Theological Polyphony in Michael Crummey's *Galore*

by © Beth Downey

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Abstract

This thesis provides a close examination of religion in Michael Crummey's *Galore* (2009), focussing particularly on the novel's use of allusion—verbal, dramatic, and figurational—to harmonize its expansive polyphonic theology. Epiphany, encounter, the unexpected inbreaking of divinity into ordinary life is a central theme in *Galore*. It is expressed verbally and visually, often in terms that have meaning in several streams of spirituality all at once. These composite or bilingual figurations, which manage to allude simultaneously to more than one repository of spiritual meaning (for example Judeo-Christian, especially Catholic, iconography and Irish animist symbolism) are crucial features, ideal sites for excavating deeper theological insight into the novel. The two body chapters of this work engage the thesis topic at very different scales. Chapter 2, "A Miraculous Catch," takes the wider view, examining theology in *Galore* as expressed through composite religious figurations of sea life. Chapter 3, "Fear, Trembling, and Carousing," is devoted entirely to *Galore*'s central religious leader, Father Phelan. By analyzing a narrower subject in greater depth, this chapter works to both underline and expand upon the points made in Chapter 2, illuminating the two paradoxical themes—sacramentalism and agnosticism—that animate *Galore*'s core theology. These sacramental and agnostic "turns" are discussed throughout the thesis in relation to Christian traditions of cataphatic and apophatic theology. Finally, this work concludes with an overview of opportunities for further research into *Galore* and Crummey's work more broadly, germane to the themes of this thesis and farther afield.

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Chapter 1
Introduction

> My Jesus the cod, the cod, the cod, that Crusade army of the North Atlantic, that irresistible undersea current of flesh, there was fish in galore one time. Boats run aground on a school swarming so thick beneath them a man could walk upon the very water. (Crummey, *Galore*, 19)

Michael Crummey is an award-winning Newfoundland poet and novelist with a fast-expanding oeuvre of historical fiction; yet of his novels the first, *River Thieves* (2001), remains the one to have garnered substantial and sustained scholarly attention (please see Scholarly Context section to follow). His acclaimed fourth novel, *Galore* (2009), is gaining ground, but criticism of that work remains comparatively limited. Excellent work has been published on the postcolonial workings in several of Crummey's novels, but the absence of religious or spiritual analysis currently available on his work leaves open an important gap, particularly where religion has been central to the workings and history of colonialism. Crummey's body of work, poetry and prose, demonstrates significant religious entanglement and a conscious negotiation with that entanglement, directly informing numerous themes of scholarly interest in his work, not limited to post-colonial studies. Such approaches to Crummey's work include his treatment of myth, the "magical," race, violence, literacy, memory, and many others.

The bounty of material ripe for analysis in *Galore* and the limited scope of a master's thesis naturally recommended it for focussed study—a going deep, rather than wide. Moreover, *Galore* lies at the intersection of virtually all my own core interests as a student of literature: Newfoundland, and more broadly Canadian Atlantic literature; Irish literature and folklore; religion/God in fiction and film;

even children's literature, by way of folklore's lingering "relegation" to the nursery (Tolkien, np). They all come together in *Galore*. But of all these charms, spirituality—a tone of genuine address to the numinous—was and is the linchpin for me. Living and working as I do in an increasingly "post-Christian" milieu, I find special interest in those writers who continue to address questions of faith, prayer, miracle, sin; those compelled still to crack their ink-pots over the feet of one whom philosopher and literary critic Richard Kearney has called "the God who may be" (2).

Trying to articulate how other, more secular lines of inquiry into Crummey's work could benefit from an available body of religious analysis gave rise to one or two false starts for my project. For instance, much of the extant scholarship labels *Galore* a work of magical realism almost out of hand, which is problematic (Chafe, "Michael Crummey," np; Sugars, "Genetic Phantoms," 7-36; Jensen, np; Fullmer, 36; Mackey, np.) Crummey has claimed inspiration from Gabriel Garcia Marquez's *100 Years of Solitude* more than once; however, while the novel does conform to many conventions of magical realism, Crummey and others have contested the label (Crummey with Sugars, "Our symbiotic relationship," np; Galloway, np; Martin, "Splashed and Swallowed," 149). I question outright the efficacy of "magical realism" as a label, its justice and internal logic. Or at least, I question the scope of its legitimate application. Too often I feel it semantically denies "folk belief," or the ancient religions of marginalized peoples, as authentic religions deserving robust theological engagement. The as-yet unexamined application of a "magic realist" label to Crummey's work means that some important structural features are elided or altogether ignored; when read attentively, however, these features illuminate a more credulous theological core—an openness to religious inquiry and exploration—that runs throughout much of Crummey's poetry and fiction.[1] Indeed, *Galore's* open-handed approach to

[1] For examples in poetry, see especially Crummey's 1998 collection *Hard Light*, and any of the following selections: *Arguments with Gravity* 44, 46-47, 59; *Little Dogs* "Early and Late," 148; *Salvage* 54-56, 70-71; *Under the Keel* "Judas Rope," 32-33, "Watermark," 39-44, and "Confession," 44-46.

the marvellous and to faith bind it up with several other works by Crummey of comparatively conventional realism written across the span of his career, such as *The Wreckage* (2005), "Miracles" (2013), *Sweetland* (2014), and a number of the short stories in his early collection *Flesh and Blood* (1998).[2]

Thus, if I wanted to work on religion and spirituality in *Galore*, it seemed at first as though some protracted exploration of the problems inherent to the magical-realism label might be prudent, to demonstrate not just what alternative reading methods might be useful to augment scholarly perspective on Crummey's work, but also why these methods are more appropriate, and to elucidate the shift in logic that draws a reader from one perspective to another. Obviously, this apologetic undertaking quickly threatened to overwhelm the whole project. I set it aside, though I hope to return to it in the future.

As a counterpoint to the language of magic-realism, critic and writer Samuel Martin presents the language of a sacramental or Eucharistic turn in *Galore* (*Bleached Bones Rattling*, 216-276). Such language arranges ontological categories quite differently; specifically, it invites readers to figure immanence and transcendence differently, opening up broad new (actually old) avenues of analysis for *Galore*, and Crummey's work overall. My own framework, in light of this, has been to analyze the role and functions of spiritual or religious allusion in *Galore*—both Christian and Irish Celtic (please see Framework section to follow). This is why: to say that there is a sacramental turn in Crummey's writing is essentially to say that in this work, the natural and the supernatural do not co-exist side by

[2] Since the beginning of this thesis, Crummey has published another novel, *The Innocents* (2019), which earned a full hattrick of nominations for Canada's top literary awards: the Giller Prize (shortlisted), the Governor General's Award, and the Writers' Trust Fiction Prize. While the novel's release date did not leave time for me to afford it significant consideration here, it deserves mention. Even the most cursory survey of this new book suggests exciting opportunities for new theological analysis, which I look forward to pursuing in the near future. (The protagonists, two adolescent siblings left orphaned and so alone they might as well be the only two people on Earth, are called Ada and Everett. Right off the bat, a clear, though intriguingly gender-flipped allusion to Adam and Eve in Genesis.)

side. Rather, they are fundamentally intertwined. The language of sacramentalism is integrational language that hinges on immanence—the divine or metaphysical *in and through* the physical. Similarly, in literary terms, allusion is the device whereby things metatextual—that is, everything above and beyond the physical book—find immanence in the text. There is no *super*-natural as such.

The following thesis is largely about mapping the spiritual landscape in *Galore*. By mapping, I mean building a sort of key of important landmarks (symbols, distinctive figurations, allusions), and the varying terrain (repositories of reference, such as Judeo-Christian scripture and hagiography, or Irish Celtic animist mythology) that readers will encounter while reading *Galore* for religion and the numinous. Many of these landmarks are natural to two or more terrains but furnish different information in each. For example, and to dispense for a moment with the extended metaphor, a fish has enormous significance in both Christian and Irish Celtic iconography, however the respective meanings are not identical. With such *bilingual* symbols, as I call them, the overlap and interplay of resident meaning works to multiply and solidify an individual figuration's significance in context—such as in my chosen epigraph above. I demonstrate this figurative effect as it applies to *Galore* as a whole in Chapters 2 and 3. Further explanation regarding exegesis of bilingual symbols/figurations follows in Conceptual Framework.

Some readers may find the features and moves I point out in this work familiar, having seen them or similar ones elsewhere. Conversely, other readers may find this reading altogether new and unusual. Nevertheless, my hope is that the experience will open the way for new insights to emerge, from *Galore* and from Crummey's wider work. In summary, I argue that a clearer understanding of *Galore*'s religious voice, and its rich texture of composite or bilingual spiritual allusions, is critical not only to a productive exploration of the novel's dense theology and spiritual landscape (see Chapter 2), but also to richer analysis of its operations as a historical novel, embedded in the ongoing intertextual

dialogues of human retrospect, revision(ing), and re-membering, as in Chapter 3's discussion of Father Phelan and Chapter 4's discussions of whiteness.

Scholarly Context and Significance

Well before he rose to fame as a novelist, Michael Crummey was a respected poet on the Canadian literary scene. For example, he won the inaugural Bronwen Wallace Award for most promising new poet in 1994. Today he has six published collections and his work is included in four anthologies published between 2002 and 2013. However, his fiction has always earned him more attention, and more praise, than his poetry. When Crummey's first full-length poetry collection, *Arguments with Gravity*, debuted in 1996, it earned a cool but encouraging critical reception, later winning the Writers' Alliance of Newfoundland and Labrador Literary Award for Poetry (Legge, 98-101; Lee, *arguments with gravity*, np). Critics noted in Crummey's work a strong sense of voice, a daring with regard to subject matter, and above all, earnestness (Legge 99; Starnino, D6). It was this earnestness attributed to Crummey's work, which reviewers often found deficient in art or burdened with pathos, that garnered the most criticism. It would also prove, predictably, the essence of Crummey's impact when he found his poetic groove with *Hard Light* (1998)—a "genre-defying" book of vignettes that straddled the line between poetry and prose (Chafe, np.)

Perhaps because it defied genre, *Hard Light* was initially met with mixed, almost puzzled reviews (Coleman, 300; Lee, *Hard Light*, np). Some took a lightly complimentary but noncommittal tone, while others recognized the breakthrough for what it was, praising Crummey's bold prerogative with found material, his rights-reserved approach, picking and choosing among forms to suit each adaptation. "Forthright about his artistry in making use of oral and written sources from the past," wrote *Fiddlehead's* Bill Bauer, "Crummey makes it his choice as to how to cast these gleanings: in

poetry, prose, lists or catalogues. He is deft and convincing in these choices" (104). John Steffler interpreted the work's significance one step further: "The implication is that human identities are not neatly contained things, but diffused, cumulative, and inclusive" (164). Paul Chafe, in his essay "Newfoundland Poetry as Ethnographic Salvage," called *Hard Light* "the salvaging of a culture without the savaging of its people" (np). Crummey's genius as a curator and interpreter of (hi)story was beginning to show forth.

In 2001 Crummey published a chapbook of back-to-pure poetry, *Emergency Roadside Assistance,* but its reception was dwarfed by his premier novel, *River Thieves,* released the same year. Arguably his most celebrated work today, *River Thieves* won rave reviews (Babstock, np; MacLeod, Lewis, np; McNeil, np; Poster, np.) Paul Chafe called it "a long look into Newfoundland's 'heart of darkness'" ("Lament for a Notion," 93.) The novel quickly found an international audience, short-listing for the IMPAC Dublin Literary Award, the Commonwealth Prize, and Canada's Giller Prize; in the end, it took just about every Atlantic Canadian fiction prize going (Chafe, "Michael Crummey," np). Some years later, Fiona Polack celebrated *River Thieves* for being "one of the few" works of fiction to "attempt innovations" to representations of Indigeneity in Newfoundland history, calling it "a potential circuit breaker in entrenched and restrictive literary patterns." *River Thieves,* Polack writes, is "the first fiction to challenge the notion that Beothuk perspectives are readily accessible to sympathetic contemporary authors—and, by extension, to endeavour to jolt readers from complacent assumptions about their 'knowledge' of the Beothuk" ("Memory Against History," 55.)

Recently, *River Thieves* also formed the centrepiece of Crummey's reflective 2018 Henry Kreisel lecture, "Most of What Follows Is True." As this talk recalls, *River Thieves* generated substantial but constructive controversy over what authors of historical fiction owe the pasts they recreate (Uebel, "Imaginary Restraints," 137-150; Sugars, "Original Sin," 147-175). In 2009, Herb

Wyile published a full-length analysis of the novel's postcolonial significance, "Beothuk Gothic: Michael Crummey's *River Thieves*" in *Unsettled Remains*, an anthology of postcolonial Canadian Literature scholarship co-edited by Cynthia Sugars (229-249). Later, Sugars published her own long-form analysis in editor Fiona Polack's anthology, *Tracing Ochre: Changing Perspectives on the Beothuk* (54-74).

Perhaps because of the splash made by *River Thieves* (pun intended), the contents of *Emergency Roadside Assistance* reappeared almost *in toto*, along with new work, in Crummey's second full-length collection, *Salvage* (2002). It was at this juncture that the *Globe and Mail*'s Carmine Starnino blessed Canadian readers with a particularly lucid assessment of Crummey's oeuvre to date (D6). Despite concerted efforts to win the name of genre-ambidexterity, Starnino wrote, Crummey had shown his dominant hand four years prior with *Hard Light.* The disappointing juxtaposition of *Salvage* next to *River Thieves* simply confirmed matters. "Michael Crummey didn't get a chance to write the poems he really wanted to write—energetic, emotionally persuasive, with a rich relationship to the vernacular—until [*Hard Light*]," Starnino writes. With it "Crummey's lines […] finally found their full stretch […] strength, flexibility and vividness." In an otherwise scathing review, wherein he called *Arguments with Gravity* "routine," "precious," "always a touch mawkish, always a touch bland," and *Salvage* "teem[ing] with thrown-together wisdom," "infected with [...] airy, catch-in-your-throat sentimentality" even "sloppy"—Starnino notes that "when Crummey's [emotional] directness is focused by a responsive ear and an alert vocabulary, it leads to moments that refresh one's admiration for his abilities" (D6). That responsive ear, which finds its purpose when Crummey positions himself as listener, translator, respondent—as he does in *Hard Light,* select poems from other collections, and virtually all of his fiction—could well be the through-line that constellates his best career successes. In a 2016 interview for the CBC's *As It Happens,* Crummey confessed that "from the beginning the

poetry was always very different from the fiction, because the fiction was about the world 'out there,' and the poetry was always really personal" (np). For Crummey it seemed, whether consciously or unconsciously, fiction was a way to externalize and dialogize the personal, reflective, poetic impulse. Fifteen years later in the wake of his superior poetry collections like *Under the Keel* and *Little Dogs,* "responsiveness" or a listening quality, remains a stable rubric for evaluating the strength of his work.

Flesh and Blood is also an important thematic precursor to *Galore,* and Crummey's first committed dive into the depths of marvellous realism.[3] As would the characters of *Galore* six years later, the characters of *Flesh and Blood's* fictional Black Rock "drown and come back to life, foresee the futures of others, find their true loves in blinding snowstorms, and receive visitations from angels in their dreams" (Darbyshire, np). Some critics read these marvellous happenings with distinctly protestant eyes, as metaphors, strictly descriptive, representational (Darbyshire; Fuller, "Living in Hopes" np). But even among these, Biblical language and allusion proliferated, including phrases like "redeeming grace," and the word "magic[al]" began to appear (Darbyshire). "Fate is as meaningful as prayer and love in his characters' lives," writes Danielle Fuller, identifying explicitly, perhaps for the first time, the mixed cosmogeny of Crummey's world ("Living in Hopes" np). *Fiddlehead*'s Bill Bauer observed of *Flesh and Blood* that:

> One of the attributes of Crummey's prose in these stories is his abundant use of simile and similitudes. Both the characters and the authorial voice are forever seeking likenesses -- often for feelings that are difficult to

[3] First coined in 1949 by Cuban writer Alejo Carpentier in the preface to his debut novel *El reino de este mundo,* or *The Kingdom of This World,* "marvellous realism" never caught on as a critical term the way "magical realism" did, but it never quite died out either. (See "On The Marvellous Real in America," *Magical Realism: Theory, History, Community*, 75-88.) The terms have been used more or less interchangeably since Carpentier, with the choice of "marvellous" over "magical" being—it would appear—largely a matter of personal or poetic preference on the part of individual authors. To my knowledge, little significant scholarly attention has yet been paid to the fact that these two terms have very different semantic implications, especially in postcolonial contexts.

> express. For stories that are devoid of symbol and metaphor with their attendant airs of authorial control and completed definition, the similes with their explicit use of "like" and "as if" yield a more provisional and appropriate articulation. Both author and characters share the more modest effort to connect -- "I said it was "like." I didn't say it "was." -- bespeaks an ongoing assumption that knowing, connecting are, indeed, but provisional. (np)

This remark stops just barely short of naming Crummey's imaginary for what it is: parabolic. *Love is like... Pain is like... Growing is like... The kingdom of heaven is like, is like...* But it is this imaginary that would later explode in *Galore*, with a bang big enough to produce two full centuries of intercultural myth, marvel, parable, parody—hungry similitudes chasing endlessly after the unspeakable, yet experienced. To the best of my knowledge, no formal research or criticism has been published on magical/marvellous realism, faith, biblical allusion, or the religious imaginary in *Flesh and Blood.*

Crummey's second novel, *The Wreckage* (2005), is set during World War II in Newfoundland, Canada, and Japan. A national bestseller, it received serious critical acclaim and some excellent scholarship on its post-colonial mechanics—even, perhaps by extension, its morality—but the scholarly record again shows no focused analysis of the novel's foregrounded theological concerns as such, or of biblical allusion in the text (Bush, np; Soderstrom, np; Crummey with Wyile "The Living Haunt the Dead," 295-319; Sugars "The Rain of Incident," 11; Wyile, "Making a Mess," 821-837). Valerie Legge draws attention, again only in so many words, to Crummey's parabolic imaginary, let fly in the "startlingly original similes and metaphors that give [*The Wreckage*] its deep, poetic resonance" (564). When *Galore* hit shelves in 2009, it seems three was a charm—appropriate, for this

book in particular. One of its strengths was the fact that, while it served up plenty of Crummey's usual suffering, angst, and hardship, it was *fun.* The sheer gallivanting entertainment value, when combined with its technical prowess, had reviewers virtually atwitter with praise (Bourque, np; Galloway, np; Hansen, np; Martin, "Splashed and Swallowed," 149-151; Medley, D11; Sugars, "Review: *Galore*," 289). For this reason (not solely), it garnered international critical acclaim, short-listed for the IMPAC Dublin Literary Award and the Governor General's Literary Award, and won the Commonwealth Writers' Prize for best book in Canada and/or the Carribean, as well as the Canadian Authors' Association Award for fiction.

Many reviewers point out the dense texture of religious allusion in *Galore,* and its unique flavour juxtaposed against what some called a magical realist approach. (Samuel Martin and Steven Galloway are the stand-out challengers of this idea.) Still, to date only one in-depth analysis of religion in *Galore* has been completed. In his PhD dissertation *Bleached Bones Rattling: Reviving the Art of Sacramental Reading,* Samuel Martin calls much needed attention to the sacramental sensibility in *Galore,* using some theological allusions of his own to capture it (250). However, Martin has a specific conception of how *Galore's* (purposeful, believing) theology works and manifests. He examines "varying ways in which holiness confronts a reader, calls her to responsibility, draws her out of herself into a world of others, and, through a sacramental encounter, returns that reader to herself and her world with a broader view and experience of others" (2). While this process is well observed and articulated by Martin, I argue in contrast that *Galore*'s theology is inherently polyphonic, that its overall voice is a harmony of contrasting and even dissenting voices, which achieve together a certain affect that is both credulous and uncertain. Furthermore, Martin does not include systematic analyses of Biblical allusion in *Galore,* or the multilingual function of symbols that allude simultaneously to

biblical and other intertexts—for the obvious reason, among others, that his work engages with several novels and does not focus solely on *Galore*.

In an adjacent corner, Terry Goldie's essay "Is *Galore* 'our' Story," attends closely to many of *Galore's* "mythic" elements, including Biblical allusions and references. His focus however is on the way *Galore* reflects, preserves, transforms and comments on the history of orality in Newfoundland (83-98). Goldie's interest here is in sense of place, the constructed nature of people's regional identities and relationships to place. His analysis shares disciplinary kinship with that of Cynthia Sugars, who has published more work on Michael Crummey than any other scholar in Canada. Similar to Goldie, Sugars names and attends to *mythos* in *Galore,* but with a secular-philosophical ear. Her primary interest is post-colonialism; in particular, the construction and transmission of regional or ethnic identities in Newfoundland, by those who claim the identities, or seek to assign identities to others, or both.

Today *Galore's* significance in Canadian Literature criticism still pales next to *River Thieves,* a fact that I suggest speaks more to dominant fashions and scholarly daring than it does to artistic merit. Stephen Galloway makes an astute observation in this regard:

> Where [*River Thieves* and *The Wreckage*] took one or more characters and placed them in a historical context that allowed readers to see both the characters and Newfoundland, which is how most historical novels work, *Galore* achieves a far more difficult effect. The characters, plot and setting have been fused, in that this book isn't so much about the people and the events and places that affect them as it is the folkloric sum of Newfoundland, and the characters, as individual and real and compelling

> as they are, are, for all their strangeness, archetypes, an odd and wonderful mash of biblical and pagan touchstones. ("Review," *Globe and Mail*, np)

These touchstones are well observed, and it is precisely this "odd and wonderful mash," this accomplished feat of alchemy, that my thesis strives to give focussed attention under a heretofore neglected but essential interpretive lens.

To the vibrant and expanding body of scholarship outlined above, my project adds new close readings of *Galore* that open up discussion on previously untapped elements of the story, and of Crummey's wider work. It offers the first focussed theological analysis of *Galore* to date, though just one of many possible such studies, including detailed annotation of biblical allusions in the novel—the value of which insight is rapidly increasing as biblical literacy becomes more specialized (previously common) knowledge. Specifically, this work demonstrates the intricate dialogues between Judeo-Christian and folk mythologies that (in)form theological discourse in *Galore*, illuminating the novel's distinctive Christology and sacramentalism. In doing so, it also highlights dimensions of Crummey's accomplished technique that might otherwise be overlooked. Furthermore, this reading demonstrates many opportunities for ongoing examination of allusion, folklore, and religion in Crummey's broader oeuvre. Most exciting of all, from a personal standpoint, this work lays the first foundation in criticism for a truly robust examination of the agnostic turn in Crummey's work. Liminality, things 'neither this nor that,' is a major theme in *Galore* and in several other of Crummey's novels. This persistent tension between faith and doubt, epiphany and absence, miracle and mystery—the ubiquitous blend of yes *and* no as regarding God or the numinous—is the thing about Crummey's work that is itself liminal, "neither this nor that," neither certain nor cynical.[4] It may well be the most faithful thing about religion in his writing.

[4] This ambivalence or uncertainty is something I observe specifically in how Crummey's works approach God or the numinous. Human institutions (like churches) are often subjected to much clearer criticism.

Conceptual Framework: Notes on Allusion

Before addressing the 'how' of my work with allusion in this project, it is important to address the 'what' and 'why.' What kinds of religious or folkloric allusions and figurations am I tracing, [5] and why are these particular patterns worth dedicated study? Shane O'Dea writes in "Newfoundland: the Development of Culture on the Margin," that "Newfoundland's history is Newfoundland's culture. The two are not, as they are for many nations, separable" (73). And while the Irish and religious influences on Newfoundland history and culture are self-evident to many familiar with the island and its artists' productions, the depth and breadth of those influences remain profound. Newfoundland's literary achievements have been formed by a language, history, religious culture, and folkloric repository steeped in Irish influence. From as early as 1888, when Michael Francis Howley wrote his *Ecclesiastical history of Newfoundland*, followed quickly by D. W. Prowse's *A History of Newfoundland from the English, Colonial and Foreign Records*, to Patrick Mannion's 2018 award-winning study of ethnicity in Newfoundland and other Atlantic regions, the study of connections within and between Ireland and Newfoundland, and their varying religious communities, has been a robust field. A brief, by no means comprehensive survey of pertinent topics could include music (such as Gearóid Ó hAllmhuráin's "Soundscape of the Wintermen: Irish Traditional Music in Newfoundland Revisited"); migration patterns (largely due foundational work by John Mannion, such as "Irish Migration and Settlement in Newfoundland: the Formative Phase, 1697-1732"); gender and history (Willeen Keough's work being paramount, like "'Good Looks Don't Boil the Pot': Irish-Newfoundland

[5] I use this word 'figuration,' as opposed to 'symbol,' 'icon,' or other words I tried on during the production of this thesis, because of its flexibility and descriptiveness. As outlined in Erich Auerbach's essay "Figura," which traces the history of the word and its use in literature, 'figuration' carries with it a dynamism, a sense of something always in the midst of being fashioned or coming together. For these reasons, I felt it fit well with the ideas about allusion that I have worked to emphasize here, not least of all the way allusion, too, is always in the midst of coming together, of being made to mean. (See my discussion of Joseph Pucci, further into this section.) Indeed Auerbach himself traces the historical relationship between allusion as a device and the use of words like 'figura(e)' or 'figuration' to describe its application all the way back to Roman antiquity (*Scenes from the Drama of European Literature,* 26- 27).

Women as Fish (-Producing) Wives"); and the not-to-be overlooked linguistic connections (William J. Kirwin spearheads such study in works like *The Planting of Anglo-Irish in Newfoundland*). My thesis steps into this vast arena of scholarly work to examine, through careful and inventive close readings of Crummey's *Galore*, the Irish literary and theological heritage still manifest in contemporary Newfoundland fiction. And while some protest might be made that such heritage is bound to show through more clearly in *historical* fiction like Crummey's work, which preoccupies itself with bygone—and importantly, reconstructed—versions of Newfoundland, I would restate that while historical fiction might appear to be about the past, it equally reflects the present wherein it is produced, consumed, and made to mean.

One of the difficulties in reading for and mapping out religion in fiction, is that it is very often written in something like code. This is partly due to the nature of human experience with the numinous—we catch at it, most of the time, indirectly, and thus we are limited to oblique, indirect expressions of experience. Metaphor is indispensable to the purpose; it can be used simply and with immediacy or it can be used on a grander, more complex scale, encompassing smaller participant metaphors. Take the first few verses of the Gospel of John: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it" (John 1:1-5, NKJV). That is a *lot* of little metaphors stitched together into one grand figurative statement. But there is a single, principal device that this complex web of metaphor relies upon for its structure: allusion.

The Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms (online) defines allusion as follows:

> An indirect or passing reference to some event, person, place, or artistic work, the nature and relevance of which is not explained by the writer but relies on the reader's familiarity

> with what is thus mentioned. The technique of allusion is an economical means of calling upon the history or the literary tradition that author and reader are assumed to share, although some poets […] allude to areas of quite specialized knowledge. […] In addition to […] *topical* allusions to recent events, Yeats often uses *personal* allusions to aspects of his own life and circle of friends. Other kinds of allusion include the *imitative* (as in parody), and the *structural*, in which one work reminds us of the structure of another (as Joyce's *Ulysses* refers to Homer's *Odyssey*). (np)

Most of John's allusions in the passage above refer back to famous sections of the *Torah* or Hebrew scriptures, especially Genesis wherein God speaks the world into being, beginning with the statement "Let there be light" (Gen 1:1-3 KJV). The most obvious example is the opening structural allusion, where John opens with the exact same phrase as Genesis: "in the beginning."

According to the Oxford definition furnished above, allusion might seem at first like a device easily deployed. The difficulty emerges when one considers the depth and breadth of potential meaning latent in a single word, let alone a phrase or an extended metaphor. In that line about "calling upon the history or the literary tradition that the author and reader are assumed to share," *assume* is the operative word. Such assumptions are more easily and reliably made in some cases than others. For example, in Western literary tradition from as far back as the middle ages, to assume readers' general competency in Christian scripture and, to a lesser extent, associated hagiographical stories or writings, was hardly any assumption at all. It was a *fait accompli,* the evidence of which was borne out even as recently as the mid-20th century by common parlance, in phrases like "using Christian names" (i.e. operating on a first-name basis.) Consequently, the study of biblical or religious allusion in literature is a tradition as old as printed texts. In her analytical writing, critic and novelist A. S. Byatt, for instance, has traced and exegeted biblical allusion through virtually every century from Freud's works to Spenser's and prior,

not excluding translated works such as those by Blazac, Dostoyevsky, or Proust ("Envy," np; "Introduction," *Passions of the Mind,* 1-6). Only in the present post-Christian era of Western culture, barely a hundred years old yet, has biblical and theological literacy grown more rare, making assumptions of shared biblical awareness between writer and reader riskier, and religious allusion generally more esoteric, or at least niche.[6]

Reader Response theory has long since pointed out that different readers, while they may indeed share knowledge of that to which a writer is attempting to allude, are predisposed to make different connections—or even combinations of connections—based on their unique personal experience.[7] Indeed, the variety of connections any reader could feasibly make out of a given reference is practically boundless. Readers *realize* the potential of allusions differently. In acknowledgement of these and other problems, Joseph Pucci in *The Full-Knowing Reader* explains at great length why emphasizing the author over the reader of allusion is misguided. His title alludes to an excerpt from Michael Drayton's *Poly-Olbion,* quoted as an epigraph to Pucci's first chapter: "the verse oft, with allusion, as supposing a full-knowing reader, lets slip" (ix). Pucci writes, "Drayton is clear in the ways he assigns the power of allusive meaning to the work being read, not to the author who wrote it. It is, after all, the "verse

[6] Despite this, a skilled writer—which Crummey certainly is—can deploy allusions that, rather than merely pointing to one source text, draw on a wider web of embedded cultural awareness so that even less initiated readers can get the point. For example, a reader who does not know the book of Jonah may know Pinocchio, and in carefully shaping the way he or she portrays and discusses a whale—that is, how he or she shapes the visual allusion—a skilled author can convey the necessary sense that this monster enacts a kind of grand retributive (perhaps ultimately restorative) justice upon the person it swallows.

[7] Reader Response theory's basic assertion is that readerly reactions to literature are essential to the critical interpretation of that literature ("Reader-Response Criticism," *Purdue OWL,* np). To a degree, this argument seems intuitive; the idea that readers should be able to take a cue about a literary work's meaning, significance, or aesthetic objectives from the thoughts, emotions, and instincts it draws out in them is, in a way, no more radical than the idea that tragedies are sad and comedies are joyous. The same example, however, reveals some of the limitations in this theory. If a tragedy fails to engender sadness or sympathy in a particular reader, is it any less a tragedy? Might other structural features such as death, loss, or fall from grace define a tragedy with equal or greater stability/authority than the presence or absence of reader-response cues? (See "Structuralism in Literary Theory," in "Structuralism and Semiotics (1920s-Present)," *Purdue OWL,* np). The answer, I hazard to suggest, is buried in paradox—it is both yes and no. When reading literature for allusion, as I call on Pucci below to demonstrate, this debate becomes even more complex—though arguably more fun as well.

let[ting] slip" here. Drayton also privileges the reader in the process of unraveling allusive meaning and in the function of that meaning" (xi). In Pucci's words, "allusion demands, and in demanding creates, a special kind of reader, who is empowered at the expense of the author to make a literary work mean" (x).

This framing of things closely resembles Richard Kearney's theory of *persona,* from his book *The God Who May Be: A Hermeneutics of Religion*. He writes,

> Each human person carries within…the capacity to be transfigured [by transcendence toward God], **and to transfigure God in turn—by making divine possibility ever more incarnate and alive**. This capacity in each of us to receive and respond to the divine invitation I call *persona*. …Persona is the infinite other in the finite person before me. In and through that person. And because there is no other to this infinite other, **bound to but irreducible to the embodied person**, we refer to this persona as the sign of God. Not the other person as divine, mind you—that would be idolatry—but the divine in and through that person. The divine as trace, icon, visage, passage. (2, emphasis mine).

In other words, the potential of an allusion exceeds the meaning made of it, just as the fullness or potential of the divine exceeds the incarnation any person manifests of it. The meaning made of any single allusion is "bound to but irreducible to the [meaning-making] person." This is what makes the difference between an allusion on the page, all potential, and an allusion realized "in and through" a reader—the allusion as "trace, icon, visage, passage."

However, in both Kearney's and Pucci's formulations, the presence of a definite base material or infuser of potential energy (God, author) is unavoidable. In his search for the earliest mentions of something like allusion in literary theory, Pucci mentions discovering

> a cohort of passages from Terence, Aristophanes, Varro, and Virgil, which described the process by which older literary language was used in a newer work of verbal art. More important than the similarity of these descriptions, however, was the conformity of their authors' vocabulary. Consistently, these writers used images of textual movement, implantation, and cutting to describe what seemed to be allusion. (xvii)

Pucci notes again that these authors were emphatic concerning the necessity of a powerful reader to the success of art using these techniques. Nevertheless, the presence of a gardener (author, God) doing this cutting, grafting and transplanting is essential. This is self-evident, for without such a person, even the most powerful reader has no commission. To return to a biblical example, the opening of the Gospel of John would have impacted Jewish readers, those intimately familiar with *torah*, in a very particular way. Upon hearing a story about Jesus Christ open with "in the beginning," such an audience would be clapped with immediate associations to Genesis, and the first story about Yahweh. That said, while scholarship is divided on whether the Gospel of John had a single author or several there is some level of consensus about who this account was likely written for; many theorize that the text was directed to Christian disciples in Asia minor—a group that would have transcended ethnic cultures, geographies, and prior faith traditions ("Gospel According to John," *Encyclopeedia Britannica Online,* np). These readers would have brought their own various transplanted Christian educations to the Johannine account. The many additional, unintended, valuable or misguided connections that readers down the last roughly two thousand years have made are incalculable. The question at hand, then, is not whether an author can author allusion, or whether God inspires incarnation, but whether those actions can be achieved without the involvement of empowered cooperators. In both Pucci's and Kearney's formulations, they cannot.

It is clear then that a fulsome explanation of allusion must both include and distinguish between a word or phrase's allusive potential, allusion as a device that can be deliberately deployed, and the actualization of an allusion's potential, which may or may not correspond to an author's intention or express all potential. It must acknowledge the problem of imprecision and uncertain ends. A scheme of explanation which could encompass these paradoxical elements of allusion would be invaluable. To that end, I have found it useful to borrow an approach, again, from Judeo-Christian hermeneutics.

Allusion reflects both the boundless and the stable nature of literature, in the same way that theologians understand names for God as reflecting both the knowable and the unknowable nature of the Divine Reality [God]. Theology has specific language for both these elements: *apophasis* means speaking of God *via negativa,* or by negation. Apophatic language and statements are used to express the total ineffability of God. *Cataphasis* means speaking of God in direct, affirmative terms. *Cataphatic* language and statements are used to express the knowability of God in revelation—that is, the human ability to experience and recognize, if not fully comprehend, the Divine Reality. Apophatic theology springs out of the conviction that God is always utterly beyond human comprehension or expression, and that, as a result, humans can only ever speak of what God is *not*, or how the things one might say about God are less than true, failures of articulation. The Jewish tradition of writing God's name in unpronounceable form (the tetragrammaton, commonly YHWH) is a pre-Christian example of applied apophatic theology. In the Christian era, specifically in the middle ages, apophasis was known for a time as 'Christian agnosticism.'[8] Cataphatic theology, on the other hand, insists that while a man's reach may exceed his grasp, it does not exceed his touch. Signposts, sensations, shadows and foretastes of the Divine Reality are accessible to human beings; partial even as they are, these glimpses are trustworthy, and powerful enough to shape human beings in fundamental, enduring ways.

[8] For further discussion, see Richard Woods' *Mysticism and Prophecy: The Dominican Tradition* (1998).

Both these attitudes are wise and truthful, but incomplete; they depend on one another for their usefulness, found in balance and counterpoint. Without cataphatic conviction, apophasis loses all potential, like a gas with no container. Without apophatic humility, cataphasis travesties the Divine Reality. To repurpose these modes of thinking, a purely apophatic description of allusion would focus on the limitless number of potential connections latent in a single word or phrase, notwithstanding authorial intent. A purely cataphatic description of allusion would focus on authorial intent, structuralist semiology, and empirically verifiable relationships between works. But the most complete and vivid description of allusion would, as Pucci's does, focus on the empowered, realizing reader—the person working the metaphorical bellows, negotiating the relationship between apophatic potential (free air) and cataphatic probability (the bellows channelling the air), in order to actualize a meaningful effect.

To say that an allusion is always already more than what a reader can make of it is true, but if that were the whole truth it could not be a device; it would be a wild, unbridled force of literary nature of which readers were unable to speak. To say that allusion is intentional, specific, and verifiable is true, but if that were the whole truth scholarship would not propound such a marvellous breadth of interpretations of individual works. Allusion, in its wholeness, is a paradox wherein transcendence and immanence kiss. In a religious reading, and to return to my earlier mapping metaphor, the reader becomes a kind of orienteer tasked with searching out patterns in her surroundings in order to identify her location and effectively navigate the terrain. Yes, there are trees, but what kinds of trees? What kinds of rocks? Where else do those trees and rocks usually appear? In literary terms, one must sift through the almost infinite references that a novel's allusive action potentiates, identify patterns consistent with a particular repository of symbols and meanings, and then test their collective compatibility, cooperation, their net-strength when actualized according to the norms of that repository.

Chapter Summaries

My thesis was composed in the manuscript style; namely, the main two body chapters are slightly modified versions of scholarly articles either published or under consideration by an academic journal. Chapter 2 concentrates primarily on what I call the bilingual iconography of *Galore*—that is, figurations built on symbols (chiefly sea creatures) that allusively engage both Judeo-Christian and Irish animist repositories of meaning. Chapter 3 concentrates primarily on the genealogy of a character type, namely the Irish Priest. However, there is much overlap between these chapters. For instance, both draw attention to structural and imitative allusions clarified by the systems of symbolic or topical allusions that underpin them (i.e. Christian and Irish Celtic), and naturally, both chapters deal with the previously mentioned issue of "bilingual signs." More specifically, Chapter 2, "A Miraculous Catch: The Bilingual Iconography of *Galore*" engages Crummey's use of both folk and religious figurations of sea life—specifically the whale (whence Judah Devine first appears,) and Judah's miraculous chain of squid, with brief considerations of other devouring fish. I call these figurations bilingual because they expound simultaneously the Irish Celtic and Judeo-Christian foundations of *Galore's* world and theology, annotating its spiritual landscape. Analyzed in this way, fishy creatures in *Galore* host overlapping Irish and Christian allusions that reinforce Judah Devine as a complex Christ figure in the novel, and also contribute to a sacramentalized code of textuality in *Galore* that links narrative, or textual wisdom with food, enriching diegetic figurations of Eucharist central to the novel's theology. Chapter 2 is currently in the peer review process with *Literature and Theology*. Chapter 3, **"**Fear, Trembling, and Carousing: Father Phelan in Michael Crummey's *Galore*" is a slightly modified (lengthier) version of my article published in *New Hibernia Review* 23:4 (Winter 2019).

Though Michael Crummey's works have always featured a religious bent, that bent has always traced a question.[9] By turns both reverent and iconoclastic, his stories test the stretch and mettle of any creed espoused therein, often pitting them against the humanizing (and dehumanizing) demands of life in 19th century Newfoundland and Labrador. His works demonstrate a strong flavour of that "Christian agnosticism" described earlier.[10] Such being the case, Father Phelan, Crummey's first significant cleric, is a subject of particular interest. Tracing very briefly some of the history of priest figures in Irish literature, Chapter 3 examines Phelan as a priest of particular clerical lineage, and (diegetically speaking) socio-geographic placement. It also acknowledges Phelan (hyperdiegetically speaking) as a man lodged out of time, in a postcolonial work set before the advent of words like 'colonialism.' By these two routes, I present how Phelan's transatlantic and transhistorical contexts make him a unique conduit for commentary on and advancement of clerical leitmotifs within Irish diaspora and Canadian literatures. I also analyze the particular theological statements made through Phelan's character in light of the novel's mixed spiritual milieu, which incorporates Christian and Irish animist influences along with diverse folkloric elements.

My concluding chapter begins, as is customary, with a brief summary of the body chapters' achievements. Following this, I offer some discussion of those numerous elements of this project which, while they did not fit the parameters of a master's thesis, demanded pursuit by other means, and are now germinating into other projects. Finally, this chapter identifies some areas of Crummey's work ripe for future study, paying specific attention to questions of textuality and orality, (il)literacy and voicelessness, including the persistent parallels *Galore* draws between reading and memory or self-

[9] Far from dissipating or sabotaging the novel's theological force, this agnostic turn makes Crummey's work even more penetrating. To quote the Canadian poet Phyllis Webb, a question is "hook/of the soul": "question/ query/ hook/ of the soul/ a question of/ questions/ why/how/ oh God/ has it come to this/ hook/ sickle/ scythe/ to cut us down this/mark?" ("A Question of Questions, I" *The Vision Tree,* 126).

[10] Crummey's short story "Miracles," featured in *Running the Whale's Back*, begins with a description of the moon comparing it to "a single Braille dot," calling to mind both readable information and blindness simultaneously (21).

knowledge; writing and resistance; illiteracy/erasure/forgetting and loss of agency and identity. With these realities in view, I hope readers will find the table set for a probing discussion of *Galore's* ambivalence about its own existence as a story, a book, a testimony. By analyzing, in an open and questioning way, the roles of speech and silence in *Galore's* polyphony, this chapter will outline opportunities for further essential research on *Galore,* and Crummey's work generally.

Chapter 2

A Miraculous Catch: Bilingual Spirituality in Michael Crummey's *Galore*[11]

> The fish has been a tricky symbol for ages. You are never certain whether you are talking about the real, scaly and pungent variety, or whether you are listening to a fish story.
>
> *Andrew Atkinson*

> The bible, and religion in general, were so inextricably entwined in those people's lives. I really like the way this notion of a person coming out of the belly of a whale cuts on both of those things, the folkloric side and the biblical side.
>
> *Michael Crummey*

Galore is nothing if not a fish story. Yet, by this, readers must not be misled into thinking less of the novel's seriousness or power. Better then to say *Galore* is nothing *less* than a fish story. In his introduction to *Running the Whale's Back: Stories of Faith and Doubt from Atlantic Canada,* Andrew Atkinson explains that "Atlantic Canada is home to these two varieties of fish stories: the folk narrative and the broader network of religious figuration" (12). Michael Crummey's *Galore* houses both varieties. Its heartbeat relies on a blurring, or murmur, between the literal and the figurative. Its world is one in which liminality never detracts from, but rather contributes to, the power in people, places,

[11] This chapter is a longer version of a scholarly article now under review with Oxford University's *Literature and Theology.* The text for the journal had to be shorter to meet *Literature and Theology*'s word limit.

and events. This chapter focusses on Crummey's use of both folk and religious figurations of sea life—specifically the whale (whence Judah Devine first appears,) and Judah's miraculous chain of squid, with brief considerations of other devouring fish. I call these figurations bilingual because they expound simultaneously the Irish Celtic and Judeo-Christian foundations of *Galore's* world and theology, annotating its spiritual landscape. Bringing Irish animist and Christian references together allows new layers of meaning in the novel to blossom. Specifically and most importantly for the focus of this chapter, fishy creatures in *Galore* operate in two main ways: they host overlapping Irish and Christian allusions that reinforce the character of Judah Devine as a complex Christ figure in the novel; and, they contribute to a sacramentalized code of textuality in *Galore* that links narrative (textual wisdom) with food. Together, these two fishy functions enrich the diegetic figurations of Eucharist so central to the *Galore*'s theology.

In the sections that follow I illustrate and analyze some key behaviours of language in *Galore* that allow bilingual figurations to operate the way they do. For example, the whale in which Judah Devine's character arrives is often referred to by diverse, sometimes contradictory names and I outline the biblically and mythically informed logic of such conflations. Sea dragons, whales, whalefish, and 'great fish' like Leviathan all swim together in these deep, dark, murky waters. Sometimes they even form surprising chimeric mashups. Later, with certain biblical foundation already laid, I turn to Irish animist narratives to help illuminate how fishy figurations in *Galore* contribute to the novel's "Eucharistic turn," first identified by Samuel Martin. I demonstrate that the fish's allusive relationships to Irish animist spirituality are just as important to *Galore's* sacramental theology as its relationships to Judeo-Christian tradition. Finally, my culminating sections take a deep dive into *Galore's* multifaceted fishy rhetoric, through close readings of specific events and fishy-figures, such as Judah's whale, the

cod-the-size-of-a-goat whence Jabez Trim's bible is first harvested, Patrick Devine's sunken library, and Judah's miraculous catch of squid.

The Monster Mash: *Galore's* Leviathan in Christian and Irish Animist Context

From the first page, *Galore* throws readers into the deep-end by referring to the thing that beaches itself in the Gut as a humpback whale, a "Leviathan," and a fish, all in one sentence: "They weren't whalers and no one knew how to go about killing the Leviathan, but there was something in the humpback's unexpected offering that kept the starving men from hacking away while the fish still breathed" (1). For modern readers, this sentence can look tangled and self-contradicting. However, by heaping these different-meaning words together—humpback whale, Leviathan, and fish—Crummey signals readers to set aside all their preconceived distinctions, their assumptions about what a thing is or is not. In order to understand this book, its people, places, and happenings, readers will need to accept that nouns, such as "fish" or "Leviathan," can operate like adjectives: they can describe the spirit of a thing, or allude to certain important traits it has, without attending in the least to superficial facts. Further, readers must understand that such verbal or grammatical alchemy on the page is a statement about life, about reality: things can be more than what they are. Those who like using 'chimeric' as a value judgement, meaning 'impossible' or 'unrealizable' rather than simply 'comprising many different species/elements,' will find themselves much frustrated by this book and its preoccupation with liminality. Yet *Galore* is just one example in a long and illustrious tradition of stories that strive to informatively blur the boundaries of being. Here, a "mashup" always makes a point.

Originating in the Book of Enoch, a noncanonical Jewish text, Leviathan is first described as a "sea monster" of titanic proportions (Laurence, 58:7). Where Leviathan appears in canonical books of the Tanakh and Christian bible, interpretations of its physical form have varied—as by extension have

artistic depictions. One interpretive school represents Leviathan as a kind of sea dragon, a chaos monster reflecting the boundless, uncontrollable power of the ocean. [12] Other interpretive schools connect Leviathan with known animals that fit the beast's overall profile. (In the Book of Job, God has a long speech featuring a detailed physical description of Leviathan.) In this vein, the Revised Standard Version includes a footnote on Job 41:1 suggesting Leviathan may correspond to a crocodile, while other passages (in the RSV and other translations) connect it with a great whale. According to Jewish *midrash*, God made Leviathan on the fifth day of creation; Genesis 1:21 of the Hebrew Tanakh says God created "the great sea monsters" that day. Rashi's commentary explains:

> **the...sea monsters**: The great fish in the sea, and in the words of the Aggadah (B.B. 74b), this refers to the Leviathan and its mate, for He created them male and female, and He slew the female and salted her away for the righteous in the future, for if they would propagate, the world could not exist because of them....
>
> (Rashi, *The Complete Tanakh—Hebrew Bible: The Jewish Bible with a Modern Translation and Rashi's Commentary*, np)

So, Rashi gets the floundering reader of scripture from "monsters" generally, to "Leviathan and his mate" specifically. (The female mate having been killed and "salted away"—a detail that is important for my later discussion). The reader has moved from the wide realm of legend into one whopper of a Hebrew fish story. Rashi adds a helpful dash of realism, explaining the Leviathans and their ilk are workably analogous to "the great fish in the sea." Next door, in the Christian bible, most translations of this verse simply say, "the great whales."[13]

[12] See Job 41:11-12: "Out of his nostrils cometh out smoke, as out of a boiling pot or cauldron. His breath maketh the coals burn: for a flame goeth out of his mouth" (GNV). Water is often a symbol of chaos or entropy in the ancient Jewish worldview, as per Job 7:12 "Am I the sea, or the monster of the deep, that you put me under guard?" (NIV).

[13] See Genesis 1:21, GNV, KJV and NIV.

To modern audiences, Leviathan-as-whale presents a new problem: whales are still not fish. But the authors of these early texts did not make the distinctions readers make today—at least, not so readily. Translations everywhere play fast and loose with the differences between whales, monsters, and monstrous fish. For example, the Revised Standard Version of Ezekiel likens the Pharaoh of Egypt to "a dragon in the seas," but the King James Version translates "dragon" as "whale" (Ezek 32:2). Similarly, and even more to the point, the Geneva Bible has Job ask God "am I a sea, or a *whalefish,* that thou keepest me in ward?" (Job 7:12, emphasis mine). Such murky, mutable, poetic conditions are perfect for a good fish story, and art has always taken advantage: Herman Melville's *Moby-Dick* begins with a sequence of epigraphs (the first few, biblical) that play on these conflations like improvisational jazz (7-15). Early paintings inspired by the Book of Jonah regularly incorporate both fishy and whale-like elements into the beast that swallows the protagonist.[14]

Leaving Thomas Hobbes to one side, then, Leviathan is a name invoked either as shorthand for a palimpsest of fishy images, or as a direct reference to specific scriptures and deuterocanonical lore. *Galore* does both with its first sentence. On the one hand, Crummey uses this watchword "Leviathan" as a way of signalling to the reader "this is what you're in for from here on out: echoes on echoes on echoes." As if to underline the point, he follows up with additional multi-allusory fusions like Judah (which incorporates the biblical names of Jonah, Judas, the tribe of Judah named for Israel's eldest son, and St Jude, all at once) and Father Phelan (see my next chapter for a discussion of Phelan's resemblance to the runner Jonah and the hanged betrayer Judas).

[14] See especially Pieter Lastman's 1691 "Jonah and the Whale," wherein the eponymous whale is distinctly fishward-leaning. Milton too, in *Paradise Lost* describes the Leviathan as both having gills and blowing like a whale does (Book 6, 412-416). Unlike Lastman's painting, Michelangelo's detail in the Sistine Chapel includes no hint of a whale at all; the fish next to Jonah is huge but otherwise normal. Similarly, the cover art for *Galore's* 2010 trade paperback edition shows a quatrefoil window-cut of a man being swallowed by something very like an enormous codfish. This window-cut approach, together with the twist on the fish's details, make visual allusion to hagiography as a genre.

Crummey uses his individual Leviathan, a humpback whale, in a way that directly recalls the *midrash* stories born out of Enoch 58: "And [God] slew the female and salted her away for the righteous in the future." Just so, *Galore*'s whale becomes a saving grace for the starving Newfoundlanders on shore. Moreso, Judah Devine becomes a saving grace for the community, a saint with a hagiography that grows and grows until, even after he unaccountably vanishes, his story is so vividly preserved with repetition that it becomes a version of the man himself "salted away for the righteous in the future."[15] As in Christian celebrations of Eucharist, the story becomes the food. First the people shape their story cannon, then the cannon shapes the people as they "feed on [the saviour] in their hearts,"[16] telling and retelling his story, passing it around like a salt-fish communion until they themselves become "the salt of the earth," as in Matthew 5: 13-16 (NIV):

> "You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot. You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven."

I quote the passage from Matthew in full, because it explains a pre-existing symbolic relationship in Christian iconography between salt and light. The salt-light relationship is important because it illuminates the biblically allusive relationship between two of *Galore's* Christ types: Judah Devine, represented in this pairing by salt, and Ralph Stone, represented by light, as I discuss below.

[15] Judah's whiteness is compared to that of salt twice in the first few chapters of *Galore;* see pages 3 and 12.
[16] This language derives from the Eucharistic Rite as found in the Anglican *Book of Common Prayer*, wherein the priest/celebrant passes out the bread to participants, saying "take this in remembrance that Christ died for you, and feed on him in your heart by faith, with thanksgiving." Citation in bibliography.

Throughout *Galore,* Judah and Ralph feature in continuous connection with the whale, deriving their first Christological hallmarks from that connection.

Ralph and Judah are character foils. Both men arrive in the Gut by similar means: Ralph is shipwrecked, and Judah is, well, whalewrecked, so that both men arrive on shore by a passage through death into new life (84). The language of passage through death into life is important because it is the heart of Christology; it defines every sacrament of mainline Christianity, and it is a big part of what signals Ralph and Judah from the very outset as Christ types.[17] The remains of the two men's vessels are put to similar uses as well: From the remains of his lifeboat, Ralph Stone builds the basic furnishings of a house (85). Years after Judah's arrival, Father Phelan notices the skeleton of the whale that brought him, by this time a sun-bleached cathedral of bone on the beach, and it inspires him to build a new house of worship (read, church).[18] In both cases, salvaged materials, emblematic of death and decay, are turned into living places, emblematizing resurrection. Further, upon arriving on shore both Ralph and Judah suffer a full day's scouring from Devine's Widow,[19] who works in vain to scrub each man free of the otherworldly quality that 'afflicts' him. For Ralph, it is his blackness. For Judah, it is his stench, though one must bear in mind that the stench is essentially one with his whiteness—a pallor considered evidence of his passage through death, or at least the whale's stomach. Ultimately, Ralph and Judah are echoes of one another; two ways of driving home the same point. Judah is "salted

[17] Not all of the following seven ceremonies are considered full sacraments in every mainline denomination (in the Anglican church, only Baptism and Eucharist are,) but all seven *are* central to the life of worship in each. They are: Baptism (together with Confirmation), Confession, Eucharist, Marriage, Holy Orders, and Extreme Unction (Last Rites.) Every one of these rites is defined by an expression of passage through death into new life. For example, Marriage and Holy Orders are about death to a life of self-service in order that one might live a better, richer life characterized by total love and service of an Other (see Ephesians 5: 1-2, 25), whereas Extreme Unction is about passage from this life, through death, into the eternal life to come.

[18] Across many movements of church architecture, the portion of a church where congregants gather, called the *nave* (from the Latin *navis,* "ship") features a vaulted ceiling intended precisely to resemble the overturned hull of a ship. The nave ceiling in the Anglican Cathedral of St John the Baptist, St John's, Newfoundland, is a fine example. What Phelan saw in the whale's ribcage was a visual echo of this familiar tradition.

[19] The homophony between Devine and Divine here, in the family name generally but especially as pertains to Devine's Widow, is significant. See further commentary in my conclusion.

away" like Leviathan, as a story to feed the future faithful. Similarly, Ralph is preserved through the lamps he makes and sells to nearly everyone on shore, and beyond as far as Bona Vista (84). The bond between them, of course, is that through all the first year after Judah arrives on shore, Ralph Stone's lamps burn the butchered Leviathan's oil (41). As salt and light therefore, both born in their way of Leviathan and midwifed by Devine's Widow, the two men are bound together—in scripture and sacrament alike. In Baptism, descent into and emergence from water symbolize the baptized person's death to self and resurrection in Christ. Candidates also receive a lit candle with words from the congregation: "receive the light of Christ, to show that you have passed from darkness into light" (*BAS,* 160). Between his passage through watery death into life, and his connection to lamplight that shines for a whole community, Ralph brings the sacrament of Baptism, with its language of enlightenment and new life, into dialogue with the sacrament of Eucharist that Judah embodies.[20] Together, the two men enrich, expand, and clarify one another's Christology, drawing in the full scope of Christian narrative.

There is more to say about *Galore's* monstrous fish, including Judah's whale, and their significance to the novel's iconography, but that discussion depends for full impact on more context about Irish Celtic, as well as Christian, touchstones. Bringing an Irish animist perspective to *Galore's* whale or Leviathan necessitates an understanding of what significance whales had in ancient Irish culture. Although whales, or *míol mór,* are occasionally mentioned,[21] very little information about them exists in early Irish sources, suggesting whales may not have been well-enough known at the time to hold a significant place in the Irish pantheon. The fact that whales are rarely if ever included in contemporary studies of animals significant to Irish Celtic society, such as Miranda Green's *Animals in*

[20] For more on Judah's connection to Eucharist, see "Judah's Whale and Other Important Fish" later in this chapter.

[21] In the Mythological Cycle, Amergin's "Bounty of the Ocean" (Irish, "Bríocht Baile Fharraige") mentions sea creatures "*leathain míol;*" this is sometimes translated as indicating salmon 'the size of whales,' and other times as indicating 'broad whales' themselves, in addition to the salmon mentioned in the previous line of the poem. See Sean O' Tuathail's *The Excellence of Ancient Word* (np), and R.A.S. Macalister's translation of *Lebor Gabala Erenn* (p.62) respectively.

Celtic Life and Myth, or the *Oxford Dictionary of Celtic Mythology* reinforces this feeling. It is possible the ancient Irish, like the ancient Hebrews, achieved only a partial, murky understanding of whales, such as may be detected in their stories of sea-monsters, like the *bledmall* (Bane, 63, and MacKillop, 44).

More definite figurations of whales emerge toward the medieval period of Irish literature, naval and biological sciences having advanced. This period was one of great upheaval in the Irish worldview, with old animist and new Christian ideas contending fiercely together, converting, modifying and revising one another by turns. Thus, even if clearly identifiable whale figures are pretty new at this time, their significance or connotations in lore and literature will have been flavoured by traditional animist perspectives, and very probably by the old sea-monster stories mentioned earlier in this chapter. One good example of such flavour is in a popular episode from the hagiography of St Brendan, wherein the worthy abbot and his crew disembark from their ship during a sea voyage to celebrate Easter on the back of a whale, who has obligingly surfaced to host them.

Scholar and writer of the Irish 19th century, Denis O'Donoghue outlines the widespread popularity of this tale in its day; its credibility as a story of early Irish seafaring and animal encounter; and, its distinctively amiable view of the whale as compared to similar versions of the same legend from other countries (*Brendaniana,* 90-91). His remarks are valuable to quote at length:

> It has been said that this extraordinary story, as it is found in the Voyage of St. Brendan…has been borrowed from the account of the adventures of Sinbad the Sailor, in the Arabian Nights[…]; but it cannot be shown that those Arabian tales "were known in Ireland, or could have been used in that manner so early as the middle of the seventh century"[…] It is certainly much more probable that *the whale was known to our Irish mariners, many of whom, from the earliest times, sailed the Northern Seas,* the habitat of

> the "great beast," […] and that the curious tale travelled from the West to the East, and found its way from Ireland into the Arabian Nights. […]From whatever source the story originally sprung, it is worthy of note that it had got very generally a firm hold on popular credence, not only in the East, but all over Europe, in mediaeval times ; for in all those curious books called "Bestiaries," or "Treatises on the natural history of animals, with spiritual meanings attached," that were in general use in the middle ages, this legend of the whale…holds a prominent place.
>
> […]
>
> In those moral [Bestiaries] or poetical [Milton's *Paradise Lost*] applications of the wonderful story, where the whale [or Leviathan] is supposed to typify or represent [a] demon, *the spirit of the tale in the Brendan legend is entirely changed*; for in this, the great "sea-beast," far from showing any diabolical proclivities, co-operates, with great regularity, in the celebration of the Paschal festival, year after year, for seven years… Here, the "spiritual meaning" [of the whale] is evidently quite different." (O'Donoghue, 90-92, emphasis mine.)

O'Donoghue's remarks demonstrate how the whale figure of this legend—as featured in St. Brendan's Voyage—bears the influence of an Irish animist worldview, even within the story's explicit Christianity. The fact that the whale is seen here as submissive to, even cooperative with, the will of God, presents it as a creature *of* God, permeable to God's spirit and capable of manifesting something of divine will and identity. This perspective—as opposed to the more dualistic one that casts the whale as a demon who would, but for being overpowered, rebel against God—is much more harmonious with an animist worldview, wherein all things are animated with divinity.

These later, more concrete examples of whale figures in Irish literature also help to solidify in what zoological light the whale was seen. None of the stories I have been able to find cast the whale as anything other than what it was in most English-language writing down to the 19th century—that is, a sort of gigantic, not-quite conventional fish. Synthesizing, then, from ancient and medieval sources, one can reasonably deduce that in the context of *Galore*, the whale's symbolic significance from an Irish standpoint is essentially that of a fish, but a fish "writ large."

Judah's whale then, can be taken as a slippery, dynamic, and (importantly) hyperbolic expression of a familiar symbol, but a symbol that has currency in two different registers pertinent to *Galore*. The fish has significance in both Irish animist and Judeo-Christian traditions, though its meaning is not identical (I elucidate further in the following section). It thus constitutes a point of overlap, of confluence between these two visual languages or dialects. I therefore call figurations like Crummey's whale *bilingual.* The interplay of meaning resident in a bilingual symbol, like the fish (or whalefish) as featured in *Galore*, is not accessible to every reader. Many will only be able to realize one half of its significance, if at all. But some readers, those lucky enough to be versed in both of the symbol's constituent traditions, may realize the bilingual symbol's composite suggestive power, such that for them it multiplies and clarifies layers of meaning, enriching the text twofold. The following section will furnish a very brief explanation of how figurations of fish in Irish animist tradition and fish in Christian iconography, overlap.

Word Made Flesh: Fish as emblems of divine wisdom

In Irish animism, the fish is an emblem of divine wisdom (MacLeod, *Celtic Myth and Religion,* 118). Fish in this context are neither pets, companions, workmates, knowing harbingers (like crows),

nor powerful others with whom humans must negotiate (like wolves). Fish are game. They differ from plant crops in that they have minds of their own, habits and behaviours that fishermen must account for—in short, they are not domestic—but the fish is primarily a harvest, something to be sought, caught, and integrated into the seeker's person. The fish is thus a potent cognate for wisdom—an illusive yet life-affirming thing that must be eked out of the murky depths of foreign planes like the future, the past, the unconscious, the other. Further, a robust symbology of these mutable, murky depths exists in both Christian and Irish animist mythology. In Judeo-Christian literature, the use of water as a symbol for the unknown, for chaos, for unbounded potential is fairly well known, as is its use as a symbol for death or the underworld, and cleansing or rebirth.[22] According to Sharynne NicMacha, "the sacred shamanic triad of Sky, Earth, and Underworld/Ocean formed an important part of the Celtic perception of the cosmos" (*Queen of the Night*, 34). In that cosmology, the Underworld/Ocean signifies a "place of primordial darkness…analogous to the cosmic womb from which the universe arose, or the cosmic ocean from which life emerged. This is where [humans] were, in some form, before our worldly birth, and whence we will return" (15; see also MacLeod, 15-16 and 100-103).

NicMacha's description speaks usefully to Crummey's biblical epigraph for *Galore*, taken from the sixty-eighth Psalm: "I will bring my people again from the depths of the sea." It implies, in harmony with Christian tradition, that to be brought back from the depths of the sea (analogue for primordial and final darkness) is to be simultaneously raised from death—as figured in Christian baptism—and reborn, or "born again" as the biblical phrase goes, into life (John 3:1-21, KJV). This phrase is frequently cited by Reverend Violet later on in *Galore.* The philosophical distinctions

[22] A helpful synthesis of this tradition can be found in the "Thanksgiving over the Water" from the Anglican Church of Canada's baptismal liturgy (*Book of Alternative Services*, 157-158).

between resurrection and rebirth are subtle and may be articulated in different ways, but the fact remains that they are semantically distinct, and that to fuse or layer them together is to deliberately fuse and layer spiritual meaning. Understanding the harmony between Irish animist and Christian concepts of water helps illuminate the ways fish also symbolize divine wisdom in Christianity.

In Christian tradition the fish is a symbol of Christ. Atkinson helpfully recalls that in the days of the early church, *ichthys,* the Greek word for fish, was a secret "brand" among Christians: "If you met a wanderer on the road and he drew an arc in the dirt, you might finish that off with a second arc, signalling your stealth allegiance to Jesus Christ, whose initials correspond to the first two letters of the acronym, followed by "Theos" (God), "Ypsilon" (Son), "Soter" (Saviour)" (12). The association between fish and Christ goes back further though, drawing its allusive power from the biblical stories of Jesus' ministry.

The semiotic bridge from fish to divine wisdom in Christian iconography is built by the co-valent biblical relationships between fish and food, and fish and Jesus. The through-line is most famously articulated in John 1:1-14: "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God, and *the Word was God*. […] *The Word became flesh* and made his dwelling among us" (NIV, emphasis mine.) In other words, Jesus Christ, the ever-living Word or wisdom of the Creator, puts on flesh and becomes incarnated on Earth where he lives the life of a human being, experiencing appetites, hungers, needs, and vulnerability, and ministering in turn with divine wisdom to humanity's hungers, needs, and vulnerabilities. As poetry would have it, many stories of his ministry give motivic pride of place to fish: Jesus orchestrates a miraculous catch so big it breaks nets, after his fishermen friends have hauled all night and caught nothing. Jesus feeds five thousand by miraculously multiplying two fish and a handful of flatbreads. Jesus fries up fish on the beach for those same grieving friends, a surprise for the morning after his resurrection. It is interesting that in all of these cases, as in the Irish animist context,

the fish that Jesus becomes associated with are a harvest—they are for catching and eating. Thus Christ, the incarnate wisdom of God, becomes associated with physical provision, and embodiment.

In *Galore,* reading the symbolism of fish (and fishy creatures) bilingually, reveals the novel's intricate Christology, its embrace of mystery and apophasis regarding the divine, and its sacramentalized code of textuality wherein narrative becomes food, becomes life—the salvific "Word made flesh." The following sections will demonstrate this further through applied theological reading.

Judah's Whale and Other Important Fish

Judah's whale figures as both a symbol and source of wisdom in *Galore*. It is symbolic in an Irish "fish writ large" way and it is a source in a Christian "Word made flesh" way. The Christian dimension comes through particularly in Judah, with his beautiful writing, almost encyclopedic biblical knowledge, and his apparently miraculous insight regarding the squid-jigging grounds near the Rump. The Christian side of things also shows through when the whale (with its connection to Judah established) is harvested as food and a source of enlightenment (lamp oil, cognate for wisdom,) creating Eucharistic resonances. Taking *Galore* as a whole, with consideration for both its Christian and Irish Celtic iconographic heritage, Judah's whalefish is so much more than a common humpback: it is a messenger of divine wisdom, a source and manifestation of epiphany, as well as a vehicle of divine approach, ushering human beings back and forth between realms of life, death, and time. In this way, it bears resemblance to another Christian/Irish Celtic bilingual symbol: the cross or *bile,* meaning "world tree" (In my concluding chapter I present the Kerrivan tree, *Galore's* other cross-analogue, as a valuable subject for future study, but this chapter will deal exclusively with Judah's whale).

The whale as cross; Judah as Christ-type

Galore begins "during a time of scarcity when the ocean was barren and gardens went to rot in the relentless rain and each winter threatened to bury them all" (1); this sentence sets the scene and the stakes for the rest of the story. It illustrates how difficult, spare, even perilous life in 18th century outport Newfoundland could be, while giving voice to the livyers' feelings of cosmic isolation and abandonment. Readers are met with images of "rot" in the ground and of being buried, language that recalls biblical lamentations like the eighty-eighth Psalm:

> I am overwhelmed with troubles, and my life draws near to death. I am counted among those who go down to the pit [*sheol*]; I am like one without strength. I am set apart with the dead, like the slain who lie in the grave, whom you remember no more, who are cut off from your care.

Galore's phrase about the ocean being "barren" right before Judah (a Christ figure) arrives with the whale also recalls the Divine silence of the Christian bible's intertestamental period, preceding Christ's birth. Consider this passage from *Galore*'s first chapter: "My Jesus the cod, the cod, the cod, that Crusade army of the North Atlantic, that irresistible undersea current of flesh, there was fish in galore one time. Boats run aground on a school swarming so thick beneath them a man could walk upon the very water" (19). Here, Crummey frames remembrance of abundant fish in Biblical language, along with sensationalist reference to Christian 'holy wars' and the miracles of Christ, as though to draw a line between abundance of fish and perceived abundance of God's spirit or living word, present among the people. Considering matters through the Irish animist lens, the ocean (sacred nether, source of enlightenment and provision) is barren, no fish (sacred wisdom) can be got from the deep realms, until a whale (the *biggest* iteration of sacred wisdom possible) all but launches itself onto the beach, bringing

Judah—himself a kind of wisdom or "word made flesh" because of his verbal muteness and written literacy—to the people of the Gut.[23]

To summarize, *Galore* like the New Testament starts by preparing readers for a miracle, an inbreaking of divine presence and provision. Thus, begins a protracted theme of God—or at least providence—emerging from the ocean. In *Galore,* the opening miracle is the humpback delivering its human cargo; and though for most readers this image might soonest recall Jonah, Crummey's word choices work cooperatively with a pre-existing network of intrabiblical associations to forge a bond between the humpback and the cross, as well as Judah and Jesus. Other examples of such *deus ex oceanus,* as it were, which I will examine after Judah, include Jabez Trim's bible cut from the belly of a harvested cod, Patrick Devine's sunken library, and the miraculous catch of squid.

Crummey's story of how Judah—a fusion of Jonah and Christ types—winds up on shore contains some unusual imagery as Jonah stories go, in that most Jonah stories give no consideration to what becomes of the whale after Jonah is ejected. The Book of Jonah says nothing about it all. In *Moby-Dick* Father Mapple of the Nantucket Mariners' Chapel tells it this way: "Then God spake unto the fish; and from the shuddering cold and blackness of the sea, the whale came breeching up toward the warm and pleasant sun, and all the delights of air and earth; and 'vomited out Jonah upon the dry land'" (Melville, 49). Exit the whale. As with so many versions of this tale, Father Mapple's telling gives a sense that Jonah is cartoonishly spat out of the breaching whale's mouth onto shore where he lands with bounce, thump, and a sandy skid. But whether the whale shows any signs of lingering displeasure or harm, a sore throat perhaps after its own ordeal; where the whale goes, and what becomes of it; these are absent considerations. By contrast, Crummey specifies in vivid detail how

[23] Again, John's gospel describes the inbreaking of Christ's nativity as God breaking the long intertestamental silence: "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. …The Word became flesh and dwelt among us."

Judah's whale "steamed through the harbour mouth of Paradise Deep and drove headlong into the shallows like a nail hammered into a beam of wood" (*Galore*, 11).

Chronologically, if not in page-order, that comparison to a nail driven into a beam is the first suggestion of co-significance between Judah's whale and the cross of Christ. Even on page one, Crummey moves quickly from nativity story to passion play by using words like "sacrifice" to describe the Whale's arrival,[24] so unlikely it seems deliberate, then again by visual allusion as the shore-dwellers work to plunder the whale: "They managed to drive a stake with a maul and set the beast bleeding steadily" (1). Here, the fishermen refigure upon the whale the moment in John's gospel when Roman soldiers pierced Christ's side with a spear to finish him off, a gesture that foreshadows and solidifies the connection between *Galore's* Judah and Jesus. Later, in butchering the whale, the livyers make manifest in its body Christ's own words about his death on the cross: "This is my body, broken for you." This echo recurs and takes on new meaning at the end of *Galore* when Abel Devine, disabled and amnesiac, just rescued from a World War I battlefront, goes over side after a humpback whale he sees breaching.

The Biblical analogue between Jonah and Jesus is set up numerologically: Jonah slept in the belly of the whalefish three days and three nights before it spat him out onto dry land. Later, Jesus lay entombed three days and nights before the morning of the Resurrection (Matt 12:39-41). Even further back, Moses' story prefigures the coming salvation through water at two points: first, when the infant prophet is sent down the Nile in a reed basket, drifting from genocidal peril in his mother's house to safety in the arms of Pharaoh's daughter; and second, when adult Moses leads his people out of Egypt into the promised land by parting the Red Sea. Arriving as he does in the belly of a whale, coloured by

[24] By happy coincidence, the whale mentioned in the *Voyage of St Brendan* is also connected with Passiontide, appearing on Easter.

Crummey's paschal description of the whale's death, Judah embodies in synthesis the above series of characters. Tangentially, Eli Devine experiences a kind of watermark death and resurrection through his misadventure in Tryphie's pseudo-submarine, The Sculpin, which is shaped like a monstrous fish.

The link between *Galore*'s Judah and Jesus is further secured, again through the function of bilingual symbols, when Judah is first revived upon emerging from the whale: "Devine's widow turned the stranger by the shoulder, thumping his back to bring up *seawater and blood and seven tiny fish*" (5, emphasis mine). In part, this image alludes back to John's crucifixion account, when soldiers pierced Jesus' side "and forthwith came there out blood and water" (John 19:34 KJV). The seven tiny fish offer countless possibilities: where seven is the biblical number of completeness or perfection, and fish symbolize wisdom, this could signify a Christ figure's transcendent or ultimate wisdom, his essential completeness. Or, it could be a marker of Judah's having just brushed against ultimate wisdom, the Divine self, in his passage through death—much as his whiteness is thought to be. Taking this view, 1 Corinthians 13:12 comes to mind: "For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know [fully] even as I also am known" (KJV). Alternatively, again where Judah is a Christ type, the seven fish could recall the seven days of creation, and Colossians 1:15-18: "The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible…He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. …He is the beginning and the firstborn among the dead, so that in everything he might have supremacy" (NIV). Taking a completely different view, Judah's vomiting up the blood, water, and seven tiny fish, could be a symbolic show of forgetting, of wisdom purged, illustrating his amnesia.[25]

[25] This possibility is especially interesting when one considers the later cod moratorium in Newfoundland, and the vast amounts of knowledge and *self*-knowledge, both personal and cultural, that were swept away with the outports.

The purge of "blood, water and seven tiny fish" is just one among several biblical allusions in Judah's first moments of life—most of them carefully arranged figurations of birth, death, and Good Friday—that reinforce his analogue with Christ and underline the Christ-bearing whale as a crucifix. That language from Colossians, above, calling Jesus the "firstborn among [in other translations *from*] the dead," echoes Irish-American scholar NicMacha's description of the sea as a chthonic realm emblematic of both womb and grave, housing at once the primordial and the final. This double-speaking language of birth and death, enmeshed in both Irish animist and Christian codes, is figured *exactly* in Judah: though he is mantled in the whiteness of death, his arrival is narrated and re-narrated as a story of birth. When Judah first emerges like a stillborn baby from the whalefish, Jabez Trim quotes: "naked came I from my mother's womb." The full verse is "And [Job] said, 'Naked came I out of my mother's womb and naked shall I return thither: the Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord" (Job 1:21, KJV). Elsewhere in the book, Judah is frequently said to have been "born" of the whale, midwifed as it were by Devine's Widow—see *Galore* 14, 18, 51 and 313 for examples. The movements that cause Judah to cough up the water and breathe after he is dragged from the whale's belly, described here, even resemble the pike-folding movements doctors and midwives sometimes use to revive babies who fail to breathe at birth: "There were three stone steps at the head of the beach, the dead man's torso folding awkwardly on itself as [Callum Devine and James Woundy] negotiated the rise" (5). These layered inscriptions of bilingual visual allusion, pointing simultaneously to birth and death, make Judah himself into a bilingual symbol many times over—a kind of living palimpsest—clearly articulating Christhood.

One last gesture here that begs to be appreciated is the way character staging at the time of Judah's "birth" from the whale resembles and refigures biblical character staging in the scenes following Christ's death. Initially, it looks as though the two corpse-bearers, Callum and James, are

poised to play stand-in for Christ's two undertakers, Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, as in John 19:38-40. This proves not to be, however. As Judah revives, "all but the widow and Mary Tryphena [scatter] up off the beach, running for their homes like the hounds of hell were at their heels." Moments later, Selina Sellers "[comes] down to the landwash…her grandson dragging a [handbarrow] in her wake" (5). Thus, Devine's Widow, Mary Tryphena, and Selina Sellers are raised up as analogues for the three women who attend Christ's crucifixion in John 19:25, and who, in Luke's gospel, attend to his body. These are Mary the mother of Jesus, Mary Magdalene, and Johanna (sometimes Mary the wife of Cleophas). Reshuffling the cast of *Galore's* Easter tableau this way cues the reader as to what kind of importance women will have in this narrative, and paints Devine's Widow as a kind of grizzly, complicated Mary Mother of Christ, living the moments of birth and death with her son all at once, delivering him from the womb and taking him down from the cross simultaneously. This move also connects Mary Tryphena with Mary Magdalene, which throws some particularly fascinating light on her later marriage to Judah. Overall, the gesture once again underscores Judah as Christ and the whale as cross. While in the fish, or being removed from it, the connection between Judah's body and the whale's body figures a crucifix, with Christ fixed to the cross; but, after Judah is revived the whale's body remains on shore, eroding until all that is left is a skeleton stripped by villagers and the ocean, bleached by the sun, such that it comes to resemble the empty cross stripped of its now-risen victim. Over time, the whale's changed body refigures Judah's changed body, so that together, they configure a kind of Irish-lilted Christus Rex.

To conclude this exegesis of Judah's whale, I would like to draw attention to a question Abel Devine asks Esther, just before the end of *Galore*: "How did Judah Devine find his way into the belly of that whale?" (313). Esther suggests possibilities, just as people speculated the day Judah first appeared: a fisherman washed overboard, a sailor gone mad, a suicide. "That still don't say," protests

Abel, "how he wound up swallowed by a whale" (314). In drawing attention to the unseen, implied encounter between a man in the water and a whale—the unseen, implied wonder of him being swallowed alive—Abel is really enquiring about the governing dynamics, the choices and cosmic magnetism that would bring such a thing about. By extension, he highlights Judah's whale as something altogether remarkable, for it is one thing to present yourself to a whale for swallowing. It is entirely another for the whale to swallow you, whole and alive.

In my Conclusion chapter, I return to this episode to ponder how this discussion of the whale's significance bears on Abel, who refigures Judah Devine (possibly even *becomes* Judah Devine) by diving overboard of the ship bringing him home from war in pursuit of a humpback whale, some part of him recognizing it as the path toward all he has forgotten.

Living with a wild God: How *Galore* figures Word as food

In the section above, I introduce the intricate relationships in *Galore* between divine wisdom/knowledge and food in two ways: first, by elucidating the bilingual symbolism of fish in *Galore,* and second, by drawing attention to the way people in the Gut harvest Judah's whale for meat. This relationship is where Samuel Martin's language of a sacramental or "Eucharistic" turn in *Galore* really proves itself: fish in *Galore* become clear metonymic markers for the presence or nearness of God, of that divine other sought out in the deep realms of a foreign plane. By extension, fishing as an industry and fish as a food source take on strong Eucharistic connotations, such that partaking of fish can, at times, mirror partaking of the "body of Christ" at communion.

The Eucharist is a sacrament in which Christians understand themselves to draw near to God by partaking of Jesus (the incarnated Word of God that dwelt among us) through food. Opinions vary on

just how literal or symbolic Christ's spiritual presence in that food might be, but there is consensus that in re-enacting the drama of Christ's last supper with his disciples, participants take that powerful Jesus story into themselves, their hearts, minds, and even bodies, such that through them, as committed disciples of and participants in Christ's ministry, the Word might be made flesh all over again. The church (lower-case) becomes the body of Christ. In church tradition, the Eucharistic meal or "Lord's supper" consists of bread and wine as it did in the gospel story. In *Galore*, however, the more contextually relevant and loquacious fish is substituted. One key difference this gesture makes is that it draws communion out of the context in which readers are probably most accustomed to think of it—that is, a church building, in the confines of a particular ceremony—and turns it loose, dispersing it into the novel's internal environment where it can move freely and make mischief. In *Galore*, the essential quiddity of Eucharist transpires outdoors, in boats, in fishing rooms, and in homes, as much as in church, and it can happen at any time wherever two or more are gathered.

This refiguration of the sacrament in which human beings make bold to seek out and partake as directly as possible of the Divine Reality, is exactly in keeping with the way *Galore* portrays God. It makes bodily encounter with the Divine a thoroughly feral, unpredictable thing, and acknowledges that the people of Crummey's Avalon are, in the words of Barbara Ehrenreich, living with a wild God. In *Galore* the statements that characters, or the narrator, or the setting (a character in itself) make about God are deeply apophatic. People talk about what God is not. They talk about what cannot be known, what is not seen, not heard, not felt.[26] God is a murky figure, indefinite, illusive, perhaps even

[26] Examples: "Jabez tried explaining that God gave Isaac a reprieve at the final moment, sending an angel to stay his father's hand, but James was skeptical. –That don't sound like the God we knows out here, he said" (20); "The note [Mary Tryphena] carried was like a page out of Jabez Trim's Bible, the word of God which meant one thing and one thing only, and only those initiated into the mysteries could decipher it" (34); "Devine's Widow suggested even Father Phelan would have to recognize the fire as a sign from God but Lizzie shook her head. –God give up talking to the likes of us, she said, a long time ago" (119); "There are still people with no priest among them. You say so yourself, [said Mrs Gallery.] –The back of beyond, [Phelan] said. –Not even God knows they're there" (133).

mercurial. (For more on that important word, see Chapter 3.) In keeping with this portrait of the Divine, fish become a correspondently elusive Eucharistic host, far more capricious than bread. Bread cannot slip your hook or jump out of your hands. You don't have to go out in a boat risking life and limb to get it. In and of itself, it's not even alive. The grain that made the flour that made the bread may once have been, but even then, grain is a domestic crop. Fish, on the other hand, are wild—whalefish even wilder. Thus, *Galore's* host of fish reflects the simultaneously agnostic and enthralled character of *Galore's* overall religious tone; here God may be a question, but that question still has its hook.

I contend that the central struggle of *Galore* is with exactly this perceived absence of, and humans' hunger for, God. It is the novel's second highest expression of that "unrequited love" Crummey signals in his epigraph from Gabriel Garcia Marquez, which says: "The invincible power that has moved the world is unrequited, not happy love." The *highest* expression is God's longing for intimacy with humanity. (What more definitive story do human beings have of unrequited love that moved the world, than the story of God incarnate dying for those He came to profess love to, yet who rejected and killed him?) This is pictured through Judah's relationship with Mary Tryphena, and through the whale's (or whales') behaviour at the beginning and end of the book.

> [Mary Tryphena] stared out at the water, the endless grey expanse of ocean below reflecting the endless grey nothing of her life. The nothing stretched for miles in all directions, nothing, nothing, nothing, she was on the verge of bawling at the thought when the humpback breached the surface, the staggering bulk rising nose first and almost clear of the sea before falling back in a spray. Mary Tryphena's skin stippled with goosebumps, her scalp pulling taut. The whale breached a second time and a third, as if calling her attention… (*Galore,* 11)

Amidst all the other livyers' talk of absence, silence, and abandonment, Mary Tryphena's experience of divine inbreaking, later revisited upon Abel Devine, is the resounding note of contradiction that bookends *Galore* as a whole. These considerations deserve much more attention than I can afford them here, or even within the confines of this thesis. In my conclusion, I furnish a few further thoughts and outline possible avenues for future work.

Judah's 'birth' then, at the beginning of *Galore*, is only the first episode in a recurring theme of important things showing up—and disappearing, too—in fish bellies. It is the opening flourish in which fish are established as metonymic markers for encounter with God, and Judah is established as a Christ type—the living and heaven-sent *word* of God. The result is that after this, when fish are made to carry important, unlikely, or valuable things, readers ought to take notice. Consider the origin story of Jabez Trim's Bible, which at the start of the novel and for many years after remains the only Bible anywhere in the Gut or Paradise Deep:

> It was true that a cod would swallow any curiosity that strayed by its nose and a motley assortment of materials had come to hand in the process of gutting them over the years. Lost jiggers and leather gloves and foreign coins, a porcelain hat brooch. A razor strop and half a bottle of Jamaica rum, a pinchbeck belt buckle, a silver snuff box, a ball that King-me [Sellers] claimed was used for a game called lawn tennis in France. The prize above all others was Jabez Trim's Bible, recovered from the gullet of a cod the size of a goat. (*Galore*, 19)

In cases where passage through the deep (via fish) is related to salvation, or death and resurrection, Jonah's story is certainly the most pertinent. But in cases such as the above, where the harvest of the deep is more material, like salvage or treasure, two new texts get drawn in from the biblical side of

Galore's allusion repository: the story of Jesus and the four-drachma fish, from Matthew's gospel, and the story of the great fish from the book of Tobit.[27]

The story of the four-drachma fish bears strong resonance to remarks in the quote above about valuables such as "foreign coins" found in cod bellies. In Matthew 17, some temple authorities in Capernaum hassle the disciple Peter—a fisherman by trade—as to whether Jesus pays his temple tax, which amounts to two drachmas. When Peter raises the issue with Jesus, the Rabbi makes a rhetorical point about the injustice of church authorities levying taxes against their own people. "But," Jesus says, "that we may not cause offense, go to the lake and throw out your line. Take the first fish you catch; open its mouth and you will find a four-drachma coin. Take it and give it to them for my tax and yours" (Matt 17:27, NIV). The appearance of the coin-bearing fish adds weight to Jesus' objections about the temple tax by demonstrating his divine insight, but it also furnishes Peter with the political safety he needs during Jesus' stay in Capernaum. As a potential allusion in *Galore,* this episode also reinforces the code I have been describing, wherein fish are metonyms for the human experience of God's nearness and provision, symbolizing and often literally carrying in their bodies some expression of divine wisdom--usually related to text or writing. (More on this as I go on.)

The book of Tobit is a cousin to the book of Jonah, in that the man Tobit was one of the Hebrews taken into captivity in Nineveh, the same city to which Jonah was sent as a prophet. As the story goes, Tobit sends his son, Tobias, on a journey to the neighbouring kingdom of Media to retrieve some money that Tobit had deposited there for safe keeping.[28] Tobias seeks out a guide to show him

[27] Tobit is canonical to Catholics and Orthodox Christians but is considered a deuterocanonical book (or Old Testament Apocrypha) among Protestants. It is not included in Hebrew scriptural canon either, though the book is still valued within Judaism.

[28] This is done because Tobit, in despair over his people's condition in Nineveh, has prayed for death. Believing God may in fact "release" him from the burden of life according to his prayer, he makes preparation for his family's future security.

the way, and unwittingly befriends the angel Raphael who, in semblance of an ordinary man, uses a false name. On the way to Media, Tobias and Raphael camp by the river Tigris:

> And [Tobias] went to wash himself, and a fish jumped out of the river and would have swallowed the boy. But the angel said to him, "Take hold of the fish!" And the boy seized the fish and threw it up on the land. And the angel said to him, "Cut the fish up, and take its heart and liver and gall and keep them safe." And the boy did as the angel told him, and they cooked the fish and ate it. (Tobit 6:1-5a)

The angel later explains to Tobias that a smudge made from the burning heart and liver will drive away demons—handy, since the narrator mentions earlier there is a woman in Tobias' area, destined to be his wife, who is plagued by a demon. Moreover, Raphael says the "gall" of the fish rubbed on eyes afflicted by white films will clear the sight—handy again, since Tobias' father has just such a problem.

Now, a fish that is big enough to swallow a young man but also small enough to be wrangled by him sounds comparable enough to *Galore's* "cod the size of a goat." Additionally, it is not difficult to see the underlying parallels between Tobit's providential fish, which yields valuable medicine able to heal both body and soul, and what *Galore* does in placing a copy of the Holy Bible "pages…wet and stuck to one another" into the belly of a huge cod. Figurations of the healing humours of Tobit's fish and Newfoundland's harvest of medical-grade cod-liver oil hang about here as well.

Patrick Devine (II)'s descent into an English ship "wrecked on shoal ground off the Rump," with its library full of books, bears its own haunting resemblance to a man being swallowed by a great fish, and participates in this theme of treasure almost providentially yielded from the deep:

> The hold was a deathtrap by then, already half filled with water. …The ship was tilted hard to starboard and Patrick spidered along the passageways with one foot on the floor and the

> other on the wall. The vessel rocked forward suddenly, pitching him face-first through a doorway and he fell into a pool of novels and books of poetry, tomes on botany and science and history, philosophy and religion, bound copies of *Punch*." (*Galore*, 221)

Between the ominous word "deathtrap," the vision of water sloshing around in the belly of the proverbial beast, and the helplessness of Patrick's fall—not unlike being swallowed alive—down a hallway and through an opening into a heap of volumes (talk about Readers' Digest), the echoes of fishiness inscribed into this half-sunk ship are fairly dense. Even more interesting than the ship's subtly contrived fishiness is the subtly contrived relationship between what lives inside this "fish" and the salvage treasured up inside the other great fishes I've described—to wit, Judah inside the whale, and a bible inside the goat-sized cod. Jabez Trim's bible, called the "prize above all"; the sunken library for which Patrick II risks life and limb; and Judah, a conspicuously, importantly literate Christ figure; all enrich the animist symbolic relationship between creatures of the deep and wisdom or knowledge.

Even more piquant, each of these cases figures wisdom or knowledge in the form of written texts. With the bible and the library, it is obvious how this is so, though with Judah it may not be. He is, as I have described him before, a kind of "living word" or "word made flesh;" though he never speaks, he is fully literate, able to read and write beautiful calligraphy. His whiteness may also allude to the whiteness of the blank page, as I return to in my conclusion. This use of bilingual fish symbols within *Galore*'s unique semantic field ultimately figures wisdom or knowledge—and specifically writing—as food. Where this is easy to see with Judah in the whale's stomach, or a bible found whilst gutting a fish of "indiscriminate appetite," it is not quite so obvious with the sunken library (19). Nonetheless, the subtle, allusory description of Patrick's descent into the ship outlined above creates a palpable similarity between the hull of the ship, filled with books, and the belly of a great fish…in the case of the aforementioned goat-sized cod, sometimes also filled with books. Thus, not only are fish

themselves food for the livyers on shore, but the textual representations of wisdom that they carry inside are positioned as having been consumed by the fish the same way food would be.

By extension of this metaphor, illiteracy—whether textual, in the case of Mary Tryphena's inability to read Judah's love note in chapter one, or oral/social, in the case of Abel Devine's ignorance of his own family history—becomes a robust, fleshy, sacramentalized kind of hunger in *Galore*, a malnourishment as painful and debilitating as famine.[29] By the same token, storytelling becomes a way of feeding and sustaining others, and the retelling of lifeblood narratives may be seen as all but analogous to dispensing the Eucharist. Recall the earlier discussion of the salt-and-light foil relationship between Ralph Stone and Judah Devine, wherein I compare Judah's personal hagiography on shore to a 'salt fish communion' that sustains the people on shore long after he is gone. This revelation bears much more thorough investigation; my concluding chapter suggests several directions such investigation might take and furnishes some preliminary analysis.

Conclusion: The Miraculous Catch of Squid

One final episode requires attention; among instances of fish, or the ocean, providentially 'coughing up the goods,' none more obviously parodies a known biblical text than Judah's squid-jigging adventure at the Rump, adapted from the 'Miraculous Catch of Fish' which appears in both Luke and John's gospels. Here, *Galore* gives its base material a good strong twist, changing the catch from fish to squid. A twist like that is a call to attention, and so the call is answered.

[29] My next chapter features an extended contemplation of sacramentalized hunger, as expressed through Father Phelan's ministry. That content is alternately available in *New Hibernia Review* 23:4 (Winter 2019), under the title "Fear, Trembling, and Carousing: Father Phelan in Michael Crummey's *Galore*."

Judah's ouroboros-like chain of squid richly foreshadows the themes of reincarnation and circular time that the novel will later develop.[30] The chain participates in the Irish animist tradition of empowering liminality—squid, technically cephalopods, are fine examples of creatures not easily categorized, neither this nor that—and Irish figurations of wisdom coming from the deep. The chain also conforms to *Galore's* overall figuration of knowledge or wisdom, especially including that of texts or writing, better than perhaps any other single image in the novel. The principal way *Galore* achieves this bilingual articulation is through the substitution of squid for fish in its parody of the biblical Miraculous Catch. Changes like these are not made willy-nilly. If the goal here was to make a change for the sake of distance, to get close to a biblical story without replicating it, many options stand at the ready: lobsters or crabs clinging onto one another by their claws, for instance. Yet squid do things—literally and symbolically—that almost no other creature could do. Most importantly, they squirt ink. My belief is that the squid was a deliberate choice here, selected for the way it contributes to *Galore's* established motifs of whiteness and textuality.

In chapter two of *Galore,* the narrator relates King-me Sellers' inner thoughts regarding Judah, sometimes nicknamed "The Great White" (*Galore,* 1). This portion of the text alludes strongly—almost word for word—to Herman Melville's *Moby-Dick,* echoing a speech by Ahab in chapter 36, "The Quarter-Deck," as well as the narrator Ishmael's meditation on whiteness in chapter 42, "The Whiteness of the Whale."[31] Before demonstrating the allusive connection, it is worth highlighting the structural similarity here: in *Moby-Dick,* Ahab articulates his personal hatred first, and then the narrator (in this case Ishmael) further details the psycho-spiritual roots of that fearful hatred. Similarly, in

[30] The circumstances of Abel Devine's injury at war, rescue, and "return" to the sea set matters up so that the story can be interpreted as circular, and readers may even surmise that Abel *is* Judah carried back in time to correct his story. I have my own counter-proposal to this theory, which preserves the idea of cyclical (if not fully circular) time in the novel, but that is a matter for the conclusion chapter of this thesis.

[31] Indeed, the resonance is so strong, critic Cynthia Sugars accidentally elides Melville's whale and Crummey's in her initial review of *Galore.*

Galore, King-me spews injunctions against Judah long before the passage I will cite, but it is not until this moment, when the narrator intervenes to expose the innermost quality of his hate, that we understand King-me's hatred to be rooted in fear of Judah's inscrutability—his "blankness."

First, *Moby-Dick*:

> "All visible objects, man are but as pasteboard masks. But in each event—in the living act, the undoubted deed—there, some unknown but still reasoning thing pts forth the mouldings of its features from behind the unreasoning mask. […] **That inscrutable thing** is chiefly what I hate; and be the white whale agent, or be the white whale principal, I will wreak that hate upon him." (Ahab, 133; emphasis mine)
>
> Is it that by its indefiniteness [whiteness] shadows forth the heartless voids and immensities of the universe…? Or is it, that in essence whiteness is not so much a color as the visible absence of color, and at the same time the concrete of all colors; is it for these reasons that there is such **a dumb blankness**, full of meaning…from which we shrink? (Ishmael [as narrator], 157; emphasis mine)

Next, compare *Galore,* King-me recalling his first landing in Newfoundland*:*

> A steep horseshoe of hills rising around them, the densely forested spruce crowding down to the landwash. The silence of the place was implacable, and King-me felt a panic rising through him in the face of all of that nothing… He settled on *Paradise* before he'd stepped off the boat, thinking anything less would be an admission of weakness. The bushborns in the Gut knew the harbour simply as Deep Bay and the name was too apt to abandon altogether—Paradise Deep, they insisted on calling it. As if to tell King-me that something of the place would always be beyond his influence.

> Watching Judah emerge from the whale's guts, King-me felt the widow was birthing everything he despised in the country, laying it out before him like a taunt. Irish nor English, Jerseyman nor bushborn nor savage, not Roman or Episcopalian or apostate, Judah was the wilderness on two legs, **mute and unknowable, a blankness** that could drown a man. King-me was happy enough to think of that carted off to England and hung. (75, emphasis mine)

The creatures composing Judah's chain of squid contribute meaningfully by their pure whiteness—a feature not available through most other sea creatures that could be used to parody the Miraculous Catch—to *Galore's* inner code of whiteness, as well as its theology. This is partly because their whiteness recalls that of the page, and partly because it recalls that of the *blank* page. These squid embody, better than ordinary fish could, *Galore's* central theological tension—the pull between encounter and elusion, epiphany and apophasis. This is just one glimpse into an extensive and elaborate code of whiteness featured in *Galore,* a topic warranting further investigation than I can afford it here.

Moreover, because of the squid's ability to spout ink, it also contributes meaningfully to *Galore's* recurrent meditations on storytelling, history and historiography, writing, and textuality more generally. Yet, in the context of the present study, what is more pertinent is that through these associations the autotrophic chain of squid reinforces *Galore's* repeated figuration of knowledge or wisdom, especially that of texts or stories, as *food*: "Callum lifted one [squid] out of the bilge water but they rose in a chain, one squid attached to the tail of the next. He looked back to the stranger and could see he'd dropped his line altogether and was bringing the squid in hand over hand in one continuous string, mouth to tail, mouth to tail, mouth to tail" (27). In my final chapter I suggest several dimensions or permutations of "the w/Word" awaiting more fulsome exploration in *Galore.*

In summary, *Galore* demonstrates all the classic themes and behaviours of a fish story in the parabolic tradition Atkinson highlights, from the way the novel subjugates questions of fact to questions of truth, or essential significance, to the way it uses tales of physical encounter with a wild, wilful harvest of fish to illustrate its characters' relationships with the numinous. Through these behaviours and through its supple figurations of ocean wildlife, which draw on both Judeo-Christian iconographic and Irish Celtic animist traditions, *Galore* shows forth a sophisticated sacramental theology.

While character names in *Galore* tend to be strategic and precise, even 'aptronymic' as my next chapter will show, strategic conflations—like Judas with Jonah, whence Judah, or fish with whales, monsters, squid and other sea creatures—are equally indicative of the novel's central points and convictions. These deliberate efforts to 'muddy the waters,' as it would seem, are part of *Galore's* dialogue with its parent mythologies; understood as such, they are not obscurative but clarifying and revelatory. In treating both language and physical reality as though they are stretchier, more mutable than they seem, *Galore* is able to map a spiritual landscape—over its setting, and within its individual characters—that makes room for both faith and doubt, epiphany and apophasis.

Judah Devine and the humpback 'whalefish' in which he arrives on shore are primary among these chimeric figurations. The whale, as I have shown, can be best understood as a fish 'writ large,' expressing wisdom from an Irish animist angle, and alluding to Christ, the living word or wisdom of God, from the Judeo-Christian angle. Judah, in turn, derives his first Christological hallmarks from his association with the whale, appearing in a scene that places his character in dialogue with both the story of Jonah—which prefigures Christ's passage through death and resurrection three days later—and the story of the crucifixion. In this all-important first scene, Crummey's careful word choices and character placements engage an intricate web of allusions, connecting Judah's whale with the cross and Judah

himself with Christ. As the starving people of the Gut butcher the beached humpback for food, they enact a new figuration of Eucharist, echoes of which will repeat throughout the remainder of the novel.

Galore's bilingual figurations of sea life also contribute much to a sacramentalized code of textuality in *Galore* that links narrative, or textual wisdom, with food, enriching diegetic figurations of the Johannine "Word made flesh," and revealing in greater detail the central 'eucharistic turn' that Samuel Martin first identified in the novel. Every creature of the deep that gets any real attention in *Galore,* be it a whale, a sunken ship, a codfish, or a squid, carries in its body some expression of wisdom or knowledge—usually written. Where this written wisdom turns up in the bellies of creatures themselves hunted as food, that wisdom is figured as edible, nutritive, such that a human being's essential sustenance consists as much in the knowledge of truth as it does in food.

The other side of this is that in *Galore,* ignorance of any serious kind—be it illiteracy, ignorance of one's own story or origins, or ignorance of the truth that one's love *is* requited—is a deprivation deadly as famine. This is where the metonymy of fish in *Galore,* for human beings' experience of God's nearness and provision, takes on a cutting edge. Literal famine, or absence of fish, serially haunts the people of *Galore's* twin outports; similarly, the realities of life post-moratorium and of oceans increasingly under threat haunt present-day readers of the novel. If abundance of fish in *Galore* represents people's feeling that God is near, that God cares, then absence of fish inevitably gives voice to their recurrent conviction that God has abandoned them, or worse, never knew them—never existed. In this way, *Galore's* metonymic relationship between fish and a truly felt encounter with the divine helps to demonstrate the novel's central theological tension—the pull between encounter and elusion.

I have touched briefly here on the matter of whiteness in *Galore,* through Judah Devine's character and the chain of white squid and will return to this again my conclusion chapter. In this

chapter, I show how whiteness further engages the theological tension in *Galore* between hope and doubt, enthusiasm and agnosticism. Both Judah and the squid embody something of the blank page through their whiteness, but they express—in Judah's case through writing, and in the squids' case through less focussed ink—something of a definite, if not always comprehensible, message. To overwrite this tension, to call the message of *Galore* more definite, more obvious than it is, would be to travesty the novel's profound truthfulness, best expressed in a humility that respects the boundaries of knowing. And yet, readers would be equally remiss to ignore the way *Galore* questions the solidity of these boundaries—boundaries on knowing, on being, on time, on God's love. There are at least two ways to read open endings like those that populate *Galore*. One can read them as inconclusive, dead in the water, or one can read them as indefinite, unrestrained, sheer potential, eternally alive. Through the above explorations of *Galore's* sacramental theology I hope I have demonstrated compelling evidence for a viable reading in the second vein. I hope too that the following chapter, a deep dive into *Galore's* central religious leader, Father Phelan, will further that life-affirming case.

Chapter 3

Fear, Trembling, and Carousing: Father Phelan in Michael Crummey's *Galore*[32]

The island of Newfoundland, located off the east coast of Canada and independent from that nation as recently as 1949, is a critical centre of North American Irish diaspora. Its geographic isolation and economic history have made it, among other things, a kind of "time capsule" where linguistic, folkloric, and religious cultural artefacts are preserved in a detail and clarity exceeding that of more trafficked mainland centres (Crummey, "An Evening with Michael Crummey" np).[33] Local poet and historical novelist Michael Crummey sets all of his work here, in the land he calls home. His 2009 novel *Galore* is a reflection of the process whereby transatlantic Irishness has unspooled here in Newfoundland, and stitched itself into the place.

Inspired in part by Gabriel Garcia Marquez's *100 Years of Solitude*, *Galore* follows two family dynasties in a fictional pair of twin outports: the Irish Catholic Devines, peasant fishermen all, populate The Gut.[34] Just over the hill, the English Protestant Sellers family of Paradise Deep are merchants whose hard work, bolstered by the prejudices of British rule, keep the Devines and their ilk in continuous debt. Over the course of almost two centuries extending fore and aft, the families feud, fall

[32] This chapter was published in *New Hibernia Review* 23:4 (Winter 2019) essentially as-is, using only a different citation system. Consequently, the opening paragraphs reflect concern for an international reading audience that may or may not be familiar with Newfoundland or *Galore*. Revisions for publication also included some cuts for length, meaning a significant section outlining the history of priest types in Irish literature (more familiar ground to *NHR's* readership) was excised, and some strategic citations regarding frontier priesthood added.

[33] I cannot affirm this view without also mentioning Herb Wyile's important book *Anne of Tim Hortons* (Waterloo: Wilfred Laurier University Press, 2011), which thoroughly debunks the all-too-common stereotype of Atlantic Canada as an idyllic, folksy place lost in time. See for starters p1-6, 21-28. For a not-unrelated discussion on the complexities of drawing or refuting similitude between Ireland and Newfoundland, see Danine Farquharson's "How Irish Is Newfoundland?" *CJIS* 34:2 (Fall 2008), 10-11.

[34] The word "outport" refers to any of the small rural fishing communities that dot Newfoundland's coastline, stretches of which can be highly remote. Many were accessible only by boat well into the 20th century. The post-confederation collapse of Newfoundland's cod stocks spelled death for many outports, and government relocation ensured it for others. (Crummey's 2014 novel *Sweetland* is set amidst this relocation.) Today, grassroots efforts are being made to revitalize the remaining communities, and to nurture what has survived of outport culture.

in love, and forge unholy alliances. For the first few decades, the only clergyman for miles around available to witness, narrate, and solemnize the assorted mischief is Father Phelan—a brand of mischief all his own.

On publication, many reviewers pointed out *Galore*'s dense texture of religious allusion, wrought in what some called a "magical realist" narrative approach (Chafe, "Michael Crummey," np; Hansen, np; Jensen, np). A few also noted, more with readerly relish than academic appetite, what a larger-than-life figure Phelan cuts in the story (Mackey, np). Samuel Martin in particular noted that "Phelan's rapacious presence is so strong in the first half of the book that the second half suffers somewhat for his absence, though his spirit and his influence on the community continue in the later generations" ("Splashed and Swallowed, np). To date, however, scholarly work has revolved mainly, and not inappropriately, around *Galore*'s post-colonial significance and its depictions of memory and place (Goldie, 83-98; Sugars "Review: *Galore,*" 289; Crummey with Sugars, "Our symbiotic relationship," 105-119). As a counterpoint, Samuel Martin has compellingly presented the language of a sacramental or "Eucharistic" turn in *Galore,* which aligns categories of the transcendent and the real rather differently, opening up broad new (old) avenues of analysis (Martin, *Bleached Bones Rattling*, 216-276). In this article, I aim to extend and deepen what Martin began—in places recovering old ground to furnish new insights—through an in-depth study of Father Phelan as spiritual anchor, central religious figure, and frontier priest.

Father Phelan, an itinerant Irish Dominican friar defrocked by his order some years before the start of *Galore*, appears at first to confound every definition of a priest. For all that he is deeply flawed—a lewd, raucous, womanizing winebibber with few certainties—Phelan is sincere almost despite himself, a priest to his own chagrin. Vocation sticks to this man like mashed potatoes on toddler's hands. And offensive though his ways may be to more pious sensibilities, the facts of his life

emulate the life of Christ with undeniable precision. Unsanctioned, suspect to the moral establishment, even against the law, he pursues his ministry to Newfoundlanders in a place that more self-interested clerics would shun. He breaks all the rules, goes where he should not go, mixes with the poor, the ignorant, the low and the rowdy, forgiving sins no matter how unforgivable. In a scene that recalls Christ's harrowing of Hell between the crucifixion and resurrection (see 1 Peter 3:18-19, NRSV), Phelan even goes so far as to hear confession from the ghost of a murderer, dead by suicide. Following his own excommunication by a fellow priest, shunned by his friends and erstwhile parishioners, this act of clerical service not only liberates the ghost, but also reaffirms Phelan's priestly legitimacy, this time on a spiritual level beyond the reach of human dictum.

Given the history of priest figures in Irish literature, with a nod to developments wrought by Catholic Revivalist Graham Greene, I read Phelan as a priest of particular clerical lineage, and (diegetically speaking) socio-geographic placement. I acknowledge Phelan (hyperdiegetically speaking) as a man lodged out of time, in a postcolonial work set before the advent of words like 'colonialism.' I also recognize him, by virtue of his transatlantic and transhistorical contexts, as a unique conduit for the advancement of clerical leitmotifs within Irish diaspora and Canadian literatures, and for retroactive commentary on the same. Further, this work analyzes specific theological statements made through Phelan's character—statements that leverage their force and impact out of the novel's mixed spiritual milieu, which incorporates Christian and Irish animist influences along with assorted folkloric elements. Consequently, this article demonstrates the surprising and subversive authenticity of Phelan's priesthood in a very Irish Newfoundland, as he works out his salvation—and others'—with equal parts fear, trembling, and carousing.

Father Phelan in Context

In a 2011 interview with Elizabeth Periale, Michael Crummey said “Father Phelan [is] the riskiest character I've ever written and I think there was a time in my life when I would have tried to make him less what he is, to *protect him* (and myself I guess) from what a reader might make of him. But I just let him go in *Galore.* And he was an exhilarating son of a bitch to follow around” (Crummey with Periale, “Ten Questions,” np; emphasis mine). This instinct toward protection is one I will discuss at greater length, but its percipience is sadly evident from the extant commentary. For instance, in an aside from her interview with Crummey the same year, Cynthia Sugars writes that

> Toward the end of the novel, one of the central figures, Callum Devine, explains what he most misses about the wayward priest Father Phelan. It is not his religious instruction, for the priest was relentlessly mercurial, but rather the sense he conveyed that 'the people on the shore were something more than an inconsequential accident in the world'. (“Our symbiotic relationship,” 143)

“Mercurial” here, is a difficult (but potentially useful) word—a stretchy, capricious word that behaves according to its context. Crummey himself describes Phelan as mercurial, but the term seems to operate differently in his usage than Sugars’ (*Galore,* 16). In my view, it is not Phelan’s teaching or priestly service that is mercurial: his ministry is thoroughgoing and consistent, if unconventional. ‘Mercurial’ suits Father Phelan to the extent that it implies levity, as opposed to the Reverend Dodge's personal gravitas, or unpredictable action rather than variable character. Bacchanalian, honestly, is a far better word to describe Phelan. But the differences in meaning available here constitute in themselves a useful example of why Crummey might want to protect his fictional priest.

Father Phelan is a figure deeply vulnerable to being painted as changeable or hypocritical, not because he himself is inconsistent, but because he is inconsistent with readers' *expectations* of him, and

with official Church expectations of him—both as they were in his own time, and often still are. Raymond Gillespie explains that in Phelan's time "a process operated by which the elite of an institutional church, who had clearly formed intellectual preconceptions about the nature of belief which were articulated in theological systems, such as the decrees of the Council of Trent, attempted to superimpose these doctrinal positions on an indigenous set of lay ideas about the supernatural which the elite found strange" ("Popular and Unpopular Religion," 31). Gillespie is speaking here about efforts toward the Christianization of early modern Ireland, and the repression of Irish Celtic spirituality there, but the will of the institutional Church did not fail to cross the Atlantic. Frontier clergy working in North America, like Phelan, laboured knowing full well what their superiors wanted and believed but an ocean's worth of distance drastically reduced the elite's capacity for enforcement, and the realities of frontier life—both material and psycho-social—coloured everything about clerical practise, including theology itself. In the 'New World' "flexibility had to be the watchword and 'excessive rigor' avoided," writes James O'Toole. "Wise missionaries applied church law leniently more often than not, and they were impatient with criticism on this score." O'Toole quotes one frontier priest's letter to a colleague in Europe railing against those "who, brooding over undigested scraps of theology, & never studying any degree of liberality to enlarge their minds, throw indiscriminate censure on every person departing ever so little from the rules of thinking and acting they have laid down for themselves" (*The Faithful: A History*, 21). Satisfying as the minster's rebuke is to read it seems that in history as in fiction the best priest characters earn their black cassock—that symbol of human imperfection, which ordination does not solve.

Phelan's imperfection has importance beyond *Galore*'s diegetical timeline. While the events of the novel transpire before words like 'postcolonialism' or 'sex crisis' have evolved, the experience of reading *Galore* is embroiled in the present those terms describe. As a result, Father Phelan and clergy

generally in *Galore* are, depending on how you look at it, either forced or empowered to contend with the associations, concerns, and assumptions of a modern readership. It follows that, for Crummey's readers, Father Phelan operates within an echo chamber that includes a canon of real and stock-priests stretching from the middle ages right up to the present day. Within this group Irish priests,[35] Catholic Revival English priests (the Irish priest's curious half brother), and pre-Confederation/Canadian priests have particular relevance—most especially the fictional ones, whose lives are read in definitive volumes of prose that can be echoed, referenced, or repainted. These issues lead me to ask what role failure plays in moving a priest left or right along the spectrum of sympathy. What kinds of priestly failure make a villain? Is there such a thing among priests as heroic failure? Here at last is the purview of Father Phelan. Hear the phonetic cue there: Phelan/Failin'.

When Father Phelan first took the page in 2009, he extended an already long line of Irish priests and priest-types. (Sean O'Faolain has helpfully proposed three essential priest types in Irish literature: "the jovial, hunting, hearty priest, who is really a 'good fellow' in clerical garb; or the rigorous, unbending, saintly and generally rather inhuman ascetic—the patriarch of his flock; or the man whose life is one long psychological problem" (*The Irish,* 109).) He also gave Michael Crummey access to comment on an illustrious tradition of priests throughout the West—in film, fiction, and popular culture—held suspect for their capacity to joy in the physical. (Recall the scene in John Patrick Shanley's *Doubt* (2008) where shots of the nuns sharing their spare, silent meal are intercut with shots of the priests laughing, drinking, and telling ribald stories over steak dinner.) As an eighteenth-century priest *performing* in the twenty-first century, Phelan enables *Galore* to speak ventriloquistically to a postmodern audience whose instincts regarding the organized Church, Catholic or otherwise, have been gutted. In each of these contexts, Father Phelan cuts a perplexing figure: he is worldly, appetite-ridden,

[35] This could mean priests who *are* themselves Irish, or simply priests in Irish fiction and film, though usually one comes with the other.

and encourages others to be so as well. Yet his faith is sincere, and his service of the poor and outcast devoted. He is profoundly de-institutionalized; defrocked, shacked up, he likens church to a shithouse, and offers confession to a Protestant murder's ghost. Yet deprived of the opportunity to practice in his vocation, Phelan very nearly disintegrates. These systems of tension have paradoxical effects on readerly sympathies and trust: de-institutionalized is good, but the Father's roguery is suspect. The question of mutability rears its head. Consequently, my task is to show whether Phelan is indeed mercurial in his character or merely in his way, and where he fails, whether he fails honestly.

Hungry Like The Wolf

Thomas Lynch did North America's Irish-descended a good turn in writing, "How We Become the Ones We Are." Taken out of context, one could easily mistake Lynch's summary of the tradition he inherited from his Irish parents and forebears for the world of *Galore* as seen by one of the young Devines. The passage contains several touchstones useful for keeping my discussion of Father Phelan anchored. For this reason, Lynch's words deserve to be quoted at length:

> I was raised by Irish Catholics. Even as I write that it sounds a little like "*wolves*" or some especially feral class of creature. Not in the apish, nativist sense of immigrant hordes, rather in the fierce faith and family loyalties, the pack dynamics of their clannishness, their vigilance and pride. ...They brought their version of the 'one true faith,' *druidic* and priest-ridden, punctilious and full of superstitions, from the boggy parishes of their ancients... These were people who saw statues move, truths about the weather in the way a cat warmed to the fire... Odd lights in the nightscape foreshadowed death; dogs' eyes attracted lightning; the curse of an old woman could lay one low. The clergy were to be 'given what's going to them,' but otherwise, 'not to be tampered with.'

> Priests were feared and their favor curried—*their curses and blessings opposing poles of the powerful medicine they were known to possess*. Everything had meaning beyond the obvious. The dead were everywhere and their ghosts inhabited the air and memory and their old haunts, real as ever, *in an only slightly former tense*, in constant need of care and appeasement. They were, like the saints they'd been named for, prayed over, prayed to, invoked as protection against all enemies, their names recycled through generations, reassigned to new incarnations. (5)

Lynch's initial joke about Irish Catholics sharing something of a culture with wolves is especially apropos. Notice how the initial simile comes to apply almost in an intensified way to priests—themselves somehow "intensified" versions of Irish-Catholicness. It also aligns, conveniently, with Father Phelan's Irish name: Phelan, from the Irish *Faolain*, translates to "wolf" in English, and in many ways "wolfishness" is a key to understanding Phelan's character.

Tracing how Father Phelan's personality and behaviour are or, just as importantly, are not "wolfish" in the ways familiar to idiom opens the way for theological analysis of his person and ministry. Phelan's wolfishness consists mainly in three areas: first, he is wily and penetrating, able to conceal himself effectively within his environment, navigate assorted geographical and political tangles, much as a wolf navigates dense forest and complex pack dynamics; second, he is a creature of appetite; and third, Phelan is hunted, ultimately to his death, if not, as Lynch aptly reminds us, to true extinction.

First then, to the wily, wilderness pathfinder: the first-time readers hear anything about Father Phelan is in chapter one:

> It was Father Phelan's habit to arrive at night and no one knew how he managed his journeys, whether he travelled by land or sea. There were no roads anywhere on the

> shore but the Tolt Road and the rough paths to freshwater ponds and berry barrens in the backcountry. It was impossible to credit he walked the distances he claimed through wild country and less likely again that he went alone by boat around a coast as savage and unpredictable. (*Galore,* 15)

Readers might not instinctually read "wolfishness" into this passage, even knowing the meaning of Phelan's name. However, knowing that *Galore* was inspired by *One Hundred Years of Solitude* prompts at least a cursory scan for influence from other magical realist works in the Central American school (Crummey with Periale, np). Under that lens, this passage from *Galore* recalls one from Miguel Asturias' *Men of Maize,* in which Hilario makes a discovery about the local postman, Nicho Aquino, whose rounds between villages force him regularly to traverse the infamous Maria Tecun Ridge. "Hilario is familiar with the *nahual,* and knows too that Nicho's speed in delivering the mail is said to be the result of his capacity to transform into a swift-footed coyote," writes Christopher Warnes (57). When he spots "a small animal" near the ridge one day, something like a coyote, he begins to wonder. Soon after, he learns that Nicho has just left town, and in a moment of something like spiritual conversion, Hilario realizes "with all the faculties of the soul which are not in the senses" that Nicho is indeed a *nahual,* and was that coyote (Warnes, 57). According to legend the Central American *nahual/nagual,* like the Irish *puca,* can appear in a variety of animal forms.[36] With the *nahual,* wolves are even more common than coyotes, strengthening the connection with Father Phelan.[37] This allusively suggested bond between Phelan's wolfishness and shape shifting is significant chiefly because it is spiritual, a throwback to the previously discussed Druidic connection. Irish Celtic animism

[36] Though I do not expand on them here, the possibilities proliferated by going from Phelan as wolf to Phelan as *puca* are not lost on me. Precedent for comparison between priests and pucas exists in Irish ex-priest Michael Harding's *Una Pooka,* for those interested in further reading.

[37] Whether by happenstance or design, this nahual/coyote connection brings a certain loveliness to Phelan as Irish priest in Newfoundland (for readers today, a province of Canada), as it creates a link to the coyote trickster so ubiquitous in Canadian Indigenous mythologies.

holds that certain kinds of animals are "world-runners," guides and emissaries able to pass between the realms of life and death; the most common are birds, horses, deer, and dogs/wolves (NicMacha, 38-41; MacLeod, Sharon, 116-122). Druids were said to borrow these animals' powers by borrowing their forms (MacLeod, Sharon, 73-80; NicMacha, 46-47). Phelan's lupine aspects readily lend themselves to this kind of Irish animist interpretation, especially considering his involvement with Mr. Gallery's shade and the rumours throughout *Galore* about his "ghost parishes" in other parts of the Avalon. Taken together, this system of allusions draws a through-line between the physical elements of Father Phelan's life and character, and the spiritual or vocational parts of him, adding texture to his priestly identity, and signalling the reader in advance to set gnostic impulses aside.

Physical description of Father Phelan is limited: he is "lean, mercurial and abrupt, the sort of man you could imagine slipping through an outhouse hole when circumstances required it" (*Galore*, 15). Still, Crummey's word "lean," paired with the idea that Phelan is built narrow enough to slip through an outhouse hole, points effectively towards another bit of wolfishness: hunger. In Phelan's case, appetite colours him not as a "spoiled priest" per Elizabeth Harris, nor a potential sexual predator per John Patrick Shanley, but rather as a man of honest if rapacious desire, with a keen appreciation for the power of appetite in others. This novelistic move in *Galore* plays mischievously on the difference between a reader's first impressions or assumptions, due to the era in which it was published, and the textual weight of evidence that gradually accrues. The way today's readers are conditioned to be suspicious makes it difficult to tell, perhaps until the very last page of Phelan's story or even a second reading, whether Phelan's wolfish appetites are essentially life-affirming or exploitative.

In fairy tales, nursery rhymes, and English idiom, the wolf is almost always a symbol of hunger, though many connect him first with visions of eating. Recollecting *Little Red Riding Hood, Peter and the Wolf,* or *The Three Little Pigs,* one might think of the wolf gobbling people up, getting full,

successful consumption. One might think of 'wolfing food down.' Realistically, 'wolfing' a meal down might as quickly imply sharpened hunger—a subsistence appetite, a deprived one. If 'the wolf is at the door,' starvation is imminent. In "Little Red Riding Hood," Perrault writes that on finding the child's grandmother the wolf "ate her up in a moment, for it was above three days that he had not touched a bit" (*The Blue Fairy Book*, 53-55). In the Grimms' version, though no mention is made of being hungry prior to Grandma's house, the wolf gets his stomach cut open (to deliver the child and grandmother) and filled back up with rocks, a perennial symbol of starvation.[38]

Father Phelan is not the devouring "big bad wolf" of nursery lore. Phelan is animated by appetite in the pure sense, meaning appetite unsatisfied. Just as tomorrow in the pure sense never comes, appetite in the pure sense is never sated. One of the first things readers learn about Father Phelan is that he is a friar: itinerant and unpaid. As opposed to parish priests, friars live on benevolence or free-will donations from the communities they serve; it follows that if the village is starving, the priest will also go hungry. Furthermore, being itinerant limits a priest's ability to lean on members of a given parish to do more for him: "A scribe then approached [Jesus] and said 'Teacher, I will follow you wherever you go.' And Jesus said, 'Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head" (Matt 8: 19-20, NRSV). So too with Father Phelan, the fated outport wolf. Crummey writes that "Legal strictures against Catholicism had been lifted decades past and a vicar appointed to govern all ecclesiastical matters from St John's. But Father Phelan continued to operate outside the bounds of state and Church hierarchy. He lived among his parishioners like a refugee, dependant on the charity of the communities he served" (*Galore*, 32). Thus, while Phelan is certainly one to eat, drink, and make merry when he can, his dependence on the community means his ability to do so is proportional to everyone else's.

[38] See Matthew 7: 9 (alt, Luke 11:11), any translation. Consider also the hunger stones of Europe, marking famine-grade low water levels in rivers.

What about sexual appetite? In the closing moral to "Little Red Riding Hood," Perrault is near explicit as to the wolf's sexual connotations (Perrault, *Little Red Riding Hood*, 9-10). The Grimms stop short of explaining themselves outright, but their story is also longer and more detailed, leaving little in doubt.[39] Father Phelan is a skirt-chaser, to be sure—his ordination vow of celibacy has been powderized by the time readers first meet him—but is he a predator after the fashion of "Little Red Riding Hood"? Again, the answer is no. Father Phelan does not approximate a model priest or even a model Christian, if good behaviour is a criterion for that label.[40] He is a crass, carousing, womanizing blackguard, but he is not the "wolf in sheep's clothing" that post-Spotlight, #MeToo era readers have come to expect. For one thing, he is always transparent about his shortcomings as a moral example. This is not meant to stand in the "boys will be boys" line of argument, but rather to underline that Phelan's parishioners know exactly who he is and what to expect from him, meaning they know exactly how to invest their trust. Take a relatively innocuous example: it is widely known that Phelan is not habitually untrustworthy or loose with a confidence. (Refer to Phelan's supporting role in the illicit relationship between Callum and Lizzie, pages 89-95, but especially 92, where he passes a secret message by snatching Lizzie at a dance.) However, neither is he stingy with his best comic stories, even if they are straight out of the confession box (*Galore* 16). Were Phelan the sort of man to prioritize his clerical image, to pretend confidentiality, the breach of trust in this would be profound. As matters stand, his utter lack of pretence makes his loose talk a *faux pas*, a serious breach of etiquette and the rules, more than a serious a breach of *trust.* Moreover, as a friar Phelan is dependent on the goodwill and provision of people in the communities he serves. (The reader sees just how much after Father

[39] This is the version reprised in Sondheim's musical *Into The Woods,* the 2014 screen adaptation plays on the story's liberal hinting to sinister effect.

[40] For a further poke at this question, by Crummey, see "Watermark," part III, *Little Dogs*.

Cunico excommunicates Phelan in chapter four.) The balance of power then, between confessor and confessing, is slanted none too sharply in Phelan's favour.

Raising the ethical stakes: what about Phelan's relationships with especially vulnerable people? What about the way he treats women, children, and outcasts? In chapter one, when Phelan asks whether nine-year-old Mary Tryphena is promised to anyone, tensions run high for present-day readers. The intertextual well from which to draw is filled with noxious news stories about priests and children. But are their fears here well-founded? Crummey's use of free-indirect style throughout *Galore* is agile, the narrator always hopping from person to person with only brief periods of independence as in this passage where Phelan appears:

> They spoke English for Lizzie's sake. She had enough Irish to discipline her youngsters and make love to her husband but lost her way in any conversation more general. She got up to fetch the infant [Callum had just mentioned] from the children's room and Mary Tryphena climbed out of bed to join the adults around the table.
>
> —Let me look at you, the priest said, holding her by the wrists and leaning back to take her in all at once. Her face pale and sunken and the eyes dark with congenital hunger. —Is she spoken for yet?
>
> Mary Tryphena pulled both hands clear. —No, she said. —Now I'm not asking you to marry *me*, girl.
>
> Callum said, We were thinking she might take communion this visit, Father.
>
> —Well now. That's a step no smaller than marriage.
>
> —Stop trying to scare the girl, Devine's Widow said.

> Mary Tryphena watched the steady flame of the candle on the table, pretending to ignore the conversation, and the priest obliged her by turning his attention to the infant. (*Galore,* 16-17)

The narrator resides primarily with Callum Devine, every so often hopping away to show us the Widow Devine's thoughts, Mary Tryphena's, and Father Phelan's. During the exchange between Phelan and Mary Tryphena, however, the narrator sides more with the child, pulling away from her just momentarily to give the reader a window into Phelan's mind. (Callum and Lizzie are married, and Mary Tryphena is their daughter.) Where the narrator is primarily loyal to Mary Tryphena in this exchange, the phrase describing her face stands out. This cannot be Mary Tryphena's thought; it is too self-conscious and too mature. This is Phelan's thought. Phelan meets this young girl for the first time in many months, asks about her prospects, takes her by the hands to look her over and what does he see? He sees malnutrition. He sees her family's poverty. He notices with compassion and concern her need and fragility in a cultural context where Mary Tryphena really does stand poised on the threshold of adulthood, and the demands of the adult world. Phelan may be a dirty cursing whisky priest, but he is not an abuser. The nature of his concern for this girl is exactly what it should be. In fact, later on as an adult, Mary Tryphena cherishes Father Phelan as the truest embodiment of religious guidance she can recall (*Galore,* 216).

The person most vulnerable to Father Phelan as a potential predator is Virtue Gallery. She is the one from whom Phelan gains the most, materially and sexually, but here as ever Phelan is the wolf of appetite, the wolf hunger—not the big bad wolf of destruction. Liz Jensen of *The Guardian* describes Virtue Gallery as "succumbing" to a "sex-hungry priest" (Jensen, np). And while sex-hungry is more than fair on Phelan, "succumb" seems a weak evaluation of what Mrs. Gallery does to him. Indeed Samuel Martin has argued that "Phelan's appetites are matched by few save Mrs. Gallery" (*Bleached*

Bones Rattling, 252). There is nothing to indicate their first sexual encounter is anything less than consensual—though Phelan makes the first pass, the narrative suggests Virtue makes the first move, and Gallery's ghost has to rattle the fire irons to "drown out the feral noise of them together." As Phelan "[watches] her straighten her skirts matter-of-factly, as if she were laying a tablecloth for dinner," he implies they may need to continue the ritual in order to help Gallery leave. "I've no pressing obligation elsewhere," she says (*Galore,* 113).

Phelan's carry-on with Mrs. Gallery most certainly violates the going standards for priestly behaviour. But his approach to the (prolonged) dalliance once again mitigates the potential damage it could cause in terms of broken trust or personal harm. Due to her personal circumstances—haunting included—Virtue already lives without most of the things Phelan could threaten to take from her if he had a mind to do her ill. Call down public censure? Virtue already lives alone, isolated, a charity-case and a leper among her people. Threaten her with hellfire? She already believes there is nothing worse than what she has lived. And in the end, Phelan is more dependant on Virtue Gallery, more subject to her leverage, than the other way around.[41] The country marriage Phelan and Virtue strike up is bizarre, disreputable, totally contrary to the expectations incumbent on a priest, but it is not abusive.[42]

Understanding Phelan as the wolf of appetite offers a way into the central theological beauty of his priesthood. For one thing, it lends clarity to his sacramental sensibilities, elucidated in the next section. Callum Devine says that "he never shared Phelan's weakness for drink and women and the sacraments, but [he] was a child of deprivation, and there was comfort in the priest's insistence that

[41] See for strongest evidence, p133: "—I will not have the two of you in the house like this, Mrs Gallery told him. —Do you hear? —Leave me be, woman, he said. —I will not have it, she said again. —You'll heave me out on my ear, will you? —Mind but I don't, she said. And she left the priest and her husband by the fire to go to her bed." Immediately following this exchange, Phelan attempts to hang himself.

[42] Contrast this with the brutal spiritual leverage Father Cunico applies to all the Catholics on shore—examples include p123-125 where he incites Callum to a painful and uncharacteristic piece of violence against his son, and his excommunication of Father Phelan later on, which all but signals the end of The Gut's Catholic community.

feeding an appetite was at the heart of a proper life" (*Galore*, 143).[43] A bibliography of scripture citations affirming God's insistence of the same would take up several pages. Phelan's embodiment of appetite, craving, of a pure unbounded desire also aligns him with the "now and not yet" paradigm espoused by Christians the world over.[44] All things continue, for the time being, poised on the brink of satisfaction or completion. Phelan's lean, lusty, ragged wolfishness expresses this paradigm with rare potency. In summary, the icon of the wolf provides a key to interpreting Father Phelan's character, his failings, and his authenticity. It helps readers navigate the fine lines he treads between iconoclasm and blasphemy, between breaking rules and breaching trust. Finally, as I will show, it helps to situate him appropriately within a larger history of Irish priest types, connecting Phelan simultaneously with his druidic forebears, and with the now-extinct Newfoundland wolf, hunted out of existence around the year 1930 (Pelly, np).

Phelan lives as a fugitive in many ways, even using this language to describe himself (*Galore,* 132-133). He is a fugitive from the law, first for being Catholic generally and later for ministering without a license. As time passes, the church establishment presses in against him and he becomes a fugitive from Church authority: the last of a wild species in a shrinking habitat (117). For most of Father Phelan's life, his vocation is just that, a calling—a seduction he willingly yields to, letting it draw him round and round the Avalon for years, serving his scattered people—rather than a feeling of being hunted. It is only when age, the comfort of a newfound home with Mrs. Gallery, and fear of annihilation under Father Cunico finally catch up with him that this changes. Towards chapter four, Phelan slips into a kind of bargaining game with God, seeking to exchange his itinerant life for that of a parish priest in a church of his own. He becomes very much the perplexed or mentally divided priest of

[43] Recall also the names of the shore's two communities—Paradise Deep (the sexual connotations of which are made explicit on page 48) and The Gut. They recall the sites of humanity's two driving appetites.

[44] Briefly: sin and death are conquered, the world has already been fully redeemed through Christ, but not yet fully *restored* to the perfection for which it is bound. Salvation is "now" and "not yet."

O'Faolain's system, his predicament resembling that of Frank O'Connor's Father Tom ("Uprooted.") In O'Connor's story, during an Easter visit, Father Tom and his younger brother Ned grapple with their feelings of bondedness to and alienation from the rural home they've pantomimed outgrowing. The morning before they return to the city Ned catches Tom waking up from a nightmare, grasping Tom's uncertainty and loneliness for the first time. In that moment Ned realizes that "for years Tom had been living in the same state of [...] fear, *a man being hunted down by his own nature*: and that for years to come he would continue to live in this way and perhaps never be caught again as he was now" (O'Connor, 154, emphasis mine).

It is at this point that circumstances begin so to conspire against Phelan that it seems God Almighty is hunting him down, smoking him out of his den back towards the path. Indeed, his circumstances begin to align conspicuously with those of the biblical prophet Elijah, who in 1 Kings cries out to God from a cave where he has been hiding from his own people (see chapter 19, esp verses 19-15). In the wake of Elijah's prayer, three storms sweep by the mouth of the cave—a "great wind," an earthquake, and a fire—"but the Lord was not in" the storms. Phelan's first two churches are destroyed by wind and fire, "acts of God" as insurance forms go, and the ominousness of this is not lost on local people. Phelan, stubborn as he is, lets slip his own misgivings when he quips to Mrs Gallery that "even Christ was denied three times" (*Galore,* 120). And though the townspeople initially help him protect his third, waterfront church, they later turn against him (albeit under spiritual duress) when Cunico formally excommunicates Phelan, initiating a rupture no less devastating in context than an earthquake (131).

This thickening conspiracy of circumstance, in which Phelan seems hunted down on all sides—by Cunico, by his own nature, by God—leads readers into the heart of Phelan's plot and *Galore's* spiritual landscape. Like the lightning fire or a wreck-house wind, the earthquake of Phelan's

excommunication is easily painted as an "act of God," because Father Cunico is invested with ecclesial authority. But here as in 1 Kings, those connotations are deceptive, and after the three storms there comes to the man of God "a still, small voice." In Phelan's case, it is the voice of an unlikely saviour—the muttering, weeping, wordless Mr. Gallery.

"The Back of Beyond": Phelan's Ministry on the Margins

It is important to recognize that even before he is excommunicated, serious impediments do exist to Phelan being rightly called a priest at all. He operates without any official authority—and that word official, "pertaining to an office," is important. The reader is clearly told early on that Phelan was defrocked by his order, formally removed from the priesthood, years before *Galore's* story begins (61).

The whole business of defrocking is an interesting one theologically, given the point that persons ordained to ministry must believe themselves, and be believed by others, to have a *vocation* to ministry; that is, a calling from God. Thus, while a person's *ordination*—the commission and blessing they receive from their bishop, their order, their 'commanding officer(s)' as it were—can obviously be revoked by whichever human entity confers it, the question remains whether a *vocation* can be revoked along with it. This gets at the question of why formal ordination is necessary to begin with, and denominations have varied profoundly on this point for hundreds of years.[45] The variance is possible in large part because scripture on the topic can be interpreted different ways. Take for one example Romans 11:24-29. Here, the Apostle Paul addresses some group in-fighting within Rome's fledgling church regarding God's attitude toward Jews since the crucifixion. Paul explains how Jesus is bringing all believers together, incorporating Gentiles by "grafting them in" to the still-growing Jewish tradition, as branches from a wild olive tree can be grafted into a cultivated tree. Paul concludes by asserting

[45] John Wycliffe, the 14th century priest, dissenter, and advocate of lay ministry, is as good a marker as any. His dissidence gave rise to the highly anti-clerical Lollard movement now considered a precursor to the Protestant Reformation.

"*God's gifts and his call are irrevocable*" (Romans 11:29, NIV, emphasis mine). The linchpin, where Father Phelan is concerned, is phrased even more forcefully in the King James Version: "for the gifts and calling of God are without repentance." To repent in Christian tradition means effectively to reject sin, but literally it means to turn around and go the other way. Repentance is a turning back, a reorientation away from error and towards the path laid out for on by God.[46] So if God's gifts and his call are "without repentance," it means they cannot be rejected or sent away; but even more movingly, it means God does not take them back. The orientation of God's will toward human beings never reneges, and though it can be ignored, it cannot be dismissed or eradicated.

When the Reverend Dodge learns from a visiting Vicar that Father Phelan is operating without authority, the Vicar says Phelan has been "gallivanting through the country all the years since [being defrocked] as if it was ceded to him by God" (*Galore,* 61). The question becomes: who is to say it hasn't been? Who is to say this place and these people are not those whom Phelan has been called by God—irrevocably, and without repentance—to serve? Indeed, as has already been demonstrated, strong textual evidence exists to suggest that it has, and they are. Phelan and his territory have this in common: they belong to the fringes, the forgotten places of the world, the "back of beyond" as he puts it (133). Phelan, his people, the home they share, and the outrageous stories they live are born and bread of liminality. They all live, proverbially and literally, beyond the edge of the map. Here there are monsters, and hunger, and wonders. Here there is everything and then some. But not everybody sees it that way.

'Here there be monsters:' a better description of how clergy dispatched from England and Europe appear to feel about *Galore's* Newfoundland could hardly be wished. The Reverend Eldred

[46] Return to Kings: at the mouth of the cave God addresses Elijah, who repeats his complaint that he is being hunted down by his own people. God tells Elijah, "*go back the way you came*, and go to the Desert of Damascus" (emphasis mine). Biblically, a desert is often shorthand for a place of trial, or, as Phelan describes his inland circuit of ghost parishes, "the back of beyond."

Dodge, bearing nominal resemblance to both “elder” and “dodgy,” is the very essence of O'Faolain's second priest type (English birth notwithstanding): he is a fierce, towering, pious ascetic, though he does not exactly seem so at first. Dodge comes ashore looking altogether unsuited to the practical demands of outport ministry—fine framed, sickly, gut-rotted from travel by boat, and what is worse, flinching at the one unexpected bit of gentleness (the kindly touch of a hand) to meet him amid the rude awakening that is his new parish (53). That recoil is made more unsavoury by the fact that it is from Martha Jewer—a single, heavily pregnant young woman, and just the kind of especially vulnerable person a minister should attend to most closely. Back to O’Faolain: on regaining his land-legs, the Reverend proves beset by priorities totally unconducive to universal human flourishing on shore—petty, political, fastidious concerns to do with keeping up appearances, consolidating power, and establishing (an ultimately toxic) sectarian purity (54-58). One of the Gut’s locals, Daniel Woundy, wagers the new Reverend won’t last long enough to shave.[47] By contrast, Phelan's proclivity for mischief takes on a different light; his ribaldry reflects grit and experience. What was dissolution from one angle begins to look something like fitness for the designated field. When the Reverend Dodge goes to visit the home of the Devines, built so low he must stoop to enter, he brings his height and rank into their space like a stick to threaten them (54-55). Similarly, Father Cunico holds a silk handkerchief over his nose whenever he walks past the fish flakes (134). But when Phelan first visits Judah, in a rude stinking shed, he brings his own lean proportions and appreciation for the leanness of outport life. He brings dignity and human touch. Rather than towering over Judah, he leans in:

> “Phelan stepped into the [stench] of the tiny room. He leaned over the man, made the sign of the cross and prayed awhile in Latin. He took a brass vial from his pocket and

[47] In fairness to Dodge, like Phelan he proves himself committed to his ministry and his people. Father Phelan later says the same thing about Father Cunico: “he won't be with us long enough to shave” (123). The echo reminds readers that it was ultimately untrue of Dodge, whom the livyers pretty well accept by this point. In short, he may be a rigid old codger, but he's an honest priest.

> anointed the forehead with oil. He came back into the open air and shook his head to clear it. —Mrs Gallery says there's some would gladly have that creature drowned in [Ralph's] Pond, he said.
>
> —There's some would gladly have you drowned in [Ralph's] Pond, Father, [said Devine's Widow.]
>
> The priest turned to Mary Tryphena. —Your grandmother is a miserable witch, do you know?" (*Galore*, 18)[48]

Phelan leads not from a pulpit or pedestal but on a level footing, with a servant's manner. He serves his "backwater shithole" of a territory with vigour, love, and endurance (32). He serves in a place and among people who could not be farther from the minds of European 'civilization.' Within his own society, he does not neglect the abandoned and the reviled, like Judah—a "jinker," "neither fish nor fowl" (25 and 18 respectively). This is what compassion looks like.

Father Phelan makes little effort to resist even his basest temptations. ("—You'd be a half decent priest if you gave up the drinking and whoring, [Devine's Widow] told him. —Half decent wouldn't be worth the sacrifice" (16)). But in his 'dissolute' character, his perceived failure, something exceedingly human insists on itself—the same something Phelan strives to nurture in his parishioners.[49] How could Phelan attest the value of feeding an appetite without having appetites himself—as formidable, indomitable, and plaintive as a child's hunger or a sailor's loneliness? Indeed, in a book so full to the gunwales with scripture reference as *Galore*, it is telling that the half dozen passages Phelan

[48] To shed light on Phelan's good humour here: "Devine's Widow thought [Phelan] a fool and made no secret of her opinion. But she knew years on the coast without liturgy or sacraments, and was happy for those comforts now, despite the package they arrived in. Father Phelan claimed she was the only person in the new world he lived in fear of, which she dismissed as base flattery" (16).

[49] Following an outdoor confirmation service at Kerrivan's tree: "The bonfire went on burning till the small hours of the night, Father Phelan the last to leave the dregs. He was pleased with himself and with the evening, the children brought to the faith and his homily on the jealousy of angels, the gathering on the Commons and the more intimate gatherings in the bushes at the edge of the field. Life insisting on itself out there in the dark, though times had been mean and uncertain" (31-32).

himself cites or refers to are almost all viscerally, materially life-affirming. Take his drunken rhapsody to Mrs. Gallery: "Mrs. Gallery spread her legs and brought his hand to the wet of her, a little noise at the back of her throat when he found it. —That's the bowl that never goes empty, Mrs. Gallery, he whispered. —That's the miracle of the loaves and the fishes" (40). Or, my personal favourite, Phelan citing Ecclesiastes to a wasting, love-sick Callum Devine: "The priest had no patience for his vigil, thinking it an insult to God to live in such denial. […] —Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, he quote drunkenly, do it with thy might, for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave. The priest slapped at Callum's crotch. —With thy *might*, you useless tit" (95). Father Phelan's clerical order "preached primitive poverty and austerity," as essential spiritual disciplines, "and Newfoundland," he muses to himself, "might have been created to embody both" (32). But Phelan understands what one too zealous for demonstrations of piety might overlook: context *always* informs practice. The work people need done, the wounds they need healed, the encouragements and restraints they need exampled to them are contingent on their social, cultural, political, ecological and economic context. Phelan's context as an Irish-Catholic outlaw in turn-of-the-19th century outport Newfoundland shapes the spirituality he brings to his ministry. The mendicant side of his rule of life keeps him personally in touch with the role that appetites, bodily needs, and frailty play in his own life and the lives of his parishioners. This attunement feeds his natural "weakness for drink and women *and the sacraments*" (143, emphasis mine).[50] All in all, it makes him a living testament to Jesus' assertion that the kingdom of God belongs to the poor—an idea the imported clergy who follow him seem hard-pressed to understand.

50 Emphasis mine. Phelan's sincerity in this regard is manifest again and again. His assertion that first communion is a step no smaller than marriage, his plunge into a burning church to rescue the host (118), his joy after the confirmation ceremony at Kerrivan's tree, and above all his manner of death—drowned in open seas, but still holding the pix in his hands (143)—all attest to it.

Conclusion: Phelan's Ghost Parish

When Phelan first came to Mrs. Gallery, he came to see about exorcizing Mr. Gallery's ghost. Obviously, things were not as simple as that; the country marriage Mrs. Gallery and Phelan embark upon—to allow Gallery his due "penance" of watching them together—carries on for some years. Meanwhile, life in the Gut proceeds apace and formal strictures against Phelan intensify. Phelan knows by this point that he has stayed too long in one place, that his true calling is to bring Christ to the rest of his parishes as he has always done, but his fear of the harshness of that life, along with his love for the Gut and Mrs. Gallery, have gotten under his skin. Running from God never looked so much like standing still. When Father Cunico formally excommunicates him from the Roman Church, banning any Catholic on shore who values their soul from interacting with him, Father Phelan loses everything he holds dear (133-134). Worst of everything is the shunning, which prevents him from practicing his vocation. Legally or illegally, in daylight or on the sly, it all suddenly becomes impossible—in the Gut at least. He deteriorates rapidly, material hardship (remember, mendicant priest) painting his exterior to fit the tattered, degraded condition of his spirit. The crushing weight of this loss drives Phelan to despair and ultimately an attempted suicide (133). If excommunication put him beyond the beyond externally—not that outward law ever stymied him before—this shows that the sickness unto death has truly taken root. It is Phelan himself who has despaired of God—the one who leaves a flock of ninety-nine to pursue one lost sheep—and taken measures that would, according to the dominant theology of his time, preclude God's proving him wrong.[51] At this point, the only thread of hope for Phelan is the literal breath in his body, the chance of repentance. According to the accepted theology of his time and tribe he has, in all other respects, passed beyond help.

[51] See Luke 15. Truly, whatever hell as might exist is locked from the inside.

However, there is another way to look at Phelan's condition—or, to speak of spiritual ontology in spatial terms, his new location. Here and now, for the first time ever, Phelan finds himself on the same plane as Mr. Gallery. He is cast out, suspended somewhere in a kind of limbo between life and death, salvation and perdition, locked in the vise grip of despair. But remember, "the gifts and calling of God are irrevocable."[52] If Phelan was called to serve God as a priest before Cunico arrived on shore then he is still called even now. Indeed, at this moment Phelan is better positioned than ever before to minister to Mr. Gallery as confessor, to confer absolution, send him to peace. The question is, does Phelan know that? Does he have the faith, after a long dark night of the soul *in partibus infidelium,* to repent of his despair and believe it?[53]

By the time Father Phelan is excommunicated it is fairly clear that even if penance is what Mr. Gallery wants from his wife, letting him have it has not made any difference in the situation down in the Droke (*Galore,* 122-124). Purgation—an opportunity to demonstrate penitence, to turn around—is what Gallery really needs. Gallery clearly has some choice to make, some role to play in his own liberation, but just what might provoke him to make that choice, or what the choice might look like, remains a mystery until Father Phelan tries to kill himself. At that moment Gallery finds something to turn around for, a real and present picture of some redemption *toward* which he might turn. It is Gallery's alarm with the fire irons that alerts Virtue to the physical emergency, but this is not really how Gallery saves Phelan. Gallery saves Phelan, and makes a start at saving his own soul in the

[52] In this same letter, Paul writes "For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:38-39, NIV.)

[53] Literally "in the land of unbelievers," *in partibus infidelium* after a bishop's title describes the state of his diocese. (It is not usually used for priests.) Essentially, the addendum is a way of indicating that this person is a titular bishop only, because the diocese he was set over has been overtaken by another faith to such an extent that he had to flee, and now lives in another bishop's diocese, like a friendly exile of sorts. In context, the phrase could be loosely interpreted "Bishop N, not-currently-bishopping." By this logic, when Father Phelan is excommunicated and shunned in his community, he becomes a priest *in partibus infidelium*; his parish has been taken over by the influence of another faith leader. One who (functionally) teaches a different gospel. The reader still recognizes Phelan as the spiritually rightful priest of this parish, but it's clear that he's been forced out.

process, by opening the way for Phelan to practise his vocation again—to be reborn a priest by doing what priests do—this time, "in spirit and in truth" (John 4:21, 23-24, NRSV). Thus Phelan finds Gallery, "on the floor [shaking] with cold...The priest's saviour kneeling there. [Phelan's] miserable little life preserved by one of the damned, the face streaked by its sooty tears" (134). The participants are poised, but the sacrament is not yet complete. Once more Phelan invites Mr. Gallery to make confession.

What follows is never disclosed. But the selective silence can in itself be read as an allusion suggesting what took place: *Galore* leaves the exchange between Gallery and Phelan locked within the confessional seal. Readers learn that Virtue Gallery was never again physically haunted by her husband's ghost, though her unforgiveness keeps her bound to him till death (151). They learn also that Phelan was never seen in The Gut again, though rumours of his continued work in the backcountry find their way. Taking this evidence as proof enough that something as singular and transformative as a sacrament transpired, what can readers assume was accomplished? If confession is about a confessor conferring absolution on one who confesses, *Galore* turns the whole matter inside out. By hearing Mr. Gallery's confession, Phelan empowers his repentance, but by offering to make confession, Gallery empowers Phelan's repentance. So: who is the confessor here, and who the absolved? Naturally, miraculously, the answer is both of them. The two take a chance on hope together, through each other, and the mystical exchange that follows restores them both to life. It enables Gallery to resolve his own state, and it enables Phelan, through the reclamation of his vocational duties, to become a priest again—on an essential level, miles deeper than anything another human being can touch.

It is difficult to understate how radical this move is, and yet how conventional, in so far as it is in keeping with all biblical Easter narratives. The triumphant, world-breaking, heroic quality of what happens here between Phelan and Mr. Gallery is so much like what happens between Christ and

Humanity at the crucifixion.[54] It feels like a cheat, it seems to break all the rules, it is unreasonable and preposterous and scandalous and more than a little alarming if you take it seriously—rather like Father Phelan. But the message is that with God this transgressive, wanton love, this thing that appears to violate what appear to be laws, is really as natural and harmonious as gravity. It is the law that defines all other laws. In *Galore* human beings, including Phelan, strive to bring themselves to God and to each other by an incomplete, unsteady, often doomed advance. Meanwhile, God unites herself to humanity by all means possible *to God*, whether that be wind, whale, or whisky priest.

[54] See especially Matthew's version where, at the moment of Christ's death, the temple curtain is torn in two (Matthew 27:50-52). Note also that this is the version wherein Judas hangs himself in despair of what he has done.

Chapter 4

Conclusion: The w/Word in *Galore*

Summary/Recapitulation

Throughout this thesis I have made a close examination of spirituality in *Galore.* My primary method for mapping *Galore*'s overall spiritual landscape has been to analyse how and where religious allusion deepens, proliferates, and at times complicates what meaning can be gleaned from the novel's explicit, surface-level content. The field of material I have considered is deep and wide. Diegetically, it includes worship, ministry, prayer, ritual, oral tradition, reading and discussing or quoting scripture. Hyperdiegetically, it includes many spiritual or religious allusions—verbal, gestural, or dramatic/figurational—that the narrator, the author (through epigraphs), or the physical book design (cover art), might make. In conducting this study of spirituality in *Galore*, I have regarded both mainstream (here, Christian) religion and folk beliefs, including historic spiritualities like Irish animism, as equally pertinent. Indeed, through careful analysis of *Galore's* many composite, or bilingual figurations, I have worked to demonstrate that a fulsome understanding of the novel's total theological discourse cannot be achieved without attending to how theology is uniquely and polyphonically expressed by all of these streams together.

This approach is, to the best of my knowledge, fairly rare in that it strives to eschew any potentially ethnocentric impulses to distinguish 'real' religion from 'mere' folk belief. In *Galore,* there are some elements of spirituality on the side of folk belief—perhaps like the idea that animals can be emissaries—that may square more easily with contemporary Western ideas about what "real religion" is. Others by contrast, like ghost stories or folk habits connected to belief in faeries—can seem like they belong to some fundamentally *other* kind of belief. By contrast, I have tried to reinforce another

way of speaking about such expressions of the numinous, drawing on Samuel Martin's language of a "sacramental turn" in *Galore.* Guided by this language, I have worked to demonstrate that a sacramental worldview (I'm tempted to call it a sacra-mentality) is the alchemical bond that allows mainstream and folk religions to harmonize together in *Galore,* and probably in a great deal of similar literature. In *Galore,* all of the novel's diverse and mysterious expressions of human relationships with the numinous, conceived and expressed differently over time and across oceans—each no more natural or absurd than the others—come together to create a distinctive composite brand of spirituality on shore. Rather than striving to disentangle this polyphony, to distinguish *mythos* from *magic* and examine each voice separately. I listen for its overall harmony, expressing in variegated tones a single, fragile idea something like 'God with us.'

Epiphany, encounter, the unexpected inbreaking of divinity into ordinary life is a central theme in *Galore.* It is expressed verbally and visually, often in terms that have meaning in several streams of spirituality all at once. These composite or bilingual figurations, which manage to allude simultaneously to more than one repository of spiritual meaning (for example, Catholic iconography and Irish animist symbolism) are ideal, crucial sites for excavating deeper theological insight into the novel. They are the keys to *Galore's* theological polyphony—the places where many voices can be heard speaking together as one. In Chapter 2 I provide close readings of several such bilingual figurations, concentrating primarily on those involving fish and other sea life—a major category in *Galore*. However, there is another, equally powerful theme in *Galore* that plays against that of epiphany, divine presence, or encounter: themes of ignorance or forgetfulness or divine absence. The feeling that creation has been abandoned are just as essential to the novel's polyphony. If *cataphasis* can be read primarily in the novel's sacramental turn, *apophasis,* its constant counterpoint, can be read in the agnostic turn. 'God with us' is the possibility, the hope that springs eternal in *Galore*, but it is

only ever a possibility, a hope. Here, as in the popular track by Vampire Weekend, "Ya Hey," the name of God is always a question, always partially obscured (*Modern Vampires of the City*, 2013.)

In attending to composite visual allusions and even composite language in the *Galore*, Chapter 2 illuminates the novel's composite theology. It also sheds important light on the role of liminality in *Galore,* where the quality of "both/neither-ness" adds power to people and situations. Allusion itself is, in a way, the perfect expression of the power of liminality. Its operation is paradoxical: specific and concrete yet boundless and variable at the same time, utterly dependent on the realizing reader for its actualization. Similarly, "A Miraculous Catch" shows how certain key behaviours of language in *Galore* allow the novel's composite figurations to operate the way they do. Mashup language, such as that used for Judah Devine's whale/fish/Leviathan is just one example. Strategic conflations—like Judas with Jonah, whence Judah—are another. Though they may be camouflaged as mistakes, these fusions are in fact strategic, precise, and descriptive. They are also an important expression of *Galore's* dialogue with its parent mythologies: in treating both language and physical reality as though they are stretchier, more mutable than they seem, *Galore* is able to map a spiritual landscape—over its setting and within its individual characters—that makes room for both faith and doubt, epiphany and apophasis.

Finally, Chapter 2 also provides important symbological analysis of the foil relationship between Judah Devine and Ralph Stone, *Galore*'s two primary Christ figures, revealing new insights about the novel's unique Christology and sacramentalism. This relationship is the fountainhead of *Galore's* Johannine sacramentality, which revolves around fresh conceptions and expressions of "the w/Word made flesh." Understanding Judah and Ralph parabolically as "salt" and "light" (per Matthew 5:13-16) later helps readers to understand *Galore's* sacramentalized code of word or wisdom as food, where sea life become sources of both mental/spiritual nourishment through writing (Judah, Jabez

Trim's Bible) and bodily nourishment as a harvest. Once again, however, this code is most accessible if readers are aware of the fact that fish symbolize wisdom—for different reasons, but to the same end—in both Christian and Irish animist tradition. Chapter 2 is an attempt to illustrate and illuminate such bilingual figurations.

Chapter 3 engages *Galore's* sacramental theology by examining the life and ministry of its central clerical figure: Father Phelan. It examines the transgressive yet honest—and surprisingly effective—ministry Father Phelan provides to the livyers of his forgotten, backwater parish, focussing on the embodied quality of his life and work. There is a mercy, an embrace of weakness that borders on celebratory, in Phelan's clerical ministry that I argue brings unique vibrancy to *Galore's* sacramental theology. Where Phelan stands within a tradition of flawed, transgressive priest figures, Chapter 3 confronts questions about the difference between a breach of etiquette and a breach of trust (or whether there is a difference at all) in pastoral ministry, particularly as informed by a frontier context. Starting from the phonetic cue offered by Phelan's name (hear *failin'*) this chapter asks, what kinds of clerical failure make a villain, and is there such thing as heroic failure among spiritual leaders like Father Phelan? By examining the way Phelan's ministry is simultaneously historical and modern--transpiring diegetically in the past but hyperdiegetically (that is, for readers) in a Me-Too-Era present, post global clerical abuse crisis—this chapter also highlights the important relationship between religious/theological and postcolonial analyses of *Galore.* Following with a lighter touch from Chapter 2, this chapter also continues my examination of mixed Christian and Irish influence in *Galore's* theological discourse. Indeed, it is an explicitly Irish interpretive cue that offers the key, as I show, to the questions posed above regarding etiquette and trust in pastoral ministry. Phelan, from the Irish surname *O'Faolain* translates to "wolf." This chapter traces the ways that Phelan's particular expression of fairy-tale wolfishness can inform his behaviour, and reassure readers that while his

transgressions may be shocking, at worst they are harmless and, at best they demonstrate more clearly than any sermon Phelan's fitness for and conviction of his vocation. Phelan *is* hungry like the wolf, but this hunger, this lust for life, is not a threat to his community; it is the sign that he understands them, and the source of compassion that drives him to serve them faithfully.

Limitations of Study and Further Research

The nature of a thesis prepared in partial fulfillment of a degree means that the work has limitations: limitations of scope, limitations of length, limitations of time. This thesis has all those limitations, but the limits are also, already sources of inspiration and germination for future, further work. The remainder of this conclusion explores some of those active germination sites and gestures toward future ideas for my own research in the coming years. The discussion to follow will not be comprehensive but, within reason, I have aimed to be as thorough and imaginative as possible.

During the last two years' work on *Galore,* several new and exciting projects have begun to take shape that do not fit the parameters of this master's thesis. As mentioned in my Introduction, I am actively finalizing an in-depth investigation of the relationships between Father Phelan and clergy in the works of Graham Greene; that work has already been invited for review by *Graham Greene Studies* (University of North Georgia), and will hopefully be submitted later this year. Additionally, discovering the eucharistic relationship in *Galore* between wisdom and food, symbolized through the novel's intricate connections between texts and fish, yielded the extremely exciting thought that, by extension of the metaphor, illiteracy is a very tangible, even fleshly hunger in *Galore*—a kind of malnourishment. Coupled with the knowledge that Newfoundland has the lowest literacy rates of any province in Canada outside the territories,[55] yet consistently produces authors who, year after year, sell

[55] Per this 2012 stud by The Conference Board of Canada, labelled current as of 2014: https://www.conferenceboard.ca/hcp/provincial/education/adlt-lowlit.aspx?AspxAutoDetectCookieSupport=1

plenty of books and contend for the nation's top literary awards, this has inspired what I believe at the time of writing will be my doctoral dissertation topic. To wit: how il/literacy, reading, and writing are figured in Canadian Atlantic fiction. These nascent projects underline a fact I hope my work up to this point has rendered obvious; namely, that there is a wealth of opportunity for further study into Michael Crummey's highly deserving body of work, particularly in relation to other literary texts.

Galore's Other Passion Play: The Kerrivan Tree as Irish *baile* and Christian cross

In Chapter 2, amidst my discussion of the whale as crucifix and its impacts on Judah Devine's distinctive Christology, I offer that Judah's whale, even more than it is a literal whale, is a messenger of divine wisdom, a source and manifestation of epiphany, and a vehicle of divine approach, ushering human beings back and forth between the realms of life, death, and time. In this way, it bears resemblance to the Irish Celtic *bile* or "world tree" (MacLeod, Sharon, 14-15). But Judah's whale is not the only world tree in *Galore.* It is not even the most obvious one. As Galloway notes, in *Galore* "the characters, plot and setting have been fused," and while Judah's whale is an excellent example of this, the Kerrivan tree is arguably an even better one (Galloway, np).

I am interested in the Kerrivan tree as a bilingually allusive figure for a few reasons: first, because its Irish and Christian significance so perfectly work together in refiguring a cross. Indeed it is far clearer and possibly more elegant this way than Judah's whale; being an actual tree, it calls readily to mind both the traditional form of the Irish *bile*—in fact, the Kerrivan tree was brought over from Ireland as a sapling—and a significant tradition in Christian art of representing the cross as a tree (*Galore,* 13). The Kerrivan tree even has a seeming agelessness about it appropriate to both referents, having been transplanted in Newfoundland one-hundred years before the start of the novel (13). Second, because the tree participates valuably in *Galore's* overall theme of *kenotics*: in Chapter 3, I

opened up discussion of the role that *erotics*—appetite, embodiment, and lust for life—play in Father Phelan's overall character, and particularly in his character as a faith leader. That chapter demonstrated, in preliminary fashion, how the two contrasting themes of erotics and *kenotics*—that is, self-emptying, or redemptive purgation—interact in *Galore.*[56] And third, because by these two mechanisms the tree demonstrates great potential to reinforce another potential veins of analysis I'm excited about, which I outline below: namely, instances and effects of blessing and cursing in *Galore.*

Many variants of the cross exist in Christian visual art traditions. Some of these variants are crafted to make a theological statement, as is the case with a Christus Rex compared to a traditional crucifix. Others, like St Andrew's cross, have historical or hagiographical roots. Still others are more metaphorical in nature, often emphasizing the life-giving impact of Christ's sacrifice by animating the site of his passion. In this vein, portraits of the cross as a tree—both animate in itself and a source of life to other creatures, illustrating the salvific, life-giving effect of Christ's sacrifice—are common (see Arcimboldo, *Albero di Jesse/Jesse Tree*; Buonaguida, *Albero Della Vita/Tree of Life*; Crocefissi, *Dream of the Virgin*; Suso, *Suso adoring the Christ crucified on a vine*). Just like Judah's whale or the Kerrivan Tree in *Galore*, these metaphorical refigurations rely on systems of allusion to function. For instance, Arcimboldo's fresco alludes to Old Testament scriptures that describe the familial line of Jesse as a stem or stump from which Jesus, the "rod" of Jesse would grow (Isaiah 11:1-4, KJV), and Suso's woodcut alludes to gospel references in which Christ describes himself parabolically as a vine (John 15:5, NIV).

Throughout Christian history representations such as these, featuring visual analogues familiar from nature like fish and trees, have had the added strength of trading well among animist peoples like

[56] A couple of meaningful kenotic moments were also addressed in Chapter 2 during my discussion of the whale, which yields Judah out of its body to become a messianic figure on shore. Judah's own purge of "blood, water, and seven tiny fish" may be another example.

the Celts, among others. Here, the overlap between Christian and other iconographic repositories facilitated theological exchange, leading to a measure of confluence and/or conversion between belief systems and storytelling traditions. The Kerrivan tree is a gorgeous example of what this particular, already well-worn use of bilingual allusion can do to deepen and nuance the cosmology—and in turn the theology—informing a work of fiction. It deserves the kind of close reading that could provide a useful exegesis of its significance in context of *Galore.*

Further, the Kerrivan tree is as much a study in kenotics, as clear a site and subject of redemptive purgation, and as much a vehicle of divine approach as Judah's whale. Indeed, it is suggested to magically confer new life upon both Judah Devine and Michael "Lazarus" Devine through a pseudo-sacramental rite not unlike baptism. In Chapter 1 of *Galore,* both boy and man are passed among the branches of the tree by neighbours and family. In the visual language of the world tree, this gesture symbolically raises them into the heavenly [canopy] realm toward divine salvation in the hopes that they may be returned to life on earth [literally, the ground]. It is an exact mirror of the passage through the chthonic [water] realms of death back to life [air] dramatized in baptism. According to the narrative, until the day of this ceremony the Kerrivan tree had yielded nothing but sour crabapples unfit to eat.[57] Still, it was believed to hold within itself the very spirit of health, which it might mystically confer upon those that drew near to it. The tree's original owners, you see, or at least custodians, the Kerrivans, "were never sick a day in their lives, sailing unafflicted through the outbreaks of cholera and measles and diphtheria that burned through the shore," (14.) Hence the bapstim-like second ritual that sprung up to accompany each infant christening on shore.

After their joint passage through the Kerrivan tree both Judah and Michael "Lazarus" Devine, who were critically ill and more than half expected to die, fully recover. *Galore's* narrator concludes

[57] Worth noting here that apple trees are sacred in Irish Celtic tradition, specifically associated passages to the Otherworld, and that apples, like fish, are symbolic sources of divine wisdom (MacLeod, Sharon, 107-114, 178).

the episode by relating that the following summer was "uncharacteristically warm and dry and Kerrivan's Tree produced apples sweet enough to eat for the first time in its purgatorial century on the shore" (15).

I cannot help but see in this episode as similar to, and perhaps even a foreshadowing of, the coming exchange between Father Phelan and Mr. Gallery. Some scholars trace the word charity back to the Latin *caritas,* or love, but in his book *What's So Amazing About Grace?* the American faith writer Philip Yancey suggests it might as validly come from the Greek *charis*, or grace, as in charisma. The two arguments inform each other beautifully: in the English, per its biblical roots (see 1 Corinthians 13, KJV), charity is an application of grace—that is, an outpouring of unearned blessing, often in the form of material gift but also in the form of gracious treatment or speech, intended to express God's love. Similarly, as I have argued, Mr. Gallery purges his truly grave sins—envy, wrath, battery, and murder, just to name a few—by conferring grace or blessing upon Father Phelan. He does this, the novel implies, through a powerful act of submission and voluntary vulnerability, of self-opening and emptying—through confession. In just the same way the Kerrivan tree purges *its* inner bitterness, manifest in its inedible fruit, by conferring grace, blessing, health, *life* upon Judah and Michael Devine.

The summary implication, I would argue, is that no creature under heaven—whether man or babe or ghost or tree—can be fully itself outside of its participation in creation's shared vocation to manifest love. Another possible intertext here may be the biblical story of the blasted fig tree wherein Jesus curses a fig tree that he finds barren of fruit—"because it was not the season for figs." Immediately the tree withers and the next day, when the disciples notice, Jesus warns them that they, too, have the power to bless and to curse, to confer or withhold grace, saying "Have faith […] whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it and it will be yours. And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive them, so that your Father in heaven may forgive

you your sins" (Mark 11:11-26, NIV.)[58] Much more detailed analysis of the spiritual implications here is warranted, both with regard to Irish Celtic spirituality and biblical theology.

Questions of Textuality

Samuel Martin has already discussed at some length how *Galore* meditates on and reprises the biblical notion of "the word made flesh," focussing primarily on a eucharistic dialectic of reading (*Bleached Bones Rattling*, 217-276, esp 250). I have taken that work further, and to some extent in a different direction, by delving deep into *Galore's* sacramental turn, expounding how the drive toward incarnation that fuels this turn can inform readerly analysis of the novel's overall theology, and its treatment of the W/word, whether written or spoken. However, many questions regarding textuality and orality in *Galore* remain to be explored.

The relationship between Crummey's own literary technique in *Galore* at the levels of style and mechanics, and novel's overall discourse on narrative or textuality is a field absolutely ripe for scholarly analysis. As I highlighted briefly in my section on Father Phelan, Crummey's use of free indirect style in *Galore* is beyond adept. It enables him to hold the narrator of the story totally obscured, even diffuse in a way, while giving expression to individual characters' distinctive speech and inner thoughts at varying levels of intimacy and clarity. Indeed, by dispensing with the use of quotation marks Crummey underlines that his story is technically told in a single voice, by a third party; and yet, it seems to me that by the same gesture he invites readers, phenomenologically, to witness the true polyphony of the novel. This effect invites numerous questions, rather in the McLuhan vein, about how medium informs message in Crummey's work, in *Galore* and beyond. Crummey's

[58] This reiterates, to some degree, earlier statements Jesus makes in Matthew 6, asserting that if the disciples forgive others, they will be forgiven, but if they refuse to forgive, their sins in turn will not be forgiven. Expressed inversely, 'offer grace and grace will be yours; withhold grace, and the state of grace will be inaccessible to you.'

playful yet provocative gambit of substituting squid for fish in his parody of the miraculous catch seems to redouble that invitation, baiting the reader to notice the way those squids' ink calls out for the focus of a pen, the way their white skin screams of paper, emphasizing the presence of a broader symbolic code of writing in the novel.

Crummey has done this before; see his short story "Miracles" in *Running the Whale's Back,* which opens thus: "The moon is full, it stands out against the darkness like a single Braille dot, perforated on a black page. If you could reach your hand up to touch the sky, you would feel it raised against your skin like the improbable beginning of a letter, a word, another story" (21). In a way all too familiar, as I have shown in this thesis, the opening passage of "Miracles" calls to mind both reading and blindness simultaneously (21). Cataphasis meets apophasis. Faith meets doubt. The hope of encounter, a feeling that God is present in the tangible world and its ordinary moments, curves its way naturally through the agnostic turn. *The information is out there,* this speaker seems to say. *It is written, if only we could read it.*[59] In all of this, questions of textuality and questions of whiteness in Crummey's work come together, in my opinion meriting joint consideration.

Whiteness in *Galore*

The age old question of how much meaning resides in each element of the written page—how much in the black of printed text, how much in the white between lines, in the margins—is every bit as pressing and obvious in Crummey's work as it is in theological studies. Furthermore, *Galore's* code of whiteness may be worth exploring for its possible bearing on postcolonial interpretations of the work,

[59] Funny enough, in the Braile system a single dot signifies A, as in Alpha, or the number one: it is precisely The Beginning. To the reader able to discern the deep-seated allusion to God "the Alpha and the Omega," this is exactly the improbable beginning of the world's improbable 'other' story--Earth's re-write, its happy ending. And that, in fact, is what "Miracles" is all about—second chances, a new lease on life. It is a story that ends, incongruously, better than it should have ended. As always, one is left to decide for oneself which turn in Crummey's work, the agnostic or the sacramental, prevails.

in so far as it is an area where the religious and folkloric symbolism of colour may directly and heavily impact race discourse in the novel. Whiteness, specifically as a counterpoint to blackness, may also prove useful as a kind of mountain pass between questions of Textuality/Orality and Muteness/Reticence in *Galore,* which I discuss below. For example, does Judah Devine's whiteness emulate in any meaningful way—as it seems to—the whiteness of the blank page? Might the foil relationship between Judah Devine and Ralph Stone be helpful in parsing this question? As in their paradoxical expressions of Christlikeness, Ralph and Judah may here be contrasting expressions of the unknowable, Judah through the "blank" of his whiteness and Ralph through the obscurity of his blackness. To unite the two men in this way would strongly recall *The Cloud of Unknowing* and its distinctive apophatic theology (see Woods, "The Darkness of God and the Negative Way," *Mysticism and Prophecy: The Dominican Tradition,* 44-58). The fact that both Ralph and Judah are emblematic of knowledge or enlightenment through their respective crafts—Judah's writing, Ralph's lamp-making—and *un*knowing through their colourings, puts a strong twist on the Christology they express. Do other instances of whiteness in *Galore*, or in Crummey's other works, fit well with this framing? Is it possible that Whiteness as blank might productively be juxtaposed with something in *Galore* akin to what apophatic mystics have called "brilliant darkness" (Lane, *The Solace of Fierce Landscapes,* 6)?[60]

Conspicuous Silence: Muteness, Reticence and Slanted Speech

Earlier in this chapter I made much of *Galore's* internal polyphony. That *Galore* is polyphonic, in almost every sense, is uncontestable. Yet for all that, muteness or voicelessness is a conspicuously prominent theme in the novel. Consider Judah Devine's ostensible muteness and Abel's after him, Absalom Sellers' debilitating stutter, Mr. Gallery's faint indecipherable muttering. Take Esther the

[60] Here again, see also Woods' "The Darkness of God," *Mysticism and Prophecy,* 44-58.

professional singer's crippling stage-fright or the damage her voice sustained from efforts to stretch her range. Take the extinction or evanescence of local tongues like Irish and outport dialect over the course of the novel. Collectively, these examples underline a profound irony in a novel like *Galore*, where strong themes of testament, testimony, scripture, storytelling/orality, literacy, and writers' craft loom large.

I would like to suggest the possibility of categorizing different qualities of speechlessness here: for example, muteness versus reticence, or muteness as a curse versus muteness as the evidence of encounter with God. Another useful category might be hampered speech or the pseudo-muteness a person experiences when trying to express the inexpressible or unfamiliar. For example, Dr. Newman notes that most patients in The Gut cannot say clearly what is the matter with them when they seek medical treatment (*Galore*, 150). Jabez Trim's Bible is damaged, partial, obscured; as a testament, its speech is thus often slanted or hobbled and some Livyers' grasp of biblical narrative is secondarily wounded—as in a game of telephone. Similarly, Mr. Gallery speaks, but his speech is low (muted) and incomprehensible. Is this reticence, the unwillingness to speak, is it 'slanted' or hampered speech? Could it somehow be both? In the following pages I will also place these themes and potential codes of silence in dialogue (pardon the word choice) with key speech acts from the novel, such as the Widow Devine's "shut up Patrick," her later prayers, young Mary Tryphena's infamous ruckus during her first night with Judah, Bride's outburst in church during a charismatic ecstasy, professions of love by diverse characters, and others. By juxtaposing these trends or instances in *Galore*, I hope to provide a springboard for further inquiry regarding the significance of vocal testimony amidst this novel's widespread speechlessness.

How might Judah Devine's silence, relieved only through his occasional writings, be emblematic of an author's muteness once their book is out in print? Just as Judah can only hope the

people around him grasp his thoughts and feelings as he is able to express them, the author can only hope—like Judah, often in vain—that readers will grasp enough of what is meant through what little can be expressed. Is it fair to say that both Judah and the writer, while technically free to make their thoughts and feelings more explicit, are inhibited by the demands of delicacy, of art, of a nuanced truth's vulnerability to the glare of direct light?

Alternately, how might Judah Devine's silence—the reader is never certain whether it is true muteness or only reticence—inform him as a Christ figure? Could this silence in itself, juxtaposed against certain written acts of self-expression, be a biblical allusion? I offer, as a possibility, Isaiah 42:1-4:

> "Here is my servant," [says the Lord] "whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom I delight; I will put my Spirit on him, and he will bring justice to the nations. *He will not shout or cry out, or raise his voice in the streets*. A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out. In faithfulness he will bring forth justice; he will not falter or be discouraged till he establishes justice on earth. In his teaching the islands will put their hope." (NIV, emphasis mine)

Just a few observations about this passage, to which *Galore* might be alluding: not only does it describe a (perhaps strategically) silent Messiah, it could also speak to Judah's self-sacrifice near the end of the book to protect his family from injustice. It harmonizes with Judah's Newfoundland (island) context, and could even—at a slight stretch, perhaps—speak to Judah's bond with little Lazarus, a "smouldering wick" of a baby, from whom Selina Sellers superstitiously feared Judah would steal the breath of life. Food for thought.

Further pertaining to theological analysis, how might silence in *Galore* work together with other themes or salient instances of silence/muteness/reticence in Michael Crummey's works related to

spirituality? Some examples worth considering might include the mainly speechless, ultimately singing ghosts in Crummey's *Sweetland* (2014), or the narrator/protagonist of his short story "Miracles" who, at the end of the story dreams (ostensibly) of the afterlife where he finds his dead parents alive and well, and being that they "took no notice of [him]," explains that he "didn't try to speak" (*Running the Whale's Back,* 30). By way of biblical intertexts, how might Zachariah's muteness after he questions the angel foretelling the birth of his son, John the Baptist, dialogue with the above examples from Crummey? (See Luke 1.) Even more interesting as may involve *Galore,* what about the famous psalm, "By the Waters of Babylon," in which the psalmist prays that his tongue might "cleave to the roof of [his] mouth" if ever he should forget, or otherwise betray his home, the beloved? (Ps 137:6, NIV). I think it clear that there are many and varied moments of fruitful analysis to be pursued here.

The last angle I wish to point out as regarding conspicuous silence in *Galore* is the racial/postcolonial angle. In her contribution to *Tracing Ochre,* Cynthia Sugars draws attention to the particulars of Indigenous people's conspicuous silence in *River Thieves,* which "takes as [its] subject the 'last' of the Beothuk, as this applies not only to the loss of a race of people, but also to the loss of a particular lexicon," interrogating what she calls the novel's "fantasy of the Beothuk word, in which words stand for people." This comparative study, which included both Crummey's *River Thieves* and Bernice Morgan's *Cloud of Bone,* observes "a difference […] in how each writer perceives the author's ability to access Beothuk language," suggesting that while in *Cloud of Bone* the Beothuk speak "rather too much," in *River Thieves,* they altogether "refuse to speak" (Sugars, "When The Beothuk (Won't) Speak," 54). Of all the silences that stand out in *Galore,* for me the silence of Indigeneity is among the loudest. And yet, this vacancy, this blank or gap seems much like several others I have discussed above, in that the silence beckons. *Galore* is a work of historical fiction, meaning it grants readers the gift of directed hindsight, slipping dramatic irony between every line by leveraging a modern

readership's knowledge of what will come next. If, as a postcolonial novel, *Galore* is sufficiently aware of its modern readerships' sensibilities regarding, say, priests and the church, to leverage out the tension that makes Father Phelan's story jump off the page, then I have to believe it is cognizant enough of readers' racial retrospect to leverage *that* as well. I am convinced that Indigenous silence in *Galore* is a deliberately *conspicuous,* self-advertising, provocative silence.

Readers of *Galore* are directed primarily to rediscover or re-*view* the many-coloured conflicts and copulations that transpired between English merchants and power-brokers and Irish underlings in 18th and 19th century Newfoundland—and parallel to that, between Christianity and folkloric or animist faith traditions. However, there are brief moments in which Crummey alludes to other such conflicts beginning to develop, or even raging already just outside the frame, between the white settlers of our focus, and the region's Indigenous peoples. These moments are only quantitatively secondary. Voicelessness being such a prominent theme in *Galore,* these moments that let slip the imposed muteness of Indigeneity in and around *Galore's* time and place should be red flags to the reader, beckoning closer examination. In order to determine what readers should make of the way Indigenous voices and traditions are muted or marginalized in *Galore,* readers must carefully consider what *Galore* has to say about all other things mute and marginalized. Just what *kind* of silence is this? What company is kept in the margins of this book? Once again, this is a topic that warrants exploration in depth and at length. Still, by way of a hypothesis, I suggest that holding local colonization at arm's length in *Galore* is a beneficent ploy on Crummey's part—a kind of bait and switch meant to draw the postmodern reader in, hard.

The Living Word: Blessing, Cursing, and Storytelling

In keeping with my Introductory arguments that the paradoxical counterpoint of *cataphasis* and *apophasis* are central to good theology, studying silence in *Galore* will only ever be half useful without an accompanying study of significant speech acts. The w/Word made flesh, the w/Word alive, are absolutely central in *Galore,* as I have begun to show with my analysis of allusion and scripture. There is more work to be done, and much of it pertains to spoken word.

The very last scripture reference made in *Galore* is made by Abel Devine, quoting Proverbs 18:21: "Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and they that love it shall eat the fruit thereof." One obvious place to start investigating the importance of speech acts, given *Galore's* sacramental theology and allusive emphasis on Johannine incarnation (the word made flesh,) would be to examine where in *Galore* words bring life or thriving, and where they bring death or destruction—in other words, where do readers find curses in *Galore,* and where blessing? Beyond that, what *makes* a speech act a 'curse' in this novel, and what makes one a blessing?

Much is made early in *Galore* of the 'curse' that Devine's Widow ostensibly laid upon King-Me Sellers after she rejected his proposal of marriage and he turned her out of his employ without wages (69). Overwhelmingly, the actual word "curse" in *Galore* chiefly indicates foul language or a condemnation, not the kind of magical indictment—words with living, transformative power—meant in this particular case. Yet I suggest that if the very first Mrs. Devine ever did cast a true curse, she did not cast it on King Me Sellers. I think she cast it on her husband, Paddy—Patrick Devine, the first—and I think she cast it with a few simple, careless words. My reasons for believing this go back to Crummey's epigraphs, where Gabriel Garcia Marquez—"It is unrequited, not happy love, that has always moved the world"—is paired ominously with a quote, in the voice of God no less, from the Psalms: "I will bring back my people again from the depths of the sea."

When she and Paddy make love for the first time, having joined forces more or less out of sheer practical need, she tells Patrick she believes they are functionally married. The free-indirect narrator, giving insight into her mindset, prefaces Patrick's response: "And he must have felt obligated to make an offering of some sort. –I love you, Missus, he whispered." What does the new Mrs. Devine say to this confession of love? "Shut up, Paddy" (78). Whatever she may feel inside, with her words she has not only left Patrick's love unrequited—consider, by the epigraph from Marquez, what a force she has just set in motion—she has also silenced him. Later, with their child Callum just an infant, and presumably with his unspoken love still living quietly in his heart, Patrick Devine dies in a measles epidemic that kills seventeen people in three weeks (100). Men of Callum's generation speak of "consoling themselves" over the bad fishing "with talk of times before their own when grass was boiled and eaten and the dead were stripped of their rags to dress the living before being buried at sea" (21). It is possible, taking these two anecdotes together, that in a time of crisis such as the epidemic, with people dying so fast, this option of sea burials may have been revived—not least to spare a vulnerable population with so many sick needing care the further burden of digging endless graves. This might speak to Abel Devine's question to Esther later on in the story about exactly how Judah Devine found himself swallowed by a whale. What if Judah Devine is not Abel transported back in time—one interpretation made very possible by the novel's ending—but rather Patrick the first, brought again from the depths of the sea (Psalms) by the world-moving power of that silenced, hampered, unrequited love?

Compare, for arguments sake, the circumstances that lead up to Abel Devine's transformation at the end of the book. When Abel Devine and Esther Newman make love for the first time, Abel starts to say something but Esther interrupts; she says "Never tell a woman you love her, Abel. It will always sound like a lie. Better you let a woman figure it out for herself" (305). In the end, Abel never does

profess his love for Esther, and Esther stoically refuses to confess hers—in words. In their subsequent lovemaking the narrator says "it felt like a fight coming out their clothes, *as if they were each trying to keep something hidden* while stripping the other bare" (317, emphasis mine). Ultimately, Abel goes off to war with unspoken love in his heart and, after being caught in a blast awakes from unconsciousness—presumably death—to discover in himself a blow-for-blow redux of Judah Devine's symptoms and condition: white all over, helpless below the waist, mute, bereft of memory, and reeking the same ammoniac reek. On the steamship journey back to Newfoundland, Abel feels his life is "*like something important he'd meant to tell someone*" (332, emphasis mine.) Then there comes the episode of his leaping over side toward a breaching humpback, in places sentence for sentence identical to the chapter in which young Mary Tryphena sees Judah's whale breeching. Abel perceives "the face of a girl waiting at home" reflected in the water, and dives after it. "Even as he fell he pictured her watching from across the room the next time he opened his eyes to the light," (333.) Just so, the first time Judah Devine opened his eyes to the light after emerging from the whale, he sees Mary Tryphena—the very image of her grandmother, his wife—watching him "across the room" (6).

So much for my fan theory about Judah's true origins, which I will point out, radically transforms *Galore's* chronology, and by extension, its theology, by changing the plot from an enclosed moebius strip into a helical progression.[61] (It also adds to Judah's Christology, being an allusion in itself once again to the gospel of John: "And the world knew him not. He came unto his own, but his own did not receive him").[62] As regarding the role of speech acts, however, and the living,

[61] Crummey himself has expressed misgivings about the closed circularity implied by Galore's ending: "In a way the book circles in on itself, and I was playing with that notion of how our relationship to the stories is a circle as well. But it suggests that the book goes back to the beginning and starts over again. And in many ways the people in these communities were really fatalistic and suffered a great deal, so I always had a bit of a mixed relationship to that ending. Am I saying that it just starts over again, and we go through all the same crap again? Really?" (Crummey with Sugars, "Our symbiotic relationship," np.)

[62] AND it makes sense of Devine family name. Devine's Widow is, in a way, "God's Widow" because she is the widow of Patrick, now Judah, the novel's central Christ figure. (I know. Deep.)

transformative word in *Galore*, this theory is valuable because it establishes reasonable criteria for what makes a curse and what makes a blessing. Both Devine's Widow and Esther Newman—in their fear and insecurity—wrongly hide from, even attempt to block or reject the greatest, most divine gift one human being can offer another: love. They are like Adam and Eve hiding from God in the garden of Eden. The result is, functionally, a curse. It is a sword of division that the laws of nature turn themselves inside out to remove. Indeed, when Mary Tryphena discovers for the first time that Judah has loved her their entire married life, yet believes that he willfully kept this from her when he could have made it clear—yes, bitter irony abounds—she regards this reticence as the greatest possible betrayal. Speaking to Dr. Newman after the fact, she quotes Proverbs 25:5: "An open rebuke is better than a secret love." She continues, "Now tell me, Doctor, why would a man keep such a thing from a woman? […] It's the only thing the world gives us, you know. The right to say yes or no to love" (236).

Ultimately, Judah's sacrifice—his flesh-and-blood actions—make tangible what his love letters failed to convey. In the end, *Galore* often forces characters to make their loves *literal* rather than *literate* in order to break their respective curses and free those who share in them. The assurance of this ultimate triumph 'by hook or by crook,' as it were, may also apply at the metatextual level. (I must thank my examiner, Samuel Martin, for nudging me toward this consideration.) Even readers who may miss the 'love letter' of Biblical allusions embedded in *Galore*, those who may not fully realize the implications of the fancy footwork (not unlike Judah's elaborate calligraphy) may still gather the essential message of the story through the characters' flesh-and-blood actions, the overall drive and motion of the plot.

Judah Devine first gets his name almost as a joke, in order to compromise between competing theories about his origins. (Though if Judah really is Patrick, it is pleasing to consider that the name Judah in the bible refers to the firstborn son of the patriarch Israel, and Patrick, as husband to *Galore's*

matriarch, is kind of like the first-born son of the Gut. Tidy fit.) Nevertheless, at the very end of the story, when Abel refigures Judah physically, he also refigures both of the constituent figures that first made up Judah's name. Because of what he never told Esther, Abel is a Judas, a traitor to love. And because Abel ran, in this case into the army, he is a Jonah. But because in the end he dives toward that love again, he also reflects the Jesus that Judah became.

All of this goes to show, as my previous discussion of the Kerrivan tree also suggests, that love silenced, love hidden or withheld is the only real curse in *Galore.* Can one assume, then, that the inverse—true love proclaimed, fearlessly and persistently—is the heart of blessing in the novel? I think so, but in specific ways and for specific reasons. As I wrote in Chapter 2, the story of Jesus is possibly the grandest known iteration of unrequited love that moved the world. Theologically speaking, Christ comes to proclaim the love of God to humanity—to tell human beings the *true* story of themselves. I think blessing in *Galore* essentially amounts to telling a true story. Just as she curses him by bidding him keep his love hidden, Esther Newman blesses Abel Devine by telling him their shared family history. Toward the end of the novel Abel repeatedly expresses a sense of loss or lostness, as though he is partially a ghost, after having lived his childhood in isolation where he heard nothing about himself or the people that he came from:

> Compared with the densely populated world of Patrick Devine's library, the scrubland and bog seemed virtually uninhabited, a place without history or memory, a landscape of perpetual present. He knew it as his country but was at a loss to say how and he walked the barrens endlessly, as if walking was a way of courting a world he was barely acquainted with. (289)

While Abel has, by this point, read more books than anybody else on shore, he has not heard the stories that are most important to who he is—the stories he is *made of.* It is not for frivolous drama, I believe, that Crummey has Esther pair her genealogical benediction with kisses and sex. This is a cue, a way of

figuring materially the generative, incarnational power of this story, this living word. It's about creating a rite that renders storytelling, once again, *sacramental*. Recalling Proverbs 24:36, "an honest answer is like a kiss on the lips," Esther's blessing, her gift of a true—if not strictly factual—story, empowers Abel to make and remake himself every bit as much as sex could.

All this talk of sex—my gift to you at the end of a long haul—this talk of blessing and cursing and incarnation, leads me to conclude with thanks again for your readerly patience and generosity. The opportunities for further study that I have mentioned here, again, certainly do not make an exhaustive account of all that deserves doing, but they are the ones most readily relatable to the work I have accomplished in this thesis so far, and I believe they make a good start.

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