view, as Wayne becomes the object that these individuals believe him to be. In *The Lives of Transgender People* (2011), Genny Beemyn and Susan Rankin suggest that attacks on people who are transgender are based on a desire to keep the binary gender system in place. Here, Wayne's body is considered unreal by the young men, but once presented with the reality, they must decide to either change their discourse or destroy the evidence that suggests their carefully constructed worldview is incorrect. Though the text does not go into detail about Wayne's attack, we know that the physical damage is not insignificant.<sup>190</sup> Instead of being open to alternatives, Derek and his friends only understand their own chosen masculine identity: men should drink beer and eat raw meat, have hair on their chests, penetrate women, and, most importantly, never allow themselves to be mistaken for women.

Despite his persecution, towards the end of *Annabel* Wayne discovers his voice and uses it to resist the medical professionals who want him to deny his dual identity. While living in St. John's, Wayne decides to stop taking his hormonal medication, which eventually causes his abdomen to once again fill with menstrual blood. To reduce this swelling, he visits Dr. Haldor Carr in St. John's. The narrator states that, while in the hospital, "Wayne was an exhibit" (369). Dr. Carr, primarily concerned with Wayne as a case-study for the teaching hospital, directly chastises Wayne, stating that "it was not just

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<sup>190</sup> The narrator states: "[Wayne] had a cut near his eye and he had injuries that Derek Warford and his gang had inflicted when they were experimenting with his body ... At the drugstore he bought ointment whose label said it was cooling and healing ... and he put that on himself in all the places that were hurt and that he could reach" (398).

the patient's own health that was at risk here" (368). To Carr, Wayne is not an autonomous subject, but an object of scientific exploration. This situation terrifies Wayne, as he acknowledges that none of the student doctors accompanying Carr will even look at him directly. Carr himself, with his "wand of metal" and his "charting levels of testosterone" (370), does not speak directly to Wayne, but addresses him in the third-person as he lectures to his group of students. Wayne considers how "the facts, with their tiny labels and medical terms, reduced his whole being to something that he did not want it to be. ... [The] doctors had labelled him ... reducing himself to the status of a diagram" (417). Wayne is dehumanized again as he experiences this form of emotional and verbal violence.

Yet, here, Wayne makes a decision to speak, acknowledging that he must "use the only thing of influence that he owned: his voice" (370). He tells Carr: "I don't want my vagina closed up again. ... I don't want you to remove anything" (370). Though Dr. Carr initially resists, when Wayne finally threatens to "walk out of the hospital" (371), the doctor accedes to his wishes. It is at this moment that Wayne realizes his life does not need to be controlled by those in positions of authority; he can define his identity in whatever way he chooses.<sup>191</sup>

As I state earlier, Thomasina easily accepts Wayne's alternate identity from his birth. Thomasina believes that "people [are] rivers, always ready to move from one state

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<sup>191</sup> There is one young doctor, a student accompanying Carr, who treats Wayne with respect. Significantly, she tells Wayne that she sees him: "I see there was a baby born, and her name is Annabel, and no one knows her" (373). This recognition is important to Wayne, and suggests that medical professionals are able to help their patients if they are able to listen to them and respect their wishes.

of being into another” (41). She argues that “it was not fair ... to treat people as if they were finished beings” (41), instead asserting that “everyone was always becoming and unbecoming” (41). Thomasina’s words closely echo those of Butler in *Undoing Gender*, when she talks about the human body as constantly undergoing change:

How do drag, butch, femme, transgender, transsexual persons enter into the political field? They make us not only question what is real, and what ‘must’ be, but they also show us how the norms that govern contemporary notions of reality can be questioned and how new modes of reality can become instituted. These practices of instituting new modes of reality take place in part through the scene of embodiment, where the body is not understood as a static and accomplished fact, but as an aging process, a mode of becoming that, in becoming otherwise, exceeds the norm, reworks the norm, and makes us see how realities to which we thought we were confined are not written in stone. (29)

Butler argues that, in many ways, the body implies both “vulnerability” and “agency” (30): although constantly an object of scrutiny and often pathologization, it is also possible for individuals to “lay claim” (30) to their own bodies and institute these new realities. Thomasina similarly describes Wayne’s intersexuality as not a *disorder*, but a “different order” (208). She tells Wayne that “a different order means a whole new way of being. It could be fantastic. It could be overwhelmingly beautiful, if people weren’t scared” (209). Thomasina thus argues for a change of convention; rather than understanding a bodily sex based on binaries, limitations, and difference, she—and the novel as a whole—proposes to recreate sex as a continuum, one which necessarily

includes intersexuality.

*Annabel* ends with Wayne leaving Newfoundland and Labrador behind. When he visits Wally at a university in Boston, the narrator states:

Wayne had a feeling, as [Wally] took him around the [university] ... that he was in a kind of wilderness; it was similar in some ways to being in the bush with his father. There was a sense that ... there was no domesticity for miles. Any venture you made was because you were setting out on a kind of exploration that was the same as a hunt. The students around him were beginning a journey that was open-ended, like his father's...into a vastness of territory that remained unnamed. ... It occurred to him that his father would have liked such a place as this, and he wished his father had come with him so he could see it. The other thing Wayne noticed was that among the students he did not feel out of place because of his body's ambiguity, as he had felt on the streets of downtown St. John's. Many of these students looked to Wayne as if they could be the same as him: either male or female. There was not the same striation of sexuality that there was in the ordinary world outside a campus. ... He felt he was in some kind of free world to which he wanted to belong ... He knew ... that in his thinking he was not so different from his father. His father would, this coming winter, walk his trapline towards unnamed places, and Wayne would finally be on his way to a landscape that was for him as magnetic and as big as Labrador. (457)

In this passage, Wayne compares the university campus to his father's wilderness. They are both "free worlds," places where the "same striation of sexuality" does not exist, and



it is here that he feels he belongs. This is a fascinating comparison—it is not precisely the city that Wayne appreciates, but specifically a university campus. It is here that he recognizes people who are “the same as him,” androgynous figures that are not singled out or attacked for their “difference.” However, it seems significant that he does not decide to attend Memorial University in Newfoundland. Wayne’s experiences in Newfoundland have led him to believe that the island cannot offer him the space that he requires.

It is important to Wayne that his actions reflect the activities of his father. Wayne does not mention his mother at this moment—it is his father’s approval that he continues to desire. Jacinta, in fact, disappears from the second part of the novel altogether while the last few chapters of the text present the reader with Treadway’s final transformation, into someone who openly embraces Wayne’s intersex identity. It is not until Treadway learns of Derek’s attack on Wayne that he finally realizes he has been wrong:

In his mind, over and over again, Treadway saw the shadowy figure of one of [Derek’s gang] tearing the buttons on Wayne’s shirt and undoing his pants and seeing Wayne’s body underneath, the body of Treadway’s own daughter, or son, it did not matter. What mattered was that no one had been there to help Wayne.

Treadway had not been there. (426)

Treadway comes to St. John’s after this attack to help Wayne emotionally, and offer him financial aid. The novel emphasises the importance of Treadway accepting Wayne’s alternate identity. Wayne has always had his mother’s acceptance, but it is his father’s recognition and approval that *Annabel* suggests he would like in order to move on with

his life; in a way, this makes it similar to other novels in this thesis that glorify the father.<sup>192</sup> However, in its construction of a father who is able to accept the possibility of alternate masculinities, *Annabel* begins to disrupt the patrilineal bonds that much contemporary Newfoundland fiction seems to champion.

As I discuss below, *Come, Thou Tortoise* similarly complicates the father-child relationship, presenting the reader with two queer fathers and their accepting daughter. Though these texts still choose to glorify the father (and ignore the mother) they make some important changes in the way that contemporary Newfoundland novels construct this father figure—and Newfoundland masculinity more generally.

### **Queer Fathers in *Come, Thou Tortoise***

One of the central reasons given for the onset of a “crisis of masculinity” in recent decades is the increased appearance of gay men in literature, film, and society. For example, Mark Simpson writes that President Clinton’s pledge in 1993 to end the Pentagon’s ban on lesbians and gays caused “panic”: “if women and queers could be soldiers, too, then what was there left for a man to do that was manly; where and how was virility to show its mettle?” (1). This anxiety finds more recent expression in President Donald Trump’s tweets about a transgender ban in the military (Levin). Such concerns highlight the heteronormative underpinnings of masculinity, as Simpson draws

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<sup>192</sup> For example, *The Strangers’ Gallery* closely connects the search for both personal and political identity in the province with fatherhood, while *Gaff Topsails* and *Galore* use historical father figures to suggest that fatherhood is an essential force behind both national and individual character.

attention to the way that “queers” are often grouped together with women and femininity. Similarly, Michael Kimmel argues that homophobia is “a central organizing principle of our cultural definition of manhood” (“Masculinity” 214). For Kimmel, homophobia is more than just the “irrational fear” (214) of gay men: “it is the fear that other men will unmask us, emasculate us, reveal to us and the world that we do not measure up, that we are not real men” (214). Both Simpson and Kimmel therefore note how sexual identity is often conflated with gender identity: to be gay is often connected with being effeminate, and vice versa.

After reading the first three chapters of this thesis, it should not come as a surprise that openly gay characters appear in only a small number of novels published in Newfoundland. Most Newfoundland novels, as we have learned, tend to revolve around the hypermasculine, aggressively heterosexual male. Indeed, maintaining a sexual relationship with a woman is the central preoccupation for almost all of the protagonists I examine in earlier chapters, from Michael in *The Strangers’ Gallery* to Derek in *You Could Believe in Nothing*, Quoye in *The Shipping News* to Dave in *Rare Birds*. All of these male characters work hard to achieve sexual satisfaction with women, feeling as if they have only succeeded in proving their manhood when they have become intimately involved with members of the opposite sex. Conversely, the inability of *Sweetland’s* Moses to impregnate women is something which the novel considers deeply tragic.

When queer figures do appear in Newfoundland fiction, they are frequently

positioned as peripheral.<sup>193</sup> For example, Patrick Warner's *Double Talk* (2011) briefly considers the struggle experienced by the straight male protagonist's uncle, a gay man who is suffering from AIDS, while a few chapters of Crummey's *Galore* explore the experiences of Eli, who feels forced to hide his relationship with Coaker. Moreover, though the plot of Wayne Johnston's *The Divine Ryans* revolves around the death of the protagonist's father, a gay man who commits suicide after his son witnesses him having sex with another man, this event takes place before the action of the novel, denying this gay character a voice in the text.<sup>194</sup> Through this tragedy, *The Divine Ryans* gestures towards the challenges Newfoundland men may have in their efforts to fulfill prescriptive masculine roles, while also foregrounding the difficulty the young protagonist has growing up without a father figure. Generally, Newfoundland novels often suggest queer relationships should be regarded with suspicion. Queer relationships either cause problems for the family members of the queer character, or, as in both *Double Talk* and *The Divine Ryans*, directly lead to a tragic death. Overall, gay characters are often denied any sort of positive experience, and they are not considered representative of the normative, or ideal, Newfoundland man.

In Grant's *Come, Thou Tortoise* a queer character *has* recently been killed, but it is not *because* he is gay. Rather, Audrey learns that her father has been the victim of a

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<sup>193</sup> One exception is Eva Crocker's anthology of short stories, *Barrelling Forward* (2017), which includes a number of stories that revolve around queer individuals. For example, one story looks at the struggle of a young man to tell his father about his boyfriend, while another examines a young woman's first queer relationship.

<sup>194</sup> The death of this character is another example of the "Bury Your Gays" trope that I introduce in the following sections.

tragic accident. While walking home one evening, he is hit by a truck. The novel is a *bildungsroman* for twenty-something protagonist Audrey, who returns home to St. John's after learning that her father has been hurt. The novel traces Audrey's struggle with her bereavement, and her discovery that her "Uncle" Thoby was, in fact, her father's long-time lover. Audrey's discovery of this relationship is much less important, however, than her desire to help Thoby, who, grief-stricken, leaves St. John's for his home in England days after Walter's death. The end of the novel finds Audrey waiting at the airport for Thoby, and the final lines of the text have her running towards an escalator to embrace him as he arrives back on the island. The novel provides us with the sort of conclusion that *This All Happened* and *Annabel* deny us: instead of having a character with an alternate masculine identity leave Newfoundland, this novel sees him not only return but also be literally welcomed with open arms. Moreover, the novel treats Walter and Thoby's queer relationship as something that Audrey accepts with absolutely no resistance or hostility; learning that her father and Thoby were lovers simply helps her better understand her "uncle's" grief.

Though the novel may not appear revolutionary, such an unassuming treatment of queer relationships is, in fact, unprecedented in Newfoundland fiction. The characters' uncomplicated reception of gay masculine identities encourages queer readers to consider Newfoundland as a place for them to find inclusion, something which the other novels I address certainly do not advocate. This novel therefore suggests that queer men can be Newfoundlanders, and that not only straight men can comprise Newfoundland masculinity.

*Come, Thou Tortoise* is primarily told from Audrey's first-person point-of-view, so readers do not receive access to Walter or Thoby's thoughts. It is therefore difficult to speak to their experiences of queerness and masculinity in Newfoundland. Although we receive flashbacks that explore Walter's life with Audrey and Thoby, Walter and Thoby are both absent for the majority of the text. In *The Cambridge Companion to Gay and Lesbian Writing*, Hugh Stevens writes that same-sex romantic entanglements have, "for the most part, been represented as an impossibility" (2) in literature. This apparently persists in Newfoundland. Moreover, the narrative structure and events of *Come, Thou Tortoise* also reflect the popular "Bury Your Gays" trope, which has been catalogued on the website tvtropes.com since 2010. The website states that "gay characters" on television "aren't allowed happy endings. Even if they do end up having some kind of relationship, at least one half of the couple ... has to die at the end" ("Bury" n.p.). One might argue that characters die on television shows all the time, but the website highlights the tendency for gay characters is to be "killed off in a story full of mostly straight characters" (n.p.).<sup>195</sup> This is certainly partially true for *Tortoise*, as the novel begins with Walter's sudden death.

However, despite conforming in some respects to the "Bury Your Gays" trope, *Tortoise* presents the relationship between Walter and Thoby as a significant bond. In *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, Sarah Ahmed argues that "the failure to recognize queer loss as loss is also a failure to recognize queer relationships as significant bonds, or that

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<sup>195</sup> The website Autostraddle reports that there have been 383 lesbian or bisexual women portrayed on television, and 175 of those characters have died (over 45%) (Riese).

queer lives are worth living, or that queers are more than failed heterosexuals” (156).

This is profoundly not the case in *Tortoise*: the loss of Walter and Thoby’s relationship is devastating, arguably even more so than Audrey’s loss of her father. Walter and Thoby have not failed in any way because they were not heterosexual: they were Newfoundland men who maintained a happy, queer relationship for decades. *Tortoise* therefore treats gay characters with respect, and suggests that they can lead happy, worthy lives in Newfoundland: the novel, unlike those before it, implies that men can find satisfaction on the island even if their masculine identities do not conform to hegemonic expectations.

*Come, Thou Tortoise* uses various techniques to explore the complexity and importance of the various relationships in the novel: its unique use of punctuation and its connection to Shakespeare’s *The Tempest* both serve this purpose. Throughout the novel, Audrey often uses grammar to understand life. For example, after she hears that her father is in a coma, she tells the reader that she prefers “comma to coma” (9). When she sees Thoby and realizes that her father has died, she uses the word “period” (30) to explain her knowledge that “it’s over” (30). She also uses French accents to describe individual’s eyebrows, and she shares with the reader her “Rule Number One of Capitalization”: “If it matters hugely, capitalize” (127). It is also significant that question marks and quotation marks are both entirely absent from the novel: for example, even when it is assumed that a character is asking a question, we do not receive the appropriate punctuation. This absence, however, only highlights the important role that questions—especially those that remain unasked—play (and not just in the game *Clue*, a favourite pastime for the Flowers family). Therefore, in a text where punctuation is imbued with

great meaning, Grant's choice to leave out question marks is particularly noteworthy. Furthermore, though a fairly common aesthetic choice for contemporary writers, without quotation marks, it is often unclear in the text whether certain words have been spoken aloud or if they remain as unspoken thoughts. This ambiguity emphasizes problems of communication in the novel, suggesting that there exist many things which go unsaid in the Flowers family.

The importance of questions is expressed by Audrey from the beginning of *Come, Thou Tortoise*: she believes that questions can elicit such powerful emotional responses that “a speech at the bedside of a comatose person should include ... a question the comatose person will really want to answer” (11). Audrey supports her faith in the power of questions by interrogating everyone she meets, from the Air Marshall on her plane to St. John's to the security guards in the SkyBar. Questions are a necessary part of life, promoting shared knowledge between individuals. It is in fact only when one of the two male pilots answers Audrey's question—“What was that thing I saw” (16)—that she agrees to exit the bathroom during an altercation in which she has stolen an Air Marshall's gun. This moment is especially significant as the answer to this question—“You saw me kiss the pilot” (16)—foreshadows Audrey's discovery of her father and Thoby's relationship. Questions lead to an emotional disarming, and Audrey feels closer to the pilot as a result of their shared information. She believes that “no comment ... is what you say if you have a secret” (102) and thus not answering a question becomes, to Audrey, the same as purposefully withholding information.

However, Audrey gradually begins to realize that there are important questions



she has never asked: “I do not know [my dad’s best friend] Toff’s last name. I have never known it. I have never noticed that I don’t know it. Is that unusual” (382). After her father’s funeral, she imagines asking Toff other questions: “why are you [sad], Toff. ... [Why] do you care so much, Toff. ... [Why] do you hate me ... [Why] did you hate us” (138). She does not actually ask him any of these things, and therefore remains unaware that Toff, and not Thoby, is her biological uncle. It is not until Audrey travels to England that she finally openly interrogates Toff, telling him “the game is up” (349). In response to the word “game,” Toff states: “Don’t tell me. You’ve got the *Clue* revolver somewhere on your person” (349). This reference to the interrogation-based game *Clue* again emphasizes the important role that the search for answers plays in her life.

The *Clue* motif continues when she finally locates Thoby in England:

Mr. Green, remember when we played *Clue* and my dad would accuse someone ... and then he’d look in the envelope and it wouldn’t be Mrs. White, and he’d get all annoyed and start accusing one of us of having Mrs. White and concealing her. ... But no one had Mrs. White. No one had cheated ... But sometimes a card went missing. Sometimes a card fell on the floor. And we were so absorbed in the game on the table ... that we forgot there was a floor, and a real house around us, and an under-the-table world where other mysteries might be unfolding (388).

Audrey realizes that the mystery of Thoby is no one’s fault: it is merely one that has, up until this point, remained underneath the table, the subject of unasked questions. Though this scenario is specific to Audrey and her family, the idea of being “underneath the table” is connected with the concept of “coming out of the closet,” a metaphor for

someone divulging their status as queer. Just as it is important for Audrey to understand every facet of her family members' identities, the book suggests that it is important for everyone to be honest with their loved ones, and to continue asking questions and learning more about each other.

Ultimately, *Come, Thou Tortoise* also suggests that questions should lead to adventure. For example, Thoby and Audrey's father build a model of a plane in their basement to help Audrey overcome her fear of flying: "It was all practice," she tells the reader, "so that I would be brave enough to be curious. Or curious enough to be brave" (291). It is Audrey's desire to know the answers to her questions about Thoby, Toff, and her father that brings her to England, ultimately reuniting her with Thoby. Questions involve "exercising [Audrey's] deductive powers ... to eliminate what is false until only what is true remains" (345). At the end of *Come, Thou Tortoise*, what remains is a genuine love between Audrey and Thoby, something unaffected by her discovery of his sexuality. It is not important that Thoby's masculinity satisfy the stereotypical requirements of fatherhood—in fact, it is because of his queer relationship that he becomes a father, ironically subverting the expectations established in the other novels of this thesis.

Although it radically resists the normative construction of Newfoundland masculinity, *Come, Thou Tortoise* is still preoccupied with patrilineality. The novel often alludes to Shakespeare's *The Tempest* to emphasize the important role of fathers. The text occasionally uses a tortoise, Audrey's pet, Winnifred, as a second narrator. When we first meet Winnifred, she is being used as a bookmark by Audrey's friend, Chuck, an actor

who is taking care of Winnifred while Audrey is in St. John's. Chuck is rehearsing for his role as Prospero in a local production of *The Tempest*.<sup>196</sup> This play revolves around the relationship between the powerful sorcerer and former duke, Prospero, and his daughter, Miranda, who have both been deposed to an island by Prospero's brother, Antonio. In the same way, Audrey and Walter spend years as a tight-knit duo, living together on the island of Newfoundland. This is not the first novel in this thesis that references *The Tempest*: Michael's love interest in *The Strangers' Gallery* is named Miranda, and, as the novel begins with an epigraph from *The Tempest*, it is suggested that Bowdring's Miranda is named for Shakespeare's heroine. In a novel that is all about the important role of fathers, it seems fitting that one of the characters in *The Strangers' Gallery* would carry the name of a well-known literary figure whose relationship with her father was of the utmost importance. The same is true for *Tortoise*: these references to *The Tempest* ensure that the reader recognizes the important role Audrey's fathers—both Walter and Thoby—play in her life.

This connection to *The Tempest* in *Come, Thou Tortoise* is also significant for the way it draws our attention to Audrey's missing mother. The novel itself is entirely unconcerned with Audrey's mother. She is never mentioned, nor even thought about, by a single character in the text, including Audrey. Arguably, the absent mother could be connected to the conventions of fairy tales, from which mothers are routinely banished, usually with evil surrogates taking their place.<sup>197</sup> *Tortoise* subverts these tropes in two

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<sup>196</sup> The novel's title also comes from this play.

<sup>197</sup> Auba Llompart Pons and Lydia Brugue Botia note that "witches, ogresses, wicked fairies, evil queens, and other variations of villainous women populate the realm of fairy tales, often taking on the role of

different ways, first by having the step-parent be, instead of a woman, another man, and secondly be someone who is kind and loving. By destabilising these expectations, *Tortoise* suggests that heteronormativity itself is a convention. It is certainly one that is popular in Newfoundland fiction.

The absence of Audrey's mother therefore provides a space for Thoby to be a parental figure to Audrey. Critic Stephen Orgel writes that, except for one passing mention early in *The Tempest*, Prospero's wife, Miranda's mother, is similarly absent from both the play and the character's memories all together. Miranda, for example, "can recall several women who attended her in childhood, but no mother" (1). Instead, Orgel argues how Prospero, "several times explicitly, presents himself as incorporating [the mother], acting as both father and mother to Miranda" (4). Furthermore, "the absent presence of the wife and mother in the play constitutes a space that is filled by Prospero's creation of surrogates" (2), including Caliban, Ariel, and Ferdinand.

*Come, Thou Tortoise* promotes a positive understanding of same-sex parenting, something which has historically been denigrated.<sup>198</sup> Although sexuality should have no influence on one's ability to parent, many believe the opposite to be true. Researchers note that the number of same-sex headed households has grown steadily over the past two decades.<sup>199</sup> However, despite this development, there still exist many "limitations and

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surrogate mother figures for fairy-tale heroes and heroines. These figures that replace the heroine's usually absent biological mother may be stepmothers, adoptive mothers, or mothers-in-law" (106).

<sup>198</sup> For example, in a study from 2013, researchers found that participants who showed a generalized "anti-homosexual prejudice" (Massey, Merriwether and Garcia, 129) also rated the "negative parenting behaviours of same-sex parents more negatively than similar behaviours in opposite-sex parents" (129).

<sup>199</sup> Psychologists S. G. Massey, A. M. Merriwether, and J. R. Garcia report that, "as the number of same-sex couples and, as a result, same-sex parenting overall has increased, attitudes toward same-sex

prohibitions” (Massey, Merriwether, Garcia 129) for same-sex parents. Therefore, *Tortoise*’s positive presentation of same-sex parenting—marked by Walter, Thoby, and Audrey’s powerful affection for each other—is worth celebrating.

## Conclusion

*This All Happened*, *Annabel*, and *Come, Thou Tortoise* all present versions of masculinity that differ from the normative, or hegemonic, understanding that this thesis argues is found throughout the majority of contemporary Newfoundland fiction. Namely, these three novels present men who do not satisfy the qualifications established by the other nine novels, which includes emulating versions of masculinity which were popular in the past; returning to rural areas; rejecting contemporary consumerist culture; and being physically strong and overtly heterosexual. Instead, *This All Happened*, *Annabel*, and *Come, Thou Tortoise* suggest that Newfoundland masculinity can and should include metrosexuality, intersexuality, and homosexuality; Newfoundland men can be mothers; Newfoundland men can live in cities; or Newfoundland men can choose to not be men, at all—masculinity itself is exposed as a construct.

Although these three books encourage the creation of a space that allows the individual to freely express themselves, they are not always optimistic or hopeful about the possibility of realizing this space. In both *This All Happened* and *Annabel*, the

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parenting have improved” (129). Specifically, they note how, “from 2007 to 2011, public condemnation of same-sex parenting in the U.S. dropped from 50% to 35%” (129).

protagonists choose to leave Newfoundland, and find satisfaction only once they live outside of the island. *Come, Thou Tortoise*, however, reverses this trajectory, and has characters—including both Audrey and Thoby—return to Newfoundland after spending time away from the island, suggesting that various identities are welcome here.

In some ways, these three novels remain attached to the patriarchal and patrilineal traditions of the island, as mothers remain absent while fathers are celebrated. Yet, within their portraits of fatherhood, *Annabel* and *Come, Thou Tortoise* manage to promote a new kind of father: while Walter is gay and happily works as an academic, living in an urban area, Treadway learns to accept his child despite Wayne's alternate gender identity. All three novels ultimately allow for a much more nuanced portrait of masculinity.

## Conclusion

Invisibility is a necessary condition for the perpetuation of ... male dominance. ... [One] cannot question, let alone dismantle, what remains hidden from view.

—Sally Robinson, *Marked Men: White Masculinity in Crisis*

The first aim of this thesis has been to call attention to recurring narrative patterns and motifs relating to masculinity in twelve contemporary Newfoundland novels. A broad study of masculinity in Newfoundland fiction had not been previously undertaken, and my project fills that gap. My second objective has been to discern whether these novels embrace “crisis of masculinity” rhetoric or offer a progressive, and more nuanced, understanding of manhood. I draw not just on masculinity theory, but also on a number of sociological studies to demonstrate how the political and economic situation of the island influences its fiction, and vice versa. For example, this thesis examines the impact that Confederation with Canada (1949) and the cod moratorium (1992) have had, and continue to have, on the residents of Newfoundland, their culture, and their collective identity. Newfoundland fiction is key in shaping public memories of these events.

Until relatively recently, literary critics did not study masculinity.<sup>200</sup> Before the late twentieth century, masculinity was not interrogated in fiction like femininity; it was

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<sup>200</sup> In *Masculinities and Literary Studies: Intersections and New Directions*, Josep M. Armengol, Marta Bosch Vilarrubias, Àngels Carabí, and Teresa Requena argue that, “gender studies have generally focused on women” (1), adding that “politically, this is logical enough” (1) as “it is women who have undergone the worst effects of gender discrimination and so it is women who had to make gender visible as a political category for the first time” (1). They add: “Nevertheless, gender studies have since the late 1980s started to pay increasing attention to men’s lives as well, recognizing that the lives of women are inextricably linked to men’s” (1).

not written about as a myth, or a performance, something which needed to be “proved” or protected. Today, however, scholars examine how literature constructs men. This shift galvanizes my study: by exposing as dangerously reductive the hegemonic form of masculinity that many Newfoundland novels endorse, I make the first ever scholarly attempt to interrogate the way that the island’s fiction promotes and maintains understandings of masculinity.

A central tension exists in this thesis between the concepts of recuperation and reinvention. I ask: when faced with great social, economic, and political change, does Newfoundland’s fiction suggest that men need to recuperate past hegemonic forms of masculinity, or does it encourage reinvention? As my thesis shows, there are texts which support both objectives, though recuperation has been far more prevalent. *Gaff Topsails*, *Galore*, *The Strangers’ Gallery*, *The Shipping News*, *Minister Without Portfolio*, and *Sweetland* overtly praise historical (yet still mythical) iterations of manliness. These novels suggest that contemporary masculinity should be based either in what they imagine as past modes of gender, encouraging separate spheres for men and women, or in the outport, a rugged landscape that allows men to prove their strength and reject the potentially effeminizing influence of consumerist culture. Moreover, while *Rare Birds*, *You Could Believe in Nothing*, and *Down to the Dirt* are more sceptical about the possibility of patriarchal recuperation in the present day, it is their construction of the white male as victim that reveals their implicit desire for a return to a time, or a place, when and where men were less troubled. However, *Annabel*, *This All Happened*, and *Come, Thou Tortoise* begin to show readers how masculine reinvention is possible within



a Newfoundland context. Instead of wholly adhering to tropes of hegemonic masculinity, these three novels begin to remake Newfoundland manhood by presenting certain identities which were once resisted (including metrosexuality, intersexuality, and homosexuality) in order to challenge the status quo.

As I outline in my Introduction, there exists a wide variety of books on literary masculinities, from different countries and time periods. However, very few have been written about Canadian fiction. Daniel Coleman's *Masculine Migrations: Reading the Postcolonial Male in 'New Canadian' Narratives* (1998) and Paul Nonnekes's *Northern Love: An Exploration of Canadian Masculinity* (2008) remain two of the only book-length studies of masculinities in Canadian literature, despite the fact that gender continues to play a significant role in identity politics across the country.<sup>201</sup> A similar study of masculinity in Newfoundland literature is unprecedented. My hope is that this study will encourage others across Canada, and that it will not take another two decades before further in-depth research is done.

Because no other similar study exists, the necessary first step in approaching masculinity in the Newfoundland novel has been to survey the fiction and highlight predominant trends. Although this thesis only looks at a selective sample of contemporary Newfoundland novels, the books it focuses on have significant cultural power. Almost all of these have won at least one literary award<sup>202</sup> and their authors'

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<sup>201</sup> As exemplified by the various case studies that I presented throughout this thesis, from Brenda Seymour's inability to successfully join an all-male team of firefighters to Jordan Peterson's refusal to use his students' preferred gender pronouns.

<sup>202</sup> Bowdring's *The Strangers' Gallery* won the 2013 Winterset Award; Kavanagh's *Gaff Topsails* received the Ottawa-Carleton Book Award in 1997; Crummey's *Galore* was the recipient of the Commonwealth Writers' Prize for Best Book and was also the Caribbean & Canada Winner of the Canadian Authors'

names are well-known in Newfoundland and beyond: these writers frequent international bestseller lists and are often praised for their depictions of their island home.

There are other works that I could have analysed in more depth, including the fiction of Lisa Moore and Wayne Johnston. However, their novels did not correspond with the prominent trends studied in this thesis, which were organized into four distinct (though ultimately related) categories. While Moore's fiction frequently resists portraying the Newfoundland man as solely responsible for the island's identity, in other ways it remains attached to certain masculine expectations. For example, although her novel, *February* (2009), focuses on its female protagonist's experience of life in urban Newfoundland, it is also preoccupied with patrilineality; moreover, through its exploration of the sinking of the *Ocean Ranger*, *February* criticizes changes in industry as being harmful to men. Similarly, Johnston's work, although frequently concerned with Confederation and Newfoundland identity, also subverts certain stereotypes of regionalism. *The Colony of Unrequited Dreams* (1999), for example, introduces a protagonist whose masculinity is tied up with political and cultural change on the island. Although this character often resists stereotypes of hegemonic Newfoundland masculinity, the novel also ironically portrays him as the bearer of negative change; his

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Association Literary Award; Proulx's *The Shipping News* won the Pulitzer Prize for fiction in 1993; Winter's *Minister Without Portfolio* was longlisted for the Scotiabank Giller Prize in 2013; Crummey's *Sweetland* won the 2016 Newfoundland and Labrador Book Award for Fiction and was nominated for the Governor General's award; Hynes's *Down to the Dirt* was awarded the Percy Janes First Novel Award; Fitzpatrick's *You Could Believe in Nothing* received the Fresh Fish Award; *Annabel* won the Thomas Raddall award in 2011 and is distinct for being the only novel in 2010 to make the shortlist for all three of the following awards: the Scotiabank Giller Prize, the Rogers Writers' Trust Fiction Prize, and the Governor General's Awards; *This All Happened* received the Winterset Award in 2000; and *Come, Thou Tortoise* won the 2009 Amazon.ca First Novel Award.

“failed” manhood, then, becomes intertwined with the island’s loss of nationhood. Both Johnston’s and Moore’s fiction responds to changes in gender in ways that do not directly correspond to the four trends I outline in this thesis.

The literary texts I have chosen provide a broad look at various genres and forms of writing from the island—from historical fiction to the *bildungsroman* to a fictional diary—bringing many relatively unstudied writers into scholarly discussions. A comparison of Newfoundland texts with those written in other regions of Canada would provide a fascinating comparison of masculine ideologies across internal borders. A closer study of the way that race and class impact gender would also be valuable. Although I begin to analyse these categories in my thesis, there remains much to be said about the way that, for example, Indigenous masculinities are specifically portrayed in the island’s fiction. The majority of the men in my selected novels are white and heterosexual; this exclusivity is a large part of the problem, as much Newfoundland fiction suggests that these particular qualities are essential in the construction of a “real” Newfoundland man, and consequently, “authentic” Newfoundland identity. Many Newfoundland novels implicitly submit that a non-heterosexual Newfoundland masculinity is aberrant; a more detailed study of queer characters in recently published Newfoundland fiction would therefore also be beneficial—although there are, unfortunately, not many characters to focus upon.

Although my project considers constructions of men in Newfoundland fiction, some literary critics have analyzed the way that women are constructed in the island’s novels. These include Patricia Donnelly’s “Newfoundland Women in the Novels of

Margaret Duley” (1974); Vicki Hallett’s “Janus Faced Woman: A Search for Newfoundland Identity” (2004); Danielle Fuller’s *Writing the Everyday* (2004); Fiona Polack’s “Home Births: Women and Regional Space in *The Sound of One Hand Clapping* and *Waiting for Time*” (2005); and Alaa Alghamdi’s “Different Spheres: Clashing Realities and the Transformative Reprising of ‘Women’s Work’ in Lisa Moore’s *February*” (2014). However, a larger, more comprehensive study has not yet been done. Although I wished to render masculinity visible, and thus expose it as an arbitrary and dangerous construct, a complementary study of the way that femininity is portrayed would shed yet even more light on gender relations on the island.

My study of masculinity in the Newfoundland novel reveals authors’ preferences for a particular hegemonic construction of manhood. In Chapter 1, I look at how Newfoundland’s contemporary historical fiction glorifies modes of masculinity perceived as prevalent in the past, including the tough, virile fisherman who told stories around a campfire and got drunk with the local priest. The authors of these novels engage with myth-making as they project their notions of idealized past masculinity into their work. *Galore* and *Gaff Topsails* boast this version of masculinity, while also using mythological father-figures to construct a history of Newfoundland which rests firmly on the shoulders of its powerful men. *The Strangers’ Gallery* also values this understanding of fatherhood, presenting it as still influential in the present day. It laments the loss of many great fathers whose identities are tied to the island’s history; their absence is partly redressed by the actions of the novel’s protagonist, a man who becomes a surrogate father at the end of the novel, ensuring that future generations of men will not have to suffer from the

pain a missing father can confer. Moreover, while *The Strangers' Gallery* praises and celebrates men, women fade into the margins. The novel has only two named female characters, and the text relegates these figures to supporting roles; they are significant mainly for their ability (or inability) to provide the protagonist with children.

Shifting to a contemporary setting, the novels of Chapter 2—*The Shipping News*, *Minister Without Portfolio*, and *Sweetland*—focus on rural Newfoundland as providing the appropriate backdrop for the expression of “real” manhood. Male characters in *Minister Without Portfolio* and *The Shipping News* reject contemporary capitalist culture, moving from busy urban centers to isolated areas where they are able to rebuild their masculine identities, both literally—as they learn how to construct their homes with their own hands—and figuratively, as they find romantic and sexual fulfillment with local women. There is a long history of identifying consumerism with femininity; I make various references to this history in Chapter 2. The novels of this chapter thoroughly accommodate this convention. Positioning consumerism as an effeminizing force, these novels show how men are able to resist emasculation if they leave the city and its industry behind. Conversely, *Sweetland* shows its reader what happens when Newfoundland men are no longer able to enact this kind of lifestyle: faced with resettlement, the eponymous protagonist slowly deteriorates, both physically and mentally, suggesting that the ideal Newfoundland man is doomed if society continues its race for globalization.

A related trend of deterioration is found in the novels of Chapter 3, which include *Rare Birds*, *You Could Believe in Nothing*, and *Down to the Dirt*. Here, I look at what

happens when men lose the space they believe they require to prove their masculinity. Seemingly trapped by a consumerist culture that they condemn, the male protagonists of *Down to the Dirt*, *Rare Birds*, and *You Could Believe in Nothing* consistently experience disappointment: their physical bodies slowly degenerate as they engage in modes of work that these texts view as effeminate. These men engage in substance abuse and other masochistic, or overcompensatory, behaviours as they bemoan their hopeless situation, criticizing Newfoundland for being no longer able to provide them with the environment that they need to thrive. It is ironic that they also accuse Newfoundland of being devoid of meaning, criticizing what they posit as vacuous tropes and traditions, while simultaneously lamenting this change: the novels position these men as victims of contemporary culture. As in the novels I explore in Chapters 1 and 2, these texts consign women to supporting roles: few in number, they are sexually objectified and treated as either tools for masculine development or antagonists in man's search for authority.

As I state above, the novels of Chapter 4 at least attempt to resist these particular conceptions of masculinity. In *This All Happened*, we meet the metrosexual Gabriel English, a man who is more concerned with observation than activity—who is concerned not with “proving” his masculinity but finding a space where he can freely explore his emotions and cultivate his personal identity. Moreover, while *Come, Thou Tortoise* presents us with a gay couple, two men whose happiness derives from raising their daughter, Audrey, *Annabel* introduces Wayne, an intersex character who embraces androgyny and argues for a break-down of the binary of gender. Instead of showing men who are “in crisis,” or glorifying a particular experience of masculinity that was popular

in the past, *This All Happened*, *Annabel*, and *Come, Thou Tortoise* provide us with alternate ways to be a man on the island.

Despite the important advances that these novels make, they also remain fixated on the role of the father, and in the case of *This All Happened* and *Annabel*, they ultimately seem to suggest that alternate masculine identities cannot succeed in Newfoundland. And, even within this latter similarity, the experiences of these characters are not equal: Gabriel, whose style of masculinity puts him in no political danger, and whose decision to leave the island is based on personal reasons of self-fulfillment, will never face the struggle that Wayne, whose gender identity puts him in danger of physical violence, endures daily. Wayne's decision to leave Newfoundland at the end of *Annabel* is less about self-actualization than self-preservation. Moreover, the women in these novels—with the exception of Audrey, in *Tortoise*—are once again presented as minor characters: Jacinta, for example, in *Annabel*, becomes decreasingly influential while it is the approval of her husband, Treadway, that Wayne so desperately desires.

As I outline in my Introduction, the novel has often been used as a tool for nation building. Newfoundland retains a sense of cultural uniqueness, as it has been a part of Canada for less than seventy years. In *Nation and Novel*, Patrick Parrinder notes that literary narratives give us an “inside view” (1) of a society, and that novels “help to define a particular nationality” (1). The rise of the novel has been linked to the emergence of national character; both the nation and the novel are ideological constructions, and both can inspire deeply entrenched identities. Throughout this thesis, I therefore considered two questions: how has the idea of the Newfoundland nation, particularly with

regards to how it relates to gender, been formed by these novels, and how do the novel's distinct qualities impact its representation of both national ideology and gender? I discovered that much Newfoundland fiction uses its male protagonists to maintain the identity of the pre-Confederation island.

For example, various mythological father figures and male ancestors are used to construct a patriarchal fatherland, while certain modes of work, such as fishing, construction, farming, mining, and lighthouse keeping—occupations which Herb Wylie argues are “traditionally associated with the image of the Folk” (29)<sup>203</sup>—are positioned as more valuable than work in the service sector. In this way, men and nation are connected, and the particular form of hegemonic masculinity that the majority of these novels promote becomes a required element in the fight to maintain Newfoundland's distinct culture. Other forms of masculine identity are often positioned as somehow taking away from the island's identity. Eli's gay relationship with Coaker in *Galore*, for example, is situated as a negative sign of modernity's encroaching influence on the Newfoundland outpost. Novels encourage a personal relationship with their reader, who must dedicate a certain amount of time to engaging with the text. Novels can also manipulate reader sympathies. The majority of the texts I discuss in my thesis try to convince their readers

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<sup>203</sup> The context of this quotation from Wylie is useful. He writes: “If Folk imagery promotes a vision of ... Newfoundlanders engaged in hardy, independent, elemental, and timeless toil, contemporary Atlantic-Canadian literature provides a very different picture ... Those occupations traditionally associated with the image of the Folk living close to land and sea and around which the economy of the Atlantic provinces has developed—fishing, farming, and forestry—have all been characterized over the course of the twentieth century by the diminishing role of the independent petty producer, though declining participation in and/or increasing mechanization and corporatization” (29). This is not true for the majority of the novels in this thesis, which conversely promote a vision of Newfoundlanders as fully engaged in this kind of work in the contemporary moment.



that an independent (i.e., pre-Confederation) Newfoundland—marked by its resistance to urban centres and contemporary modes of work—is best suited to forming successfully masculine men. Some of the novels, such as *Galore* and *Gaff Topsails*, embrace historical fiction as a genre that best appeals to nostalgia, while others, like *The Shipping News* and *Sweetland*, use the physical and psychological transformations of their male protagonists to symbolize the way that the isolated outport fosters masculine identity.

That said, the representations of masculinity that I note and trace in this thesis are not entirely unique to a Newfoundland context (although they have been influenced by elements specific to this environment, a point which I will return to shortly). In Chapter 3, I look to contemporary British literature when I discuss the similarities between some Newfoundland fiction and the British category of “ladlit,” a contemporary reimagining of the Angry Young Men phenomenon in 1950s Britain. Contemporary Newfoundland fiction also shares some significant similarities with fiction published in post-9/11 America. There was a much-discussed shift in portrayals of gender in both society and literature following these terrorist attacks, as a significant portion of American mainstream media advocated for what American journalist Susan Faludi describes as “redomesticated femininity and reconstituted Cold Warrior manhood” (*Terror* 3). From talk shows to newspaper articles, the archetypal hero of 9/11 was portrayed as unrelentingly male: media representations of 9/11 heroes not only invariably ignore female firefighters and police officers but also consistently place women in the role of bystander, admirer, or victim, despite the fact that male deaths actually outnumbered female deaths by a ratio of three to one (Rodgers 187). Significantly, these male heroes

embodied a particular conception of masculinity: they were not only men; they were representative of an elemental manhood which elevated the working-class, hypermasculine individual for whom selfless acts of bodily strength were commonplace. Many claim that this was the result of a desire for national regeneration (Takacs 297) as Americans attempted to reconstruct their national identity by embracing historical understandings of gender. This relates to my argument that the contemporary Newfoundland novel uses its hegemonic male protagonist to defend the island's ostensibly authentic identity.

The response witnessed in post-9/11 fiction, however, was more complex than was perceived in the media. Literary scholars do *not* note a proliferation of hegemonic male heroes in the nation's literature at this time, but there are various responses to the type of males that do occur. In his essay, "Post-9/11 Literary Masculinities in Kalfus, DeLillo, and Hamid," Thomas Bjerre notes an approach to 9/11 "at odds with the triumphant narrative" (243) of patriarchy that other media embraced.<sup>204</sup> He argues that an inordinate number of male protagonists in post-9/11 fiction are actually "emotionally paralyzed by trauma" (243), and that, instead of providing "simplistic heroic narratives" (244), contemporary American literature "has also served to debunk ... masculine myths" (244).<sup>205</sup> However, instead of viewing these alternate representations of masculinity as

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<sup>204</sup> Bjerre writes: "While the authors are not as naive (or idealistic) as to present solutions to the challenges of the rise of hypermasculinity and heroic narrative post-9/11, they do problematize the idea of masculinity and thereby refuse to accept the superficial and simplistic, but nonetheless normative, idea of masculinity that still pervades today's society" (243).

<sup>205</sup> Jonathan Safran Foer's *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* (2005), Jess Walter's *The Zero* (2006), Art Spiegelman's *In the Shadow of No Towers* (2004), Ken Kalfus's *A Disorder Peculiar to the Country* (2006), Don DeLillo's *Falling Man* (2007), Ben Fountain's *Billy Lynn's Long Halftime Walk* (year), and Mohsin

somehow welcoming a break-down in gendered expectations, other critics argue that such a presentation of damaged masculinity constitutes a cry for help. Rebecca Hill argues that the frequent presentation of white men's experience of depression in a large number of post-9/11 texts allows them to "both plea [*sic*] victimhood as individuals and demand a 'remasculination' of the American system" (4).<sup>206</sup>

These two different standpoints should sound familiar, as they also structure my thesis. I have argued throughout that many of the representations of masculinity in Newfoundland fiction have a particular effect: they suggest to the reader that masculinity in Newfoundland is in crisis, and that men need society's help. Hill notes that, although the "vast majority of post-9/11 literature written by white males and centered on depressed white male protagonists manages to distance itself from pre-9/11 forms of masculinity such as the patriarchal father figure and the societal escape artist" (5), this body of literature fails to offer a progressive version of masculinity. A similar problem exists in contemporary Newfoundland literature.

Like the United States, Newfoundland has experienced meaningful local events that precipitated its renewed interest in traditional gender roles, including Confederation and the cod moratorium. Newfoundland's attachment to an idealized past has impacted

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Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2008) are some of the novels he and other critics argue showcase a different sort of masculinity.

<sup>206</sup> Hill adds: "Through this claim to injury, men thus defensively combat their fears of obsolescence by marking themselves as weak to become culturally visible. However, in the same hand, their depression indicates a nostalgic yearning for a bygone era, in which white male supremacy and the patriarchy remained largely unchallenged by women or minorities. For the United States, a nation founded by white men, white male supremacy is in many ways tied to a national sense of American greatness ... The trope [of the victimized male] thus becomes a method for white masculinity to assert victimhood and advocate for a revival of cultural dominance while avoiding the inequalities created by white male privilege" (4-5).

the way that Newfoundland novels represent gender, as many texts work to promote a past version of the island in an attempt at memorialization. Both Newfoundland's and the United States' novels therefore similarly use hegemonic masculinity as a way of preserving nationalism and seeking help for men.

As I argue throughout this thesis, the novels that I examine remain fairly conventional with regards to form. Newfoundland novels frequently adopt a third-person, limited omniscience narrative, avoid using metafictional devices, and follow a traditional dramatic structure. Some exceptions exist: for example, *Come, Thou Tortoise* and *Galore* both engage with magical realism. It is tempting to suggest that having an experimental form suggests that a novel will have experimental views about gender, but this is not always the case. *Galore*, for example, remains relatively traditional in its presentation of gender despite adopting various elements of postmodern fiction.<sup>207</sup>

Yet, as I state in my Introduction, critics did believe there was a potential for an explosion of more experimental, and less conventional, writing in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. I argue, however, that this expectation was never realized. Instead, authors who were expected—by critics such as Wyile and Mathews—to go on to write fiction that explicitly rejected certain Newfoundland tropes and stereotypes, ultimately returned to these trends. For example, Michael Winter returns to the outport-as-setting in *Minister Without Portfolio*.

As I explain in my Introduction, this same trend—that is, a revival of what were

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<sup>207</sup>Critics frequently cite Michael Winter's experimentation with form—from the historiographic metafiction of *The Big Why* to the true crime novel, *The Death of Donna Whalen*. However, in *Minister*, he returns to more conventional methods.

perceived as traditional values—was identified by scholars of Newfoundland fiction and art in the 1960s, and was named a cultural renaissance by various critics, including journalist Sandra Gwyn, in the decades that followed. At this time, the island was dealing with both immense shifts in industrialization and a plan to resettle hundreds of outposts. Artists therefore used their work to praise and celebrate Newfoundland's distinct culture, drawing attention to its rural areas and its heritage, ancestors, and traditions. Though Wyile and Mathews both state that, about 30 years later, writers of Newfoundland fiction were “done” with the past and “over” concerns of national identity, I see the same goals, conventions, and stereotypical representation of gender in fiction from 1993 to 2015.

Throughout this thesis I have offered various depictions of contemporary cultural events in an effort to understand why Newfoundland literature remains conservative when it comes to depicting gender and sexuality,<sup>208</sup> as well as to gesture towards any potential future change: from Seymour's trouble joining an all-male firefighting squad to Gemma Hickey's successful efforts to have their non-binary identity legally acknowledged, Newfoundland is clearly caught up in the concerns that I outline in this thesis. For example, as recently as June 2018, the small town of Springdale, Newfoundland, rejected the request of Indian River High School's Gender-Sexuality Alliance to paint a rainbow crosswalk in the town, as a sign of support for members of the LGBT+ community. Although the town denied being against acceptance of any individual's sexual orientation, their decision, which garnered national attention, was seen

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<sup>208</sup> I am not the first to note the antipathy to change in Newfoundland writing. In his dissertation, “Resistance in Contemporary Newfoundland Fiction,” Jonathan Parsons notes the frequently “conservative tendencies” (78) of Newfoundland culture and fiction.

as anti-inclusion. However, as a response to this event, journalist Holly McKenzie-Sutter notes how, “elsewhere in the province, municipalities are seizing the moment to send out visual statements of inclusivity and support” (n.p.). Similarly, with the publication of *Annabel* and *Tortoise* in the past decade, Newfoundland writers are slowly beginning to offer alternate representations of masculinity on the island, too. Therefore, the mostly sceptical discussion of masculinity that the novels of this thesis present is hopefully only the beginning of broader discussions about gender in Newfoundland in the future.

Where might we turn to shed some light on the potential for alternate representations of masculinity in Newfoundland fiction? Unfortunately, Canadian literary criticism is not especially helpful here. The predominant focus in writing about contemporary fiction in Canada has been to highlight how Indigenous men are frequently used as “Others,” against which white Canadian men can define their own masculine identities. This is what Nonnekes interrogates in *Northern Love*. As another example, in “‘The Taste of Wet Steel’: Bordertown Masculinities in Craig Davidson’s *Cataract City*” (2017), Katherine Ann Roberts argues that Davidson, “relies on stereotyped and negative portrayals of Indigenous men to reinforce the physical strength and moral superiority of the two [white] protagonists” (69). Roberts considers this act reflective of “the tendency among white writers of Canadian literature” (69) to use the confrontation of Indigenous and non-Indigenous heritages to explore their own concerns, including those of gender. Leslie Monkman similarly argues that Canadian literature has a long history of figuring “the Indian and his culture” (163) as “vehicles for the definition of the white man’s national, social, or personal identity” (163). The contemporary Newfoundland authors I

look at typically do not include Indigenous men at all in their fiction; this figure is often erased all together, as I discuss in reference to *Gaff Topsails*.

A more promising avenue for future research is to examine how men are portrayed in fiction not written by white, settler authors. This helps guard against presenting white masculinity as normative, or as a necessary part of Canadian identity. For example, Mi'kmaw Chief Mi'sel Joe's novella, *Muin'ij Becomes a Man*, is a coming-of-age story that follows a young Mi'kmaw boy in Newfoundland as he struggles with the death of his grandfather and departs on a journey to supply his village with the items they need to survive. By veering away from an exclusively white understanding of masculinity on the island, Newfoundland fiction may potentially begin to offer different conceptions of manhood.

The United States possesses a rich vein of scholarship with regards to masculinity in contemporary fiction; trends in its literature also suggest some ways that Newfoundland fiction could potentially metamorphose in the future. For example, critic Alex Hobbs explores the impact of recent societal change on representations of men in contemporary American fiction. Hobbs argues that the forms of hegemonic masculinity that men's studies theorists argue are celebrated in America are not the forms of masculinity found in American literature.<sup>209</sup> Instead he submits that the majority of examples of hegemonic heroes in fiction are "largely deconstructed" (387) as literature "champions" a different sort of masculinity, complicating any expectations of gender.

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<sup>209</sup> Laura Claridge and Elizabeth Langland, editors of *Out of Bounds: Male Writers and Gender(ed) Criticism* (1990), agree, noting that "most male authors ... attempt to subvert the 'masculine' subjective configurations available to them at a particular moment in history" (5).

Hobbs writes: “simplistic representations of male characters and gender dynamics are not overly common in literary fiction, and are more often found in ladlit, detective fiction, and graphic novels” (393). What my thesis shows, however, is that, within Newfoundland literature, such representations are common, and not just in genre fiction.

Moreover, Hobbs’ argument rests on the belief that, in portraying men’s “physical impotence and spiritual failure” (392), and frequently emphasizing men as “cowards” or “alcoholics” (392), American novels are somehow subversive. I argue that, in addition to representing the hegemonic man, as we see in *Galore* and *Gaff Topsails*, numerous examples of Newfoundland fiction intentionally portray “flawed” men to promote a return to hegemonic masculinity (an argument Sally Robinson also makes in *White Masculinity*). We see damaged men undergo transformations in *The Shipping News* and *Minister Without Portfolio*, thus becoming the sort of model of hegemonic masculinity that is expected and desired—or we see the hegemonic man eulogized, as certain texts lament the apparent “loss” of this figure, such as in *Sweetland* and *Rare Birds*. Therefore, my thesis refutes more broadly Hobbs’s argument that the ideal of the hegemonic hero does not frequently appear in literary fiction (or at least, the trends he witnesses in American fiction do not find equal expression in Newfoundland fiction): it simply takes a different form. There is potential for Newfoundland literature to similarly present “damaged men” not as failures but as resistant to prescriptive masculine guidelines.

I am not proposing that all Newfoundland authors must use their writing to deconstruct the binary of gender, or that they must concern themselves with Newfoundland identity; yet, the way they choose to depict masculinity will continue to



have a significant effect on their readers. Feminist scholar Nancy Roberts argues that novels teach us how “to act and feel as gendered subjects” (10). They are able to “produce, replicate and impose positions of power and gender” (4), and for this and many other reasons the study of gender as a form of literary criticism is crucial. The Newfoundland novel, like all fiction, has the potential to reveal the precariousness of gender, and even reconstruct perspectives of gender. Instead of presenting gender as a binary, the novel can characterize it as something more fluid. Contemporary Newfoundland novels *can* construct a culture that is decidedly less restricted by prescriptive notions of gender and identity, and which refuses, critiques, or fully forgets the norms; similarly, Newfoundland society can foster a future that welcomes all facets of gender identity.

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