KU LEUVEN
FACULTY OF ARTS
TAAL- EN LETTERKUNDE: ENGLISH

“Where Ye From?”

Reclaiming Newfoundland’s Identity in Kenneth J. Harvey’s *The Town that Forgot How to Breathe*

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Number of characters: 106,761

Master’s Thesis
Presented in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in *Taal- en Letterkunde: English*

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Leuven 2014-2015

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INTRODUCTION

"The surface of the water was calm, unbroken by a single sea creature. How many times had she sailed out from Bareneed harbour to fish the waters? And how many times had she listened to the stories of what lurked beneath? The tales of giant fish and survival against all odds. The legends. Fish in the water. Fish in the sea. All meaningless in her deadened heart now."(p.17)

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Kenneth J. Harvey, The Town that Forgot How to Breathe

This thesis will argue that Kenneth J. Harvey's contemporary Gothic novel, *The Town that Forgot How to Breathe* (2003) serves as a reminder of Newfoundland's unique and nearly-forgotten past and of the fact that its "national and cultural identity […] is distinct from […] Britain and from other provinces of Canada" (Delisle 36). Harvey wrote this novel with a twofold aim. Firstly, he wanted to embrace the uniqueness of his province and celebrate its difference, guiding it away from the margins of Canadian national history. Secondly, he needed to provide his fellow-Newfoundlanders with a story that could help them in coming to terms with the past and, more specifically, with the trauma of the 1949 Confederation with Canada. Harvey feels that, since its entrance into the Confederation in 1949, Newfoundland as a socio-culturally distinct region has gradually but steadily been steered towards modern mainstream Canadian culture, its individuality in peril of being absorbed into the more homogenous North American culture.[1] It is almost as if, in 1949, Newfoundlanders have "simply traded British colonial rule for Canadian colonial rule" (Delisle 35). A strong adherent of the idea that the Newfoundland identity needs to be preserved,[2] Kenneth J. Harvey has transformed the genre of the Gothic by

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[1] Harvey in an interview with Diane Goettel for *The Adirondack Review*:
"I consider myself to be a Newfoundland writer first, and a Canadian writer second. Newfoundland was once a country, before it joined Canada in 1949 as the tenth province. We are an extremely distinct culture, as, I hope, is evidenced in the novel."

[2] Harvey in an interview with Craig Payette:
"[Newfoundlanders] are losing their identity. The twentieth century, particularly the period following the proliferation of television, will, perhaps, be regarded in history as the decades when the people, particularly in North

inscribing its conventions and combining them with elements of the postmodern. He has written a novel in which the boundaries between the dead and the living, the real and the fantastic are broken down in order to remind the Bareneed residents of their past and identity. This postmodern tale of horror is Harvey's contribution to the Newfoundland cultural revival that began in the 1960s and 1970s.[3] It "deliver[s] a serious criticism of and heartfelt lament for Newfoundland culture,"[4] and is to be taken as a warning not to forget. Past, story and heritage on the one hand and identity and life on the other are inseparably connected. Newfoundlanders cannot and should not repress or silence the voice of their heritage within themselves. Authentic Newfoundland culture should not be ostracized – made into something "other", something uncanny. After all, landscape, heritage and memory combine in the construction of identity.[5] *The* genre par excellence to serve this purpose is the Gothic, a genre which gives voice to identity-related anxieties and which, as explained by Prendergast, serves "the need to retain links to the past: folk tales, superstitions, and oral traditions such as medieval ballads, romance, epic and legend, all of which contained elements of the supernatural."[6] As well as parodically transforming the fictional conventions of the Gothic,[7] making it more suitable for the purpose he envisaged, Harvey has incorporated into his novel elements of the postmodern, according to which the "world is defined by the absence of absolute meaning" (Nagatini 250). These two genres have come together in a novel that "questions the notion that one [in this case, the Newfoundlander] inhabits a coherent or otherwise abstractly rational world" (250). The result of his efforts is *The Town that Forgot How to Breathe*, a postmodern horror story in which the Gothic serves as "the basis for a provocative defence of Newfoundland's imperiled cultural traditions."[8]

America, as they are the newest of cultures, lost their lives to the lives of strangers, scripted to resemble them in vague ways combined with the product of what a homogenous human is intended to be, as dictated by the standard sit-com living room, the California beach, the streets of New York, the mean-girl high school, the animated feel-good laugh-a-thon, the romantic comedy…. This is what we all are becoming."

[3] Higgins, Jenny. "Cultural Renaissance." *Newfoundland and Labrador Heritage Web Site* (2012).

[4] "Kenneth J. Harvey." on *TheCanadianEncyclopedia.ca*.

[5] N. Moore and Y. Whelan, *Heritage, Memory and the Politics of Identity* (2007).

[6] K. Prendergast, *Introduction to the Gothic Tradition*. (n.d.).

[7] Schrader argues that parody is one of "the major features of postmodern Gothic" (2001, 13).

[8] Quoted from an Amazon review by J. Anderson.

From the early eighteenth century up till now, Newfoundland has had a strong connection with Ireland. Its "cultural landscape is profoundly Irish,"[9] and the province has often been called "the other Ireland". Coogan wrote that "[n]owhere […] in the world, outside of Ireland itself, is the Irish presence so strongly felt as in Newfoundland" (Coogan 2002, 415). Some even go as far as to say that "you can't call [Newfoundlanders] 'Newfies', and you can't call them Canadians, but they will let you call them Irish […]."[10] Because of the impressive influence of Irish culture on Newfoundland and its inhabitants, this culture will be taken into account when offering an analysis of *The Town that Forgot How to Breathe*.

This thesis is made up of two major sections. In section I, a theoretical framework concerning the major issues and concepts relevant to the analysis of *The Town that Forgot How to Breathe* will be outlined. The framework will deal with the conventions of the Gothic and, more specifically, the postmodern Gothic, as well as with the concepts of horror, the grotesque and magical realism. For these concepts, I mostly rely on seminal works such as *The Cambridge Companion to Gothic Fiction* and Lovecraft's *Supernatural Horror in Literature*. Section II of this thesis will do two things. Firstly, it will concern itself with the classification of Kenneth J. Harvey's *The Town that Forgot How to Breathe* as a contemporary Newfoundland Gothic novel with elements of horror and magical realism. Due to the scarcity of research on Gothic literature set in Newfoundland, I have decided to interpret the term 'Newfoundland Gothic' as a unique blend between the Irish and Scottish Gothic – two nations that largely influenced Newfoundland,[11] and that, at one point in history, were in danger of being subsumed under a larger nation's mainstream culture – on the one hand and the Canadian Gothic on the other. Secondly, in section II of this thesis, the reader will be provided with a thorough textual analysis of *The Town that Forgot How to Breathe* by means of a careful examination of various cultural references in the novel (mainly Irish, or Celtic in general, and Christian), investigating how these contribute to the purpose of the novel and its Gothic effect. Further, this second section will focus on problems concerning identity (individual subjectivity, communal identity, and "national" identity), since the sense of displacement and crises of subjectivity resulting from the 1949 Confederation are *the* major justification for Harvey's choice to transform the genre that is still

[9] Keough, "The Creation of the 'Irish Loop': Ethnicity, Collective Historical Memory, and Place." (2014, 67).

[10] Enright, Anne. "The Most Irish Island in the World." on *IrishTimes.com.* (2013).

[11] Testimony of this was the presence of both Scottish Gaelic and a dialect of Irish Gaelic – known as Newfoundland Irish – on the island in the 19th and 20th centuries.

"the arena" for "questions specifically about individualism" (Punter 1980, 420). Though Spooner, in her introduction to *Contemporary Gothic*, is mostly preoccupied with "the Gothic's dependence on the concept of revival" (11), the opposite is true as well where *The Town that Forgot How to Breathe* is concerned: the Newfoundland cultural revival here depends on the genre through which it is being advocated.

The postmodern Gothic is a relatively new subtype of the Gothic and incorporates features of postmodern fiction. The fact that "some of the issues that are explored separately in Gothic and postmodernist fiction, are one and the same, namely: crises of identity [and] fragmentation of the self" (Beville 53) makes the genre of the postmodern Gothic perfect to deal with the loss of a sense of self in Newfoundland and "to voice the terrors and fears of 'self' towards 'other' in a postmodern culture" (Schrader 4).

Parody, Schrader writes, is "at home in postmodern Gothic novels" (9). In *A Theory of Parody: The Teachings of Twentieth-Century Art Forms*, Linda Hutcheon argues that parody is "one of the major forms of modern self-reflexivity" (2). This is one of the major assets of parody, which allows Harvey to reflect upon the social position of his people, the Newfoundlanders, in relation to mainland Canada. Parody allows us to deal with the "crisis in the entire notion of the subject as a coherent and continuous source of signification" (4-5), and, thus, with the crisis of the Newfoundland subject. Hutcheon writes that parody is "an important way […] to come to terms with the past" (101), "a positive method of dealing with the past" (4) – in this case, with the Confederation. Parody is "a form of imitation, but imitation characterized by ironic inversion"; it is "repetition with critical distance, mark[ing] difference rather than similarity" (6). This does not mean that the target of the parody needs to be ridiculed. After all, the Gothic – the target of Harvey's parodical inversion – deals with "cultural anxieties about the nature of human identity, the stability of cultural formations, and processes of change" (Botting 280). The identity that is the source of anxiety in Harvey's novel is mainly that of the Bareneed residents as Newfoundlanders. Since entering into the Confederation with Canada, the island province has undergone many changes and transformations.[12] The cultural formations and processes of change Botting mentions in the context of the Gothic as a literary genre refer to the change in the way of life of the Bareneed residents, who are in the process of (d)evolving from a community where

[12] G. Woodcock, *The Canadians*: "Since Newfoundland entered Confederation in 1949, and so completed the pattern of Canada from sea to sea, there have been profound changes in its way of life." (93).

people get together and tell stories from the past towards a society where individualism – as opposed to social cohesion – has become standard. Along with this come the fishing regulations, which represent a change from a traditional way of life whereby people are connected to the land (or, in this case, the ocean) to a more industrialized, consumer-oriented society. Finally, the processes of change mostly referred to in Harvey's work are the spread of electricity and microwaves – or, by extension, technology in general:

> The cultural isolation in which the Irish immigrants [in Newfoundland] lived has meant the survival of Irish traditions, beliefs, superstitions, folklore and culture. However, new roads, electricity supplies, improved services and of course television are opening up [Newfoundland] to outside influence.[13]

The only thing that can save the Bareneed residents from the breathing disorder that the coming of mainstream industrialized society brings with it are stories that talk of sea monsters (i.e. that which lies beneath the surface; that which has been repressed), stories that connect the living with each other, with their ancestors, and with the land and culture they have inherited from those ancestors. Because, as Blackmore argues, Confederation has led to the "[f]ading memory of our "story" (354), and, as he so eloquently puts it,

> [w]e must remind ourselves again of our story, the indefatigable spirit that is ours, the contributions that this province has brought and still brings to the country and the world. We must honour and celebrate this place. (Blackmore 375)

Storytelling is a communal activity. Telling each other stories results in a feeling of collectivity, and in a collective memory. This collective memory then, as argued by Moore and Whelan, "is central to the formulation of national," – in the case of Harvey's novel, Newfoundland – "identity" (xi). The past is crucial to the construction of identity. In *The Town that Forgot How to Breathe*, the notions of memory, identity, place and heritage are tied with one another. Without one, the others cannot be. That is the point Kenneth J. Harvey is making in his postmodern tale of horror. Without memory of the place, there is no heritage, and without

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[13] Quoted from "The Forgotten Irish", an RTE *Radharc* documentary by Aiden O'Hara.

heritage – which is expressed mainly through folklore – there can be no identity. The blurring of what it means to be a Newfoundlander in post-Confederation times is a trauma for the Bareneed residents, and traumas can only cease to haunt us when they "can be spoken […] and put into language" (Edwards 131). It is because of this that instances of magical realism are legion in *The Town that Forgot How to Breathe*. "[M]agical realism," after all, "foregrounds storytelling" (Armitt 2000, 308).

In the same way that writers of Scottish Gothic literature typically draw from "the traditions (including the 'popular superstitions, and legendary history') of *pre-Union* Scottish culture,"[14] so too has Harvey turned to pre-Confederation Newfoundland for inspiration in *The Town that Forgot How to Breathe*. From fairies and spirits over sea monsters to ghosts and banshees; Harvey has drawn extensively from Newfoundland's folklore and the mythology and legends the most dominant group of immigrants to the island – the Irish – brought with them. In doing so, he has created an army of creatures that are to serve as reminders of Newfoundland's unique culture. This is to counter the loss of knowledge of Newfoundland's history and its people's heritage. By combining the Gothic mode with elements of the postmodern, Harvey has written a contemporary horror story, set in the early twenty-first century, in which the inhabitants of a small, secluded Newfoundland community can no longer breathe automatically, which is the result of their having lost "a fundamental part of their identity."[15]

[14] Mulvey-Roberts. *The Handbook of the Gothic*. Douglas S. Mack's entry on Scottish Gothic (319, emphasis added).
[15] Back cover of *The Town that Forgot How to Breathe* (Vintage 2005 edition).

1. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In this section of the thesis, some notions of relevance to an analysis of Kenneth J. Harvey's *The Town that Forgot How to Breathe* will be expatiated upon. Firstly, the concept of the Gothic will be discussed, as well as the subtype of the postmodern Gothic. Since no explanation of the Gothic can hope to be of any value without mentioning the grotesque as a mode, due attention will also be given to that notion. Other concepts that are closely related to the Gothic and that will be dealt with are those of horror, trauma, and the genre of magical realism.

The Gothic is first and foremost a fictional genre, a medium through which "[t]he longings and anxieties of modern western civilization are brought out" (Hogle xv). The Gothic as a genre "helps us address and disguise some of the most important desires, quandaries, and sources of anxiety, from the most internal and mental to the widely social and cultural, throughout the history of western culture since the eighteenth century" (4). It helps us deal with fear, confusion and loss of identity. A typical Gothic novel is about the fear that stems "from alterations in the […] sciences, [from] acceleration, [from] mechanization of life, [from a sense of] displace[ment] […]" (5). It is a genre, Rosemary Jackson argues, that reacts "to historical events, particularly to the spread of industrialism and urbanization" (96), which is followed by a sense of displacement. This displacement results in confusion concerning the individual subject's identity.

Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto*, published in 1764, is generally considered to be the first Gothic novel. More specifically, a Gothic novel, Hogle argues in his introduction to *The Cambridge Companion to Gothic Fiction*, is a tale of terror that "usually takes place […] in an antiquated or seemingly antiquated space – be it a castle, […] a graveyard [or] a primeval frontier or island […]" (2). "Within this space," Hogle continues, "are hidden some secrets from the past," – traumas, which can be individual or personal, communal, regional and national. This space represents the unconscious, which is a "deep repository of very old, infantile, and repressed memories or impulses, the archaic underworld of the self" (2). But what is hidden in this deep repository, i.e. that which is hidden beneath the surface, can no longer remain "successfully buried from view" (2). The secrets or traumas from the past haunt the characters, "frequently assum[ing] the features of ghosts, specters, or monsters (mixing features from different realms of

being, often life and death)" (2). The Gothic is all about crossing set boundaries, "shattering the assumed norms (including the repressions) of everyday life with wildly shocking, and even revolting, consequences" (3). Essential to a Gothic text, Armitt writes in *Theorising the Fantastic*, is the calling-into-question of "the apparently fixed demarcations between the interior nightmare realm and the outside world of so-called daylight order" (53).

Characters in the Gothic are forced "to confront what is psychologically buried in individuals or groups, including their fears of the mental unconscious itself and the desires from the past now buried in that forgotten location" (Hogle 3). Ghosts and monsters serve as reminders of that past, and force the people to rethink their notions of identity and community.

In *The Handbook of the Gothic*, Tracy talks about the contemporary Gothic – which Mulvey-Roberts considers to be synonymous to New or Neo-Gothic. The traditional Gothic is a means of social criticism. In *The Literature of Terror*, Punter states that it is first and foremost "a specific reaction to certain features of eighteenth-century cultural and social life" (403). Thus, it is reasonable to argue that the main purpose of the contemporary Gothic is reacting against "certain features" of present-day society.[16] When talking about the contemporary Gothic, the notion of the 'postmodern Gothic' is never far away. 'Postmodern Gothic' is a term which covers those texts that bring together the Gothic and postmodernism, and where the emphasis lies on the Gothic conventions: "[p]ostmodern Gothic […] is first and foremost a Gothic text, which includes strong postmodern features" (Schrader 4). This is to make a distinction between the closely related but different genre of Gothic-postmodernism, where the emphasis lies on the postmodern fictional conventions. In *Gothic-postmodernism: Voicing the Terrors of Postmodernity*, Beville puts forward this term for a genre which combines the postmodern "loss of reality and self" (10) with Gothic techniques and elements. Although her concept of Gothic-postmodernism seems very similar to the postmodern or contemporary Gothic, Beville insists on a difference, arguing that, in the term 'Gothic-postmodernism', "Gothic is used here as the adjective of the term denoting that what is under investigation is the postmodern text that is characteristically Gothic" (10). Schrader, setting out the differences between the two genres, writes that the purpose of the postmodern Gothic is "to voice the terrors and fears of 'self'"

[16] In *The Town that Forgot How to Breathe*, these "features" are Newfoundland's marginal position in present-day Canadian national history and Canadian society ("Newfs" are often looked down upon) and the loss of self that came with Confederation.

towards ‘other’ in a postmodern culture that serves to fill the gap between the ‘self’ and the horror” (4), whereas Gothic-postmodernist texts “fulfil the expression of the darkness of postmodernity” (Beville 16). Both genres, however, “offer readers the potential to interrogate our own unconscious fears, terrors and anxieties,” and “expunge those fears through the return of the repressed” (11). In Gothic-postmodern texts, this is meant to “highlight the spectrality of postmodern existence,” which is represented through two main themes, namely those of “haunting and fluid identity” (11).

Horror Gothic (see also Hogle, below) is seen as a hyponym of contemporary Gothic (Mulvey-Roberts 109, 206). This type of Gothic literature, according to Tracy, deals “more ingeniously with its own century,” and heightens “the shock by the intrusion of uncanny threat, not into the comfortably long ago and far away but into the emphatically familiar fabric of our own lives” (110). In horror Gothic – and contemporary Gothic in general – “the horrors join us at home” (110). Beville too, in her work on Gothic-postmodernism, mentions terror and horror Gothic. She, however, has a different interpretation of the term ‘horror Gothic’, which she reads as “a superficial covering for our inherent desire for ‘the terror of the void’” (43-44).

Yet what, exactly, is horror? Horror, Botting warns his readers in his explanation of the term in *The Handbook of the Gothic*, is not to be confused with terror. While “terror ultimately connotes an uplifting emotion,” horror is “bound up with feelings of revulsion, disgust and loathing” (185). Beville distinguishes between the two by claiming that, unlike horror, terror “bear[s] only a suggestion of the grotesque” (26). Essential to horror Gothic is the ‘abject’, a term coined by Kristeva in *Powers of Horror*. The abject is that which “disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respect borders, positions, rules. The in-between, the ambiguous, the composite” (4). It is that which invokes fear and loathing. It is “an object of fear and fascination” (185), and we identify with it, because “it forms a repressed part of the self” (Staels 329).

There are several subtypes of horror. One very important kind of horror – and the one that is most relevant to this thesis – is the kind discussed by Lovecraft in *Supernatural Horror in Literature*. In this seminal work, Lovecraft mentions a type of horror-literature where “fear is taken out of the realm of the conventional” (32) and “in which the horrors are [not] explained away by natural means,” which he aptly terms “supernatural horror-literature” (16). Essential to the genre is what Lovecraft calls ‘cosmic fear’. In order for a novel to be a true representative of the literature of cosmic fear, there must be present “a malign and particular suspension or defeat

of those fixed laws of Nature which are our only safeguard against the assaults of chaos and the daemons of unplumbed space" (15). This type of fear-literature includes elements from folklore and, most importantly, supernatural monsters. Supernatural horror-literature can – or so Walpole claims – be measured in terms of the number of spectral figures it parades. Thus, Walpole considers Reeve's *The Old English Baron* to be "more artistically economical of horror in its possession of only one spectral figure […]" (26).

Another notion that is inseparably connected with the genre of the Gothic is that of the grotesque. As an aesthetic category or literary device, the grotesque is connected with the concept of taboo. In *On the Grotesque*, Harpham briefly explains Leach's theory of taboo. A child, Leach argues,

> …develops and imposes on the world a discriminatory grid that isolates a large number of separate things, each with its own name. Inevitably, the grid fails to account for or identify a certain segment of reality, which therefore appears as a series of "non-things." Our suppression of the objects in the interstices of consciousness takes the form of taboo, so that the sacred flourishes only in the gaps, where we find incarnate deities, virgin mothers, supernatural monsters that are half-man and half-beast. (4)

The term 'grotesque' then refers to these non-things, which escape the grid of definition. It is interesting to connect the grotesque as a term for that which resists classification with the identity-related anxieties typical of the postmodern Gothic, where "the self is not fixed" (Edwards xviii). The grotesque arises when language is unable to give voice to what are anomalies to the rational mind (i.e. the "paralysis of language" (6)). These "affronts to [our] classificatory systems" result in "anxiety, horror, astonishment, laughter, or revulsion" (4). The grotesque "is a constant intrusion on order, an anomalous agent of chaos. Violating accepted boundaries represents an attack on the entire culture" (Cassuto 115). Contrary to what common belief holds, the grotesque is not only represented through hideous creatures or monsters that represent degeneracy, but also through those other creatures more commonly thought of as beautiful or seductive, that represent hybridity, as is for instance the case with mermaids. The grotesque screams out ambiguity, and is all about in-between-ness: between life and death, the real and the imaginary, human and animal, between "the humorous and the horrible" (Cassuto

114). The "essence of the grotesque," after all, is "the sense that things that should be kept apart are fused together" (Edwards 11). The grotesque is to be found where "human degradation abounds, disfigurement of an aberrational nature assaults the senses, organic and mechanical elements interpenetrate, the categories of a rational and familiar order fuse, collapse, and finally give way to the absurd" (Ciancio 1). It is made up of "a mixture of attraction and repulsion" (Novak 65).

Though some critics go as far as distinguishing four types of the grotesque (e.g. Wolfgang Kayser), most critics tend to make a distinction between two major types: the folk grotesque on the one hand, which leans more towards the 'laughter'-end of the scale, and the demonic grotesque on the other, closer to the 'revulsion'-end. The latter is "'grotesque in the proper sense'" (Kayser as quoted by Novak 58) and causes "uneasiness [and] the kind of dread that accompanies the experience of horror" (Prior 12).

The genre of the Gothic, Justin D. Edwards writes, "is linked to the articulation of traumatic events" (131). "Trauma, like the Gothic, follows this pattern – the re-emergence of something terrifying that lies beneath the surface and threatens to forever haunt its host, unexpectedly rising up from the depths of the self or the community" (133). Crucial to overcoming trauma is storytelling. It is a therapeutic process which allows people to deal with loss[17] (e.g. loss of a sense of self), a process through which identity can be (re)created. Storytelling is an act foregrounded in magical realism, which is why the contemporary Gothic very often includes elements of or combines with the genre of magical realism.

> Magical realism portrays fantastical events in an otherwise realistic tone. It brings fables, folk tales, and myths into contemporary social relevance. Fantasy traits given to characters, such as levitation, telepathy, and telekinesis, help to encompass modern political realities that can be phantasmagorical.[18]

There are some similarities between the genre of the (postmodern) Gothic on the one hand and magical realism on the other. Firstly, both genres contain social critique. Secondly, the close bond between the Gothic and magical realism is emphasized by Armitt, who mentions that "at the

[17] In the case of *The Town that Forgot How to Breathe*, the loss of an alternative history.

[18] "Magical Realism." In the *Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*.

dark end of its spectrum, [magical realism] meets the Gothic" (2000, 306). Thirdly, magical realism resembles the Gothic in that both explore existential considerations.

Armitt describes magical realism as "a disruptive, foreign, fantastic narrative style that fractures the flow of an otherwise seamlessly realist text" (2000, 306). This means that, rather than creating a wholly different world with its own laws of nature, the author of a magical realist text seeks to invest the ordinary (i.e. the real) with a sense of the extraordinary (i.e. the unreal). Armitt's claim that "[m]agic realism is always, to some extent, 'foreign' to the real while being part of the real" (307) is reminiscent of the concept of the uncanny or 'das Unheimliche', which highlights the appropriateness of the genre to help articulate the issues that are central to the postmodern,[19] the Gothic, and postmodern Gothic literature – involving trauma, fragmentation of self and crisis of identity. Magical realism usually includes "an individual and cultural search for otherwise lost or silenced origins, in which history becomes resituated in 'once upon a time' terms" (307-308).

2. TEXTUAL ANALYSIS

"And after the seven days the floodwaters came on the earth."

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New International Version, Genesis 7:10

In this second part of the thesis, attention will first be paid to Harvey's *The Town that Forgot How to Breathe* and its classification as what will be termed 'postmodern Newfoundland horror Gothic'. In order to establish a sense of what exactly this term entails, a closer look will be taken at the parallels between the Irish and Scottish Gothic on the one hand (see Punter 2011) and Harvey's work on the other, and at the similarities between the Canada-Newfoundland relation and the Ireland/Scotland-Britain relation. Further, this section will more closely examine the

[19] Magical realism is considered to be a strain of postmodernism, see e.g. D'haen, Theo. "Magical Realism and Postmodernism: Decentering Privileged Centers." In *Magical Realism: Theory, History, Community*. (2005).

notions of identity and subjectivity in the literary text as well as offer a thematic and formal analysis of the novel.

In *Gothic Canada: Reading the Spectre of a National Literature*, Edwards provides his readers with an example of a Canadian Gothic film, *Speakers for the Dead*, which reminds us of Harvey's *The Town that Forgot How to Breathe*. Both deal with a "small town […] faced with the spectre of [the] past […]". Like the people of Princeville in *Speakers for the Dead*, the inhabitants of Harvey's Bareneed are "forced to confront their history and reconceptualise their notions of identity" (xii). This, Edwards claims, "illustrates the ways in which Gothicism is woven into a local history to disrupt a previously established sense of identity" (xiii).

According to Edwards, Canada "is a country separated along linguistic, ethnic and racial grounds. Such fragmentation makes establishing a coherent Canadian identity a difficult, if not impossible, task" (xxiii). Hence, there is no "potential to knit a community together […]". He continues to say that "the Canadian splintering of self is a gothic presence that uncannily represents a reconceptualization of identity, not as stable unified subjectivity, but as vulnerable to ruptures and divisions" (xxiv). Whenever Edwards is mentioned in this thesis, his statements pertaining to Canada and the (absence of) a Canadian identity also apply to Newfoundland. For instance, Canada is said to be "an uncanny space; it is strangely familiar and familiarly strange" (xv), thus serving as a perfect locus for the genre of the Gothic, because of its in-between-ness. It is a space in-between "America and Europe". As far as this in-between-ness is concerned, the same can be said to go for Newfoundland. In fact, Newfoundland's position is even doubly "in-between": not only is it a space in-between America and Europe; it is also a space in-between Canada on the one hand and Ireland and western England on the other: "Her face turns to Britain, her back to the Gulf / Come near at your peril, Canadian Wolf!"[20] The impossibility of "establishing a coherent Canadian identity" (Edwards xxiii) makes it even more difficult to create a sense of selfhood in Newfoundland. Newfoundland's identity is a conflicted one. They are a Canadian province, but they have only been so for not even seventy years, before which they were a North-American British colony. To add to that, the majority of Newfoundlanders are of Western English and Irish descent. Newfoundland nationalism is strong, yet they are a province of a country more than twenty times their size. Newfoundland, as Wayne Johnston appropriately wrote in *Baltimore's Mansion*, is "the country of no country" (BM 228).

[20] "The Anti-Confederation Song." on *TheCanadianEncyclopedia.ca*.

Hence, it is an excellent setting for a novel dealing with the (transgressing of) boundaries "between the extremities of the self and the Other, the sublime and the abject, the real and the virtual" (Edwards xv). When Edwards feels that Canada is a "country that will always be plagued by a lack of unity" (xv), he is providing us – on a larger geographical scale though – with a possible explanation for what happened in Harvey's fictional town of Bareneed, where the people – due to the coming of electricity, fishing regulation laws and the decline of feelings of community – have suffered from a lack of unity. All this makes Edwards' statement that Gothic texts are all about "the fears of losing one's *true* self" (xvii) even more true when it comes to Newfoundland Gothicism.

The Bareneed people are suffering from a threefold crisis of selfhood: on the levels of nationality, community and individuality or subjectivity. On the national level, people are divided between Canada, their ancestral lands (Britain and Ireland) and Newfoundland. On the level of the community, the absence of identity shows itself in the fact that the residents no longer speak to each other, no longer tell each other stories over candlelight and instead are glued in front of their TVs. The lack of personal or individual identity stems from the fact that they know nothing of their ancestors. Theirs is a severed lineage, and, as argued by Jackson, when "inherited patterns of meaning are lost, […] the notions of 'reality', of 'human nature', of 'wholeness', are dissolved" (96).

"[T]he metamorphosis of the home ground into a foreign territory," Edwards writes, "disturbs selfhood […]" (xxxi). The metamorphosis of Newfoundland is twofold. The first metamorphosis the island underwent is that from a Dominion and full member of the British Commonwealth to a part of the tenth and fourth-smallest province of Canada that is now Newfoundland and Labrador. The second metamorphosis – a direct result of the Confederation, which brought Canadian modernity and technological change to Newfoundland – is the alteration of the landscape, which was now scarred with the network of electrical wires and telephone poles, "obnoxious satellite-TV discs […] intrud[ing] upon the old architecture" (TFB 180). The result is that Newfoundlanders such as the characters Donna Drover and Joseph Blackwood struggle with their notion of self. What has happened here is "the trespassing [or blurring] of spatial borders [Newfoundland versus mainland Canada, or North America in general] dislodge[ing] the stability of the subject" (Edwards xxxi). Another example of boundary-

distortion (which, ultimately, leads to boundary-transgression), is when Joseph's symptoms – respiratory problems, irritability, flares of paranoia, confusion etc. – are getting worse:

> It wasn't safe outside. Don't take yourself into the outside and don't let the outside in until you recognize it as something inherently connected to you. And of course, there was always the possibility that what was coming in from the outside, what you thought you recognized as something that was attached somehow to your life, was actually a forgery of feeling. (228)

This is an example of the typical "inability to recognize the […] distinctions between 'in here' and 'out there'" (Armitt 1996, 55). This is what Botting in his article on horror for *The Handbook of the Gothic* means when, in his explanation of the difference between terror and horror, he mentions that horror, "[b]ound up with feelings of revulsion, disgust or loathing, […] confound[s] inner and outer worlds in an all-pervasive disorientation" (185).

The problems of identity explored by Mathews in *The Canadian Problem* are even more present in Newfoundland, and when he uses terms such as "schizophrenia" (165), they remind us of Joseph Blackwood, the protagonist of *The Town that Forgot How to Breathe*. Mathews describes the issue that is central in Harvey's work: knowing *what* you are (165). Personal identity, says Edwards, "is dependent on, among other things, language" (xviii). This all stems from the sense of displacement the people of Bareneed suffer from.

Because the Gothic deals with repression, "Gothic writers work […] on the fringe of the acceptable, for it is on this borderland that fear resides" (Punter 1980, 409-410). On the one hand, we see "the contours of reality, the detail and structure of everyday life, on the other the shadowy realm of myth, the lineaments of the unacceptable" (410). On one level, we find this in the opposition between the land and the black ocean; on another level this is represented through the literal spatial "opposite-ness" of two of the major spaces in the novel, namely the two houses on the hill: the old Critch house – a typical Newfoundland house; blue, "large" and "[s]oledly built (TFB 142) – on the one hand and the Kyle house – a solar house with "lots of glass" (TFB 56) that reflects the sky and the water – on the other. This opposition represents the psychological disunity of the Bareneed residents and the split Newfoundland identity in general. However, like the Critch house that is still standing after the flames devoured the modern solar house, so too the

original Newfoundland identity prevails after the flood has wiped away all things modern and technological. A Gothic novel, Harris argues, "is generally about the hinterland between human beings and the other, the supernatural."[21] Here, however, it is about more than just this; it is about the hinterland between an authentic way of life with social interaction on the one hand and an industrialized and individualized non-community on the other hand. Most importantly, it is about Newfoundland itself, the hinterland between mainland Canada and Britain, where, until the Confederation with Canada in 1949, people had "retained a vital folk culture that had living roots in a distant English past" (Woodcock 85).

Bearing in mind the Irish connection with Newfoundland, it is relevant to look at what David Punter describes as Irish and Scottish Gothic in *The Cambridge Companion to Gothic Fiction*. According to Punter, the Irish and the Scottish Gothic deal with history, "a history that is constantly under the threat of erasure. They speak of history […] as inevitably involved in specific modes of ghostly persistence which may occur when, particularly in Scotland and Ireland, national aspirations are thwarted by conquest or by settlement, as they have been so often" (2011, 105). Further, Punter talks about the difficult relations between "the invader, the settler, the conqueror [i.e. Britain]" (106) on the one hand and the suppressed (i.e. Ireland and Scotland) on the other hand. Though the historical process may have gone somewhat differently, there are some parallels between the Britain-Ireland and the Canada-Newfoundland relations too interesting to simply ignore. Few Newfoundlanders actually *wanted* to become part of the Confederation in 1949, and at the time, there was much talk of conspiracy on the part of Britain and Canada, and of fixed results. This is somewhat similar to what happened in Scotland after the 1707 Union with England: "[f]or the smaller, weaker, and allegedly more 'primitive' partner, […] the Union produced a situation in which the Scottish national identity was felt to be slipping away, like sand through the fingers".[22] Newfoundland (just like French Canada, for instance) is, to use Mathews' words, "a conquered nation, very much as Scotland is a conquered nation" (158). When Mathews talks about "the Canadian Problem" in his eponymous article, he is focusing on the division between French Canada and English Canada. Several of his observations, however, could also be seen as relevant to what could be termed "the Newfoundland Problem". Newfoundland too feels humiliation: "a humiliation caused by cultural

[21] Harris as quoted by Alice O'Keeffe on *WeLoveThisBook.com.*

[22] Mulvey-Roberts. *The Handbook of the Gothic*. Douglas S. Mack's entry on Scottish Gothic (319).

excommunication [and] depressed economic standards" (159). A linguistic division exists between mainland Canadian accents and the often derogatively named Newfie accents (or so-called "Newfinese").[23] Interesting to note is that, like the history of the Irish and the Scottish, Newfoundland history is "replete with […] lamented moments from the past" (Punter 2011, 106). Theirs is a history of "What if?". Punter continues to describe how "in both Scotland and Ireland Gothic at a certain point became a way of articulating these suppressed histories […]" (106). Gothic literature, in other words, re-examines "the past [as] the place where Scotland, a country obsessed with re-examining itself, can view itself whole, vibrant, mythic" (Bissett 6). One might reasonably argue that, at least when it comes to these features of the Scottish and Irish Gothic, Harvey's *The Town that Forgot How to Breathe* might well be classified as what one could term postmodern Newfoundland Gothic. One could see Ireland and Scotland as the "primitive"[24] countries of "Celtic fantasies" (Punter 2011, 107) as opposed to the more – for lack of a better word – 'rationalized' Britain. The same could be argued for that "other Ireland" – Newfoundland, regardless of its earlier Dominion status or its current province status – in relation to Canada. Punter writes that "[t]he relations between England and Scotland are ones of continuing historical asymmetry; and it is this asymmetry which Scottish Gothic so often portrays […]" (2012, 143). The same goes for the genre of the Newfoundland Gothic, which deals with the relations between 'rationalized' Canada and 'Celtic' Newfoundland. Both Scottish and Newfoundland Gothic deal with the alienation between "ancestral identity [and] modern life" (Duncan 70). Harvey writes about how Newfoundland has lost its true – a somewhat problematic term when one considers Newfoundland's First Nations people – identity with the coming of technology, the encroachment of modernity and individuality, the loss of community feeling and the coming of fishing regulations – the latter a direct result of the destructive fishing technology Confederation brought with it:

> Many residents still retained the fiery Newfoundland spirit and the ingenuity of true islanders, but a lifestyle had been destroyed for approximately half the community, and the despair was palpable. (TFB 140)

[23] G. Woodcock, *The Canadians*: "People in the old Newfoundland […] spoke dialects that were derived from those of Devon men and Irishmen of the seventeenth century and differed considerably from mainland Canadian ways of speaking." (84-85).

[24] Mulvey-Roberts. *The Handbook of the Gothic*. Douglas S. Mack's entry on Scottish Gothic (319).

In a way, one could also argue that Harvey's Gothic is a distorted pseudo-postcolonial Gothic. In *The Handbook of the Gothic,* Gelder argues that "[p]ostcolonial nations can re-animate the traumas of their colonial pasts to produce Gothic narratives" (306). Though this is not so much a novel about the traumas inflicted by the European settlers upon the Newfoundland First Nations rather than a novel dealing with the "white" Dominion of Newfoundland and its cultural trauma of being swallowed up as it were by its big Canadian brother in 1949, it *is* a novel about a nation – that nation being Newfoundland – re-animating the traumas of its past. And indeed, "the repressed [i.e. the Newfoundland identity, represented by dead relatives] return (like ghosts) and traces of the legacy of silence, pain, humiliation, and dispossession reappear in spectral figures" (Wisker 173).

When Punter talks about the Scottish Gothic, he mentions that "Scottish culture is seen as a territorialized, appropriated land, a place where a foreign body has been violently installed in the very heart of the country" (2011, 110). The 1707 Union – which Sienkiewicz-Charlish links with the emergence of the Scottish Gothic – is responsible for the "lack of the coherent identity of the Scottish nation" (Sienkiewicz-Charlish 80). The same can be said to go for Newfoundland – or Harvey's postmodern Newfoundland Gothic in particular. At some point in history, namely after Newfoundland's entering the Confederation, a foreign body was installed. This foreign body can be seen as Canadian-ness, or modernity – represented in the novel by for instance electricity and microwaves, or fishing regulations. The latter especially were installed in what Punter calls "the very heart of the country," since the ocean has always been the major source of life and wellbeing in Newfoundland. This very heart, however, the ocean along with the life it contains, has become the Gothic 'elsewhere'. What used to be an essential part of the community and its people – and, arguably, for some still is – has become the place of the unconscious, the Other's hiding place. This is what Armitt means when she explains that "[i]n order for us to feel something to be uncanny, it must derive from a situation, object or incident that ought to feel (and usually has felt) familiar and reassuring […]" (1996, 49). The ocean, which used to be an inherent part of life for the Newfoundlanders, has become something the Bareneed residents perceive as uncanny, or strangely familiar. Having become estranged from it, the Bareneed residents are now unnerved by the ocean and the secrets it hides. The authentic and traditional Newfoundland has become the other.

In *The Town that Forgot How to Breathe*, the opposition between old Newfoundland and modern Canada resulting in the splintering of identity is represented through the Gothic motif of the Doppelgänger. The main character in Harvey's novel is Joseph Blackwood. Joseph's father moved from Bareneed to St. John's, and, as a result, Joseph is what the Bareneed residents – somewhat derogatorily – call 'a townie'. The name Harvey chose for his protagonist, Joseph Blackwood, is reminiscent of that of the father of Confederation and the first Premier of the province of Newfoundland: Joseph Smallwood. The only difference between the two is the Dark-part, which emphasises how much Newfoundland has changed since 1949. It refers to that which has been repressed, the creatures that "dwel[l] […] in the darkest depths of the sea" (471), the "black smear inside [Jessica's] mouth" (76) or the "black humourless satisfaction bubbl[ing] up from [Josephs] heart" (191), and the many colours that have gradually been disappearing, only to be replaced by the monotonous grey and black. Joseph represents the community of Bareneed, or even Newfoundland as a whole. His alienation is double: it is personal ("What am I?") and familial. This isolation represents the destruction of Newfoundland's sense of self since the Confederation. As a townie, he is somewhere in-between Newfoundland and Canada. Though his roots lie in Bareneed, his manners are those of a city-man, influenced by mainstream Canada. He is "confused 'bout [his] intentions 'n whereabouts. Dat be da sign o' a townie" (183). His uncertainty regarding his sense of self makes him an easy victim to the breathing disorder. His inner tension and split subjectivity are paralleled by his ambiguous status as a hero-villain.

As mentioned at the beginning of this section, *The Town that Forgot How to Breathe* is a postmodern Newfoundland *horror* Gothic, and, as argued by Robert D. Hume, the genre of the horror Gothic typically "attempts to involve [the reader] with the villain-hero protagonist" (286). Central to the figure of the Gothic hero-villain is his duality of nature. The hero-villain, who "necessarily bears the dual markings of both villain and victim" (Mulvey-Roberts 176), represents tension. He is the embodiment of "the contradictions ingrained in the society that produces him" (Cavallaro 2002, 49). Thus, Joseph, being a resident of St. John's, represents the tension between the distinct Newfoundland culture and the mainstream North American culture that pervades urbanized life. At the beginning of the novel, Joseph is presented as a friendly, likeable person with a natural smile and "[b]lue, clear eyes that could look right into you, without a trace of ill intention" (12). Going back to where his family's origins lie, however, his confusion grows, and the gap between the two parts of his identity widens. Accordingly, the tension

between good and evil within him is growing. James' rapid irritability, bursts of anger and flares of paranoia are exemplary of the hero-villain's unpredictable behaviour.[25] The stronger the breathing disorder's hold on him, the more Joseph resembles the stereotypical Gothic hero-villain, up to the moment where, as tradition dictates, he finds himself chasing an innocent heroine – Kim – in the darkness, copying Manfred's chase of Isabella in that first of Gothic literature's masterpieces, Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto*:

> A few steps along the lower road, she had stopped, hearing the snapping of branches and the sweep of footsteps over grass. She turned to see the shadow of a man following her, darting off the road and into the woods. Joseph. *Had he completely lost his mind?* He seemed to be stalking her like prey, about to strike. (TFB 287, emphasis added)

Throughout the novel, Harvey has included many references to Joseph's insanity, which, like his stalking Kim, is another allusion to Walpole's hero-villain. Madness, "a fundamental source of terror in Gothic literature,"[26] is one of the many factors which make Joseph the latest in a long line of Gothic (hero-)villains, from Walpole's Manfred and Radcliffe's Montoni to Lewis' Ambrosio:

> He might live as Claudia's ruined and mad lover, locked in the crawl space of the solar house and permitted to roam only at night, to haunt the oppressive forest with its rotting secrets […]. (143)

Another important – and equally ambiguous – figure in Harvey's postmodern tale of terror is Claudia Kyle. One could argue that this beautiful copper-haired woman represents the authentic Newfoundland past and its Irish heritage. She is said to be of "otherworldly composure" (357), which might be interpreted as a reference to the Celtic "domain of deities or supernatural beings,"[27] both good and bad, called the 'Otherworld', which is generally considered to be the Celtic variant of the hereafter. It is worth mentioning that Claudia's surname, Kyle, is of Celtic

[25] Mulvey-Roberts. *The Handbook of the Gothic.* Helen Stoddart's entry on the Hero-Villain (177).
[26] Mulvey-Roberts. *The Handbook of the Gothic*. Helen Small's entry on Madness (199).
[27] "Celtic World & Cultures." on *TimelessMyths.com*.

origins (generally believed to be derived from Scottish Gaelic). She is also a very folkloristic figure, since she bears a close resemblance to the Irish banshee, a female fairy figure who, though often described as an ugly hag, can also be breathtakingly beautiful, as is the case with Claudia: "She was of a singular monstrous beauty inconceivable in this world" (TFB 398). Furthermore, both Claudia and the figure of the banshee are usually dressed in white, this being the colour associated with the supernatural and the Celtic Otherworld. The banshee is said to sing the night before someone is about to die, and this is where things get muddled. Though a folkloristic figure, the banshee represents death, which, in connection with the purpose of Harvey's novel as an indictment against the loss of authentic Newfoundland culture, could be interpreted as the death of the old ways. As an omen of death, Claudia might then be said to represent modernity, technology and mainstream Canadian society. Moreover, as a herald of death, the banshee has a function similar to that of the *cu sidhe* (in Irish Gaelic; *cu-sith* in Scottish Gaelic), another Celtic harbinger of death. This creature is usually described as a huge, black[28] or green wolf-like hound: "'Twas da black dog. Someone were marked fer deat'" (415). This also explains Joseph's confusion when Doug refers to Claudia as a dog; Claudia and the dog are one and the same. This doubleness draws attention to Botting's explanation of the double in *The Handbook of the Gothic*:

> [T]he double, at one stage of individual development, is linked to a narcissistic insurance against death and associated with primitive ideas about the animism of objects and the omnipotence of thoughts; it subsequently becomes a 'harbinger of death' […]. (Botting 188)

When Joseph is picturing himself "humping away at Claudia like a maniac" (199) and thinking about giving her "a good lashing" (200), or when Claudia "trie[s] forcing her body through his" (382), we are witnessing a wish for a reconnection of the two selves, "whereby two distinct identities" try to become one again, in "the same body" (Edwards 134). It is an expression of the "desire to be re-united with a lost centre of personality" (Jackson 108) and of the longing to reverse the "splitting of the subject and the fragmentation of voices, bodies and selves" (Edwards 134). "She saw his face close to hers. She knew him. She did know him" (TFB 392). Their

[28] Campbell, John Gregorson. *Superstitions of the Highlands and Islands of Scotland*. (1900).

relation, whereby Claudia holds "an enchantment encapsulating erotic allure with spell-binding fascination" (Armitt 2000, 308) over Joseph, fits within the magical realist tradition.

Claudia Kyle seems to bear a close resemblance to the Gothic figure of the demon-lover, who, when female, is represented as a femme fatale figure who is usually a double of the protagonist.[29] The relationship between Claudia and James, and between what they represent (i.e. authentic Newfoundland culture versus modern mainstream Canadian culture) is a "life-threatening conflict between victimizer and victim, or what Fiedler calls 'their fatal encounter'" (Reed 2009, 16). Whereas traditionally, the roles of victimizer and victim are clearly defined against each other, Claudia and Joseph both fantasize about harming or killing the other. This blurring of roles – reinforced by Nakagawa, who argues that, "[i]n the Gothic, the demon lover appears as the hero-villain [i.e. Joseph]" (58) – is similar to what Craciun observes when it comes to the relationship between Cathy and Heathcliff in Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*:

> [A]s Peter Grudin argues in *The Demon-Lover*, '[a]s Catherine and Heathcliff exchange roles, it is she who assumes that of the demon-lover,' and this role exchange 'symbolizes the final dissolution of the barriers between insider and outsider' (142, 152). (129)

Similarly, both Claudia and Joseph take upon themselves the role of demon-lover. Moreover, Craciun mentions "Heathcliff's desire to be haunted by his lover" (129), which is reminiscent of Joseph, who feels that, "[w]hat [Claudia] needed was a good lashing, a fist wound with a belt hammering her awake, pounding until she was not only fully in this world again but larger than life, huge, twice as big as Joseph, so that she might crush Joseph efficiently" (200). The relationship between Claudia and Joseph, one of both sexual attraction and hate, of "[c]rush and then cuddle" (TFB 200), is a distorted and malfunctioning one, like that between Cathy and Heathcliff, and between Newfoundland and Canada. Nakagawa argues that the demon-lover embodies the "fundamental fears" and "the perpetual threats" its victims are exposed to (55-56), which, in light of Harvey's novel, would mean that he authentic Newfoundland spirit and the mainstream culture of modernity feel threatened by one another.

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[29] "Origins: Textual Characteristics of the Gothic." on *Resources.mhs.vic.edu.au*
Moreover, Ward (2009) describes the demon-lover as "a woman who brings death to many" (41), which supports my linking Claudia to the folkloristic figure of the banshee.

Harvey also gives us some hints of a connection between Claudia and Kim: "[A]re they one and the same? […] If they're fooling me, so help me God, I'll kill them both" (229). Kim might be seen as another double of Claudia's. Though not a Bareneed resident herself, she is in touch with her ancestry and heritage, witnesses of which are the Irish ballads – souvenirs of the past and of the Irish origins of many Newfoundlanders – she loves to sing (337, 352).

However, Claudia is not only connected to Joseph, Kim and the black dog. After the fire in the Critch house, Sergeant Chase finds the blackened body of a young girl called Jessica. She represents the ghost of the old Newfoundland culture, she is a sad ghost, and "a spirit is sad for a reason, and that reason was doubtlessly the fault of the living" (336). Because the living have brought electricity everywhere, it is no longer the telling of stories over candlelight that brings people together, but the wires "that connect the world for all the wrong reasons" (77). Because of this, Jessica is now forced to live in "building blocks in the shape of barns" (76), whose windows are illuminated by candles. As a figure situated between the worlds of the living and the dead, she resists classification and the laws of rationality. Thus, she is a source of horror.

Returning to Claudia and what she represents, one could argue, as mentioned above, that she is the epitome of the new, post-Confederation Newfoundland, or representative of the evil forces of urbanization, technology and industrialism that try to convert Newfoundland to mainstream Canadian culture. Because water represents the very essence of pre-Confederation Newfoundland (see below), she is depriving herself of water in an attempt to dry herself out:

> *No water must pass my lips. Not a drop of it.* She hoped that she was drying up inside, erasing every stain of moisture. The glare of the outdoors was too bright for her. (96)
> "No, no water," she pleaded. (392, emphasis not added)

However, even though Claudia is afraid of fish, which – as will be argued later on in this thesis – are, just like water, representative of Newfoundland's past, she could also be thought of as a personification of the old, pre-Confederation Newfoundland where Irish culture was dominant, who, after 1949, feels lost: "She felt so numb and rootless" (409):

> What else could it have been but a dream that had forced her to exist in a dangerous world where the climate changed and the people who became such an integral part of her were arbitrarily ripped away? (411)

Trying to bring her people back, she likes to manufacture little candle houses, which are an expression of her wish to return to the old ways. Thus, she presents Joseph, the townie who has become estranged from his ancestors' land, with a miniature of the Critch house: "The roof comes off. […] It's a *candle holder* for when the lights go out" (202, emphasis added). An interesting detail is that the old Scottish word "kylle", from which Claudia's last name, Kyle, is derived, meant 'candle', and that all family crests of the Scottish and Irish Kyles have one feature in common: the candle.[30] Thus, Claudia could also be argued to be a herald of death to the mainstream Canadian identity that has nearly smothered the flame of true Newfoundland identity. Like the little houses in which the candles burn brightly, Claudia carries within her a small memory of the rich culture and heritage of Newfoundland: she is pregnant. After all: this is a novel about the Newfoundland cultural r*enaissance*: "A sun inside an Earth" (TFB 376). Claudia, as a personification of post-Confederation Newfoundland, still has within her an other. In Claudia's pregnancy, we have a literal 'other within the self'.

Claudia is trying to overcome a trauma from the past, and, as mentioned earlier in this thesis, trauma can only be overcome by storytelling. Reminiscent of Blackmore's Newfoundland,[31] Claudia is "the trauma victim who must write the narrative of her past, so that she can reconstruct the experience and 'overcome' it" (Edwards 132):

> She could not help herself. Grasping the fountain pen, she pressed the tip against her sleeve and wrote in large flowing letters: *My gown is parchment. I wear it like a skin that tells my story by design*. (38, emphasis not added)

The trauma to be overcome here is that of the Confederation with Canada in 1949 and the loss of the distinct Newfoundland culture the Confederation brought with it. It is the trauma of a history

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[30] "Kyle Coat of Arms." on *KyleSociety.org*.

[31] Blackmore, G.C. "Sense of Place: Loss and the Newfoundland and Labrador Spirit." *Royal Commission on Renewing and Strengthening Our Place in Canada*. 2003.

that could have been, yet never will be. The ancestors, the people of the old (i.e. pre-Confederation) Newfoundland, as well as the sea creatures and the fish, serve as the repressed. This "return of the repressed" is a typically Gothic trope used to "articulate a trauma" (Edwards xxxiii), such as for instance the trauma of fragmentation of identity. Interesting here is that Harvey has chosen the ghosts of the dead to represent the repressed, because, as argued by Armitt, "[a]pparent death and the re-animation of the dead have been represented as most uncanny themes" (1996, 42).[32]

In his description of the concept of horror in *The Handbook of the Gothic*, Botting argues that "[h]orror dissolves a being's sense of definite identity" (185). "The sense of a dissipation of one's faculties and physical power, the vampiric draining of energy, in part explains why horror remains more difficult to dispel," Botting continues. "Horror is evoked by encounters with objects and actions that are not so much threatening as taboo […]. Horror appears when fears come a little too close to home" (185). Joseph, who represents Newfoundland, has been influenced by mainstream industrialized Canadian culture. As a townie (i.e. having lost his Newfoundland identity), he has become estranged from the ocean, the water and the life it represents. Every time the Bareneed residents are confronted with something which is ocean-related (or related to the unconscious), this is perceived as taboo. These confrontations can be as minor as a fish landing right in front of Joseph's feet, to an image as powerful as his daughter just standing there, "skin puckered as if she'd been in the tub too long, her shivering lips blue", "talking in rhythmic secretive whisper: 'Fish in the sea. Fish in the sea…'" (TFB 172). These encounters or confrontations result in the vampiric draining mentioned by Botting. Slowly but steadily, Joseph's sense of identity – in Botting's words – is being dissolved.

According to Rémi Astruc, a French authority on the grotesque, there are three motifs which characterise the grotesque: hybridity, metamorphosis, and doubleness,[33] all three of which have been taken up by Harvey in his Gothic novel. The first instance of the grotesque in *The Town that Forgot How to Breathe* is, of course, Newfoundland itself. The grotesque, Cassuto argues,

[32] Armitt only mentions this, however, to demonstrate some of what she calls Freud's failings.

[33] "[…] les motifs qui […] caractérisent [le grotesque sont] hybridité, métamorphose, redoublement." (Brochard on Astruc's *Le Renouveau du grotesque dans le roman du XXe siècle : Essai d'anthropologie littéraire* in *Pour une anthropologie littéraire : le grotesque moderne entre éthique & esthétique*.)

> …is commonly viewed opposite the normal, shunted off into a corner where it need not be seen. […] The grotesque is hard to apprehend because it doesn't fit neatly into a category. From distorted bodies to oddly twisted tree branches, it appears in the form of anomalies […]. (115)

Newfoundland can be said to be such an anomaly, and thus grotesque. "Neither one thing nor another, the grotesque is instead a distortion, conflation, or truncation that is simultaneously both and neither – and thus questions the image of the human [or the Newfoundlander]" (Cassuto 115). Present-day Newfoundland falls between Leach's grid (cf. Section I). It is no longer the authentic, pre-Confederation Newfoundland, yet it is still different from the rest of Canada, or North America. Newfoundland as it is today is a hybrid space.

Beville writes that "Gothic discourse can […] be seen as giving a voice to this dark side of what could be termed our collective unconscious" (42). The locus of this collective unconscious of the Bareneed residents is the ocean. According to Hogle, the Gothic is about "the recovery of a lost or hidden maternal origin," and "about the connection of abject monster figures to the primal and engulfing morass of the maternal" (10). The origin here is the ocean, which can also be connected to the image of the womb, the primal origin: the ocean is Newfoundland's (or Bareneed's) origin. For a long time, in the first half of the nineteenth century, Newfoundland thrived, and this was mainly because of its booming fishing trade. People were drawn by the prospects of wealth and, consequently, immigration peaked. Because of this, Newfoundland experienced much economic prosperity. The ocean, water and fish have been of vital importance to the establishment of the country's – or, since 1949, province's – identity. They have made Newfoundland to what it is, and now, the time has come for the ocean to draw the Newfoundlanders back to their former sense of identity. This is where the "abject monster figures" come in. *The Town that Forgot How to Breathe* fulfills its purpose in the sense that it "allows us […] to confront the roots of our beings […] and to define ourselves" (Hogle 16-17).

The importance of water to the Newfoundland identity is confirmed by the fact that the people suffering from the breathing disorder are thirsty. When Donna Drover asks people *what* she is, attention is drawn to her "dry lips" (211). The microwaves – the "stuff […] in da air dat slice da spirits ta pieces [and] keeps 'em frum da livin'" – "dry out da body [and] [m]ake a person wickedly t'irsty" (204-205). The ocean, the monsters it houses, water and fish will also serve as

uncanny reminders of Newfoundland's past and its distinct identity. Since Harvey's novel is set not in a "Gothic castle, with its awesome antiquity, vast distances and ramblings, deserted or ruined wings, damp corridors, unwholesome hidden catacombs, and galaxy of ghosts and appalling legends" (Lovecraft 25), but rather on an island in the North Atlantic, with steep cliffs, water throwing itself with force against protruding rocks just off the coastline, century-old barns packed with unused fishing gear, and a people who until not that long ago grew up with tales of the banshee, phantom ships and faeries, the elements of terror and horror in Harvey's Gothic are often related to water. One example of this in *The Town that Forgot How to Breathe* is when Robin meets Claudia's daughter, Jessica:

> Layers of weighty nets, hung above them to dry, cast a mesmerizing cobweb of light over their faces and the accumulation of mouldering fishing gear. Water dripped on the girl, but not on Robin. The girl simply stared and held up her hands, palms facing Robin, seemingly unaware that she was soaking wet, soaked to the bone. (TFB 75-76)

Water can be "a device of terror" in Gothic fiction (Vice 1). In *The Town that Forgot How to Breathe*, Harvey has decided to play with the contrast between water as an element of life (the ocean providing the community with fish) and water as an element of death (ghosts of drowned people; the flood). First of all, Vice argues, water is "a symbol of purification" (4), which we find back in Harvey's novel on several occasions. Most obvious is the tidal wave, which has purified Bareneed of the surplus of cars and power lines and "absolved [the residents] of their ills" (TFB 469). It is worth mentioning that, "[c]ontrary to expectations, not one boat had been lost or upturned, and fish were discovered overflowing in the holds of every sea vessel" (469). That which has been part of Newfoundland identity since the very beginning of European settlement has been preserved, and "[t]he residents of Bareneed returned to the sea," while the spirits were "once again safely sheltered at home" (470). The motif of the flood in *The Town that Forgot How to Breathe* is reminiscent of the Biblical flood sent by God in *Genesis*. Christian references in Harvey's postmodern Gothic are legion. The first reference we encounter in the novel is the epigraph: "…Thy way is in the sea, and thy path in the great waters, and thy footsteps are not known". This is an excerpt from the 77th Psalm, which deals with a man in distress; a man who turns to God but receives no sign or word of comfort. The man has to "consider the days of

old, the years of ancient times, […] thy wonders of old" (King James' Version Bible, Psalm 77). This corresponds to the Bareneed residents having to remember their tales of yore, their legends. The wider context of the 77th Psalm goes as follows:

> The waters saw thee, O God, the waters saw thee; they were afraid: the depths also were troubled. The clouds poured out water: the skies sent out a sound: thine arrows also went abroad. The voice of thy thunder was in the heaven: the lightnings lightened the world: the earth trembled and shook. Thy way is in the sea, and thy path in the great waters, and thy footsteps are not known. Thou leddest thy people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron.

This Psalm almost reads as a concise version of the final chapter of Harvey's novel, where the monsters from the deep come to the surface, where "[s]wirling waves of amber light expanded in descent, hovering in the sky above Bareneed," and where "[t]he sea seems to be… dividing" (433) and "[a]n energy force seems to be entering the divided sea" (434).

In *Genesis*, the flood is a purification, a cleansing, a re-creation through destruction. It is God's way of returning the Earth to its pre-creation state. In a similar way, the flood in Harvey's novel is a way of returning Newfoundland to its pre-Confederation state. It is meant to purify Bareneed (or Newfoundland) of its own "evil", i.e. the attributes of modernity and technology that have come into being since the 1949 Confederation; of the loss of what is often called Newfoundland mystique. This unique use of Biblical myth "serves to distance Newfoundlanders both from colonial exploiters and from the Canadian identity that [came with] Confederation" (Delisle 24). Along with this destruction, as mentioned above, comes (re-)creation. The flood is a "process of renewal and rebirth" (42). In order to highlight this, Harvey has chosen to imitate the Genesis creation narrative, spanning out the story over six days. "For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day" (Exodus, 20: 11). On the seventh day, life starts anew for the survivors of the Bareneed flood. Having survived the apocalyptic flood (and the many monsters that came with it), the Bareneed residents – through what Goldie, as quoted by Delisle, calls "an excursion into the wilderness" –

have gained "a new awareness of self and of [Newfoundland] nationality" (29). Newfoundland is once again a nation of survivors.[34]

The ocean, which brings the Bareneed residents back to their lost identity, gives them back the knowledge of their past. It is relevant here to refer to Dooge, who, in an article of his entitled *Water and Celtic Mythology*, talks about the Celtic Otherworld, which is "always connected by a body of water" as "a source of wisdom" (16). This is also true in *The Town that Forgot How to Breathe*, where the ocean – the body of water from which monsters and the dead rise – forces the people to remember and acknowledge their original Newfoundland identity. The Bareneed residents have forgotten who (or what) they are, and the ocean forcefully reminds them that they are a community rather than a number of random individuals living in the same town.

Probably *the* major motif in Harvey's novel is the use of fish. Fish are omnipresent and refer to the old Newfoundland as the fishing paradise of the world – Newfoundland's Irish name is *Talamh an Eisc* (i.e. Land of the Fish) –, to Irish (or Celtic) folklore and mythology, and to the Christian background of the Newfoundlanders. The fishing regulations prevent the Bareneed residents from fishing, which means that they are losing contact with what has, for so long, been a vital part of their identity. They are getting out of touch with a part of themselves, and thus they become estranged from the old way of life. The old Land of the Fish – *Talamh an Eisc* – becomes uncanny, something which used to be familiar but no longer is because it has been repressed. The inclusion of fish is a way of providing the novel with horror and grotesque visual images, since they appear in situations where the presence of fish is unnatural. Horror, as mentioned in *The Handbook of the Gothic*, "is evoked by encounters with objects [e.g. fish] and actions that are not as much threatening as a taboo" (185). It can be found in "the presentation of an animal" (189). In *The Town that Forgot How to Breathe*, fish are considered taboo, because they embody Newfoundland's lost past, and are too confrontational. Thus, they have been repressed. However, they do not remain beneath the surface: "Ye see da shimmerin'. […] It be da fish tryin' ta fly, me love" (15). The fish are a foreboding of what is to come. The many flying fish indicate that what is hidden beneath the surface, that which has been repressed (i.e. the trauma of Confederation and the loss of the pre-Confederation Newfoundland identity) – will not remain hidden for long and is bound to surface soon. It is worth mentioning that Kim, Joseph's

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[34] Blackmore, G.C. "Sense of Place: Loss and the Newfoundland and Labrador Spirit." (370). Also see epigraph to the introduction of this thesis.

wife, has a master's degree in marine biology, which, in its own way, is the study of what is hidden beneath the surface. Even more noteworthy is her academic focus on what she calls "bottom dwellers" (35).

In Christianity, the *Ichthus* symbolises Jesus Christ, Son of God, Saviour. In light of *The Town that Forgot How to Breathe*, this could be interpreted as the fish – as representation of past and heritage – being the Newfoundlanders' saviour. Moreover, many of the Apostles were fishermen, and when Jesus summoned them, he said to them: "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men" (Matthew 4:19). This is an interesting connection with the Bareneed residents, since all of the people who suffer from the breathing disorder (and, thus, from a loss of sense of self) used to be fishermen:

> They continued down the list to discover that all of the dead or suffering were unemployed. […] "Fishermen," said Nesbitt […] "Fishers of men," Thompson said quietly. (247-248)

In Celtic mythology, fish are associated with knowledge (e.g. the story of the *bradàn feasa* in the Fenian cycle, the third of the four Irish mythology cycles). In light of what Harvey's novel is about, we can safely assume that (one of) the function(s) of this omnipresence of fish is to refer to knowledge of one's past, one's heritage, family, and especially identity. Harvey's novel shows some interesting parallels with the ancient Celtic story of the Salmon of Knowledge. Dooge sees this story as a description of a "leakage of wisdom from the Otherworld to our human world" (17). According to the legend, there once was a Bard called Finegas, who spent seven years trying to catch the Salmon of Knowledge. Having finally caught the fish, he asked Finn, his disciple, to cook it and to eat none of it. However, when Finegas asks Finn afterwards whether he did eat from the fish, the latter answers that "it burnt me as I turned it upon the spit and I put my thumb in my mouth".[35] Thus, Finn has acquired ultimate knowledge. The knowledge in Harvey's story is more specific: it is the knowledge of one's past, through which comes knowledge of the self, of one's true identity: "Me name's Eileen Laracy, 'n I knows evertin' 'bout dese parts" (197). The Salmon of Knowledge is represented in *The Town that Forgot How to Breathe* by "da shimmerin'," the sea monsters, the dead bodies and all things that come from the ocean. Harvey

[35] "The Boyhood of Finn Mac Cumhal." on *Luminarium.org*.

has, however, gone even further, and has chosen to also invert the principle of gaining knowledge through the – metaphorical – Salmon of Knowledge, bringing in the grotesque in order to heighten the Gothic effect. Whereas in the Irish myth, there is only talk of a fish being eaten by a man (i.e. a fish head entering a man's mouth), we not only find the same grotesque visual image in *The Town that Forgot How to Breathe,* but also the opposite. This is to emphasise the contrast between Finn and the Bareneed residents: while the first possesses ultimate knowledge, the latter lack the most basic knowledge; knowledge of who they are. This reversion brings with it horror and grotesqueness, for instance when Robin catches her first fish:

> Flesh-coloured fluid seeped from the sculpin's wide mouth. A solid object began edging out as he wiped his fingers on his pants – a flesh-coloured sculpted orb, topped with something that resembled hair, matted in mucousy clumps. […] a small doll's head, the chipped lids lifting shifting open, black eyes staring up at them in surprise. Painted porcelain lips cracked in a harrowing smile. (66)

Furthermore, when we are confronted with examples of fish entering or coming out of people's mouths, it is always presented as some grotesque, vile act of perversion:

> Jessica coughed […], her head jerking down. A beam of bright orange light flashed between Jessica's lips, strobing deep-orange brilliance across the grass. Again, Jessica coughed, retching breathlessly, her face straining, her eyes bulging […] as the orange glow shuddered against her lips. The flickering tail of a fish. Jessica gagged for a long steady time before the orange fish slipped freely from her mouth, thumping onto the grass, where it flopped around, glowing like muted fire illuminating the blades of deep-green grass. (260)

> [A] bearded man's pale-green face illuminated by faint moon-light. Two ashen hands held up what appeared to be a fish as the man stretched open his mouth to an *inconceivable* width. Turning his head in profile, he slid the head of the fish between his lips, *vigorously ramming it down his throat* with the butt of his palm. (75, emphasis added)

These are instances where the demonic grotesque comes into play, in these "bizarre combinations of human and animal forms" (Quigley 1995, 24). Heads within heads are a strange type of physical deformity. The fish – symbol of the authentic Newfoundland identity – slipping from Jessica's mouth in the first quote reflects the loss of a sense of identity. The orange colour, as will be argued below, refers to heritage and lineage. The second passage can be read as an instance of foreboding, warning us that the old way of life and the knowledge and sense of identity that come with it – represented by the fish – will enter the lives of the Bareneed residents again, *by force* (i.e. the flood). Moreover, these scenes are reminiscent of Uncle Doug, who hums an old Irish ballad about a "lively yet dead" man with salmon in his head when Robin is lying in the hospital (TFB 267). Another example of a shocking visual image is the decapitated head of Kevin Pottle spewed from the albino shark (137) – a perversion of the biblical story of Jonah. Jonah tried to escape the presence of God by ship. A terrible storm rages, and Jonah sees that the only way to calm the storm and save his shipmates is for him to be thrown overboard. He is saved because a huge fish – or whale – swallows him up. This story mirrors the events in *The Town that Forgot How to Breathe*. The Bareneed residents, by turning towards electricity and modernity and mainstream Canada, have turned their back on *Talamh an Eisc*. Newfoundland, like God, is calling up a storm over them, and the only thing that can save them is returning to the life they had before modernization, which means a life that revolves around fishing. Fish here are literally "Saviours". This motif of people coming out of fish is not only reminiscent of the biblical story of Jonah, but also of that other great Newfoundland novel, Michael Crummey's *Galore*. This motif symbolises the recurrent theme that can be found not only in Christian literature, but also in Irish[36] and Newfoundland folklore[37]: the theme of resurrection. Thus, Harvey is alluding to the Newfoundland cultural rebirth or r*enaissance*. The connection between fish and (re)birth is also apparent when "[f]rom one [fish] shot a flow of fluorescent amber eggs, from the other a jet stream of milky-white sperm" (391). This is an even more obvious reference to the Newfoundland renaissance, because here, the reader is witness to the rebirth of Jessica, who, as mentioned earlier, is the epitome of *Talamh an Eisc*.

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[36] E.g. the Celtic Cauldron of Rebirth.

[37] Michael Crummey, author of *Galore*, in "Whale of a Tale", an interview with Lee Ferguson for CBC News: "There's this theme of resurrection that runs through all of Newfoundland stories and Newfoundland folklore."

As mentioned by Pocius in *Folklore and the Creation of National Identities*, "a cultural awakening began in [Newfoundland]" during the 1970s, which is "much like the waves of romantic nationalism that characterized so many small nations in the 19th and 20th centuries" (n. pag.). This is where folklore comes in. Nationalism looks at what makes one region or nation unique, and folklore is the perfect means through which national identity can be formed. Thus, Harvey has drawn extensively from Newfoundland folklore, and, when reading Lovecraft's *Supernatural Horror in Literature*, one stumbles upon an interesting parallel between Harvey's postmodern Newfoundland Gothic and Irish supernatural horror:

> Ghost and fairy lore have always been of great prominence in Ireland […]. Whilst on the whole more whimsically fantastic than terrible, such folklore […] contain[s] much that falls truly within the domain of cosmic horror. (85-86)

Having, in the beginning of this section, dealt with the parallels between Harvey's postmodern Newfoundland Gothic and Punter's definition of Irish and Scottish Gothic, it is relevant to take a closer look at the "Celtic" or "Irish" character of Harvey's novel. References to Irish and Celtic folklore and mythology are legion in *The Town that Forgot How to Breathe*. There is talk of witches, faeries, sea monsters and mermaids, references to banshees, etc., all of this embedded in a novel full of Irish ballads. By implementing elements of Irish legends and Newfoundland folklore in his novel (such as, for instance, the *cu sidhe*, or the motif of fish giving birth, as it were, to people), Harvey is putting himself forward as candidate for greatest writer of the Newfoundland cultural revival. Although he is less pessimistic about the possible loss of a truer, more authentic Newfoundland identity, Crummey too connects place with identity, as Harvey does:

> I'm not implying, 'Oh, we've lost the real Newfoundland,' or anything like that, but I do feel like there was something in that oral culture that was incredibly rich, is incredibly rich, and has made Newfoundlanders what they are. And the more of that that disappears, the less we'll know who we are. (Crummey in "Whale of a Tale.")

In *The Town that Forgot How to Breathe,* Harvey does not deal with what Clery in *The Cambridge Companion to Gothic Fiction* calls "natural horror" (23), but is rather preoccupied with what *The Handbook of the Gothic* identifies as "the supernatural" (241),[38] or that which Lovecraft calls 'supernatural horror'. Defined by Bloom as "all those areas above or beyond the material realm, [in which exist] fantastic creatures and demonic forces which rule and direct our physical existence" (241), the supernatural is omnipresent in *The Town that Forgot How to Breathe*. Important here is that forces of the supernatural are able to "cross the divide between life and death" and "manifest themselves to human beings" (241). Thus, the supernatural creatures in Harvey's Gothic – for which he has drawn from Celtic folklore – form a link between the modernized present which has fractured the identity of the Bareneed residents – "What am I?" – and the more authentic Newfoundland fisher folk past.

It is important to note that there are two types of supernatural or horror creatures in *The Town that Forgot How to Breathe*. These two types of creatures largely correspond to what Armitt has termed ghosts of magical realism on the one hand and the phantom of Gothic literature on the other. Ghosts of magical realism "are simply 'there', […] giving testimony to the voices of those whom society has silenced […] but rarely the primary focus of the mystery of a text" (2000, 315). When Armitt uses the words "simply 'there'," I will interpret this as opposed to the (passive-)aggressiveness of some other monsters and sea-creatures – such as the hydra, who "snatched [Tommy's boat] off its course," catapulting it toward Bareneed (428) – which I will then claim to be Gothic phantoms. An example of a 'ghost' of magical realism would be the mermaid Doug witnessed. In no way aggressive, she was 'just there', calling out his name, thus actively 'giving voice to' the silenced origins of the island nation. Conversely, the Gothic phantom – the term 'phantom' here can be interpreted very broadly as monsters or supernatural creatures in general – "*is* that central source, manifesting a secret that disturbs, even chills" (315). An example of the Gothic phantom would be the ambiguous figure of Jessica, who now seems sympathetic, then threatening and dangerous. She is the central source, representing both the authentic Newfoundland spirit (cf. candlelight, above) and the new, urbanized and modernized Newfoundland (cf. the orange fish slipping from her mouth, above). She is the manifestation of a secret that "chills" (315) even literally:

[38] Mulvey-Roberts. *The Handbook of the Gothic.* Clive Bloom's entry on the Supernatural (241).

> [Donna saw Jessica] out of the corner of her eye […]. Her face was pearly and mottled green and her buried-blue lips grimaced in a misshapen, bloated way. The vision sent a shuddering chill through Donna. (19)

The pivotal creature to discuss, however, is the albino shark. As a ghost of magical realism, the albino shark is "part of the real" yet foreign to it (Armitt 307). Its colouring has made one of Newfoundland's familiar sights un-familiar, uncanny. Biologically a big fish, the albino shark can be seen as a representation of Newfoundland; it is the perfect symbol for what the Irish call *Talamh an Eisc*. When Harvey writes that "[l]ife drained out of it. Colour, too" (163), he is describing the post-Confederation process of modernization, urbanization and homogenization. Furthermore, it becomes clear that the shark is not an actual albino, but rather a ghost shark. "Weren't white first. […] It turned white *when dey beat it*" (136, emphasis added). Having voted – with only a small majority – *for* a Confederation with Canada, Newfoundlanders are partly responsible for their own loss of colour, for the loss of the authentic Newfoundland culture, and for their ensuing loss of a sense of self. As will be argued later on in this thesis, the shark's "spreading a large pink stain" (195) – sharks' blood is red, not pink – is a way of bringing back colour to the community; it is a way of giving voice to the silenced origins of Newfoundland.

Having taken a closer look at one of the ghosts of magical realism in *The Town that Forgot How to Breathe*, it is important to look at exactly what made the genre of magical realism such a relevant one to Harvey. Of particular interest to the magical realist in *The Town that Forgot How to Breathe* is D'haen's notion of the 'ex-centric', which, "in the sense of speaking from the margin, from a place 'other' than 'the' or 'a' center," he considers to be "an essential feature of that strain of postmodernism we call magic realism" (194). Since

> … the privileged center discourse leaves no room for a 'realistic' insertion of those that history – always speaking the language of the victors and rulers [in Newfoundland's case, Canada] – has denied a voice, such an act of recuperation can only happen by magic or fantastic or un-realistic means. (D'haen 197)

Magical realism, thus, allows writers "to speak on behalf of the ex-centric and unprivileged" [i.e. that of the Newfoundlanders] (195). Consequently, *The Town that Forgot How to Breathe* allows

for an “emancipation” of the Newfoundlanders, who are “traditionally excluded from the ‘privileged centers’” of Canadian national history and North American culture (200). This process of ‘centering’ and ‘de-centering’ is an expression of the “political consciousness-raising powers” of the genre (202). Thus, the combination of social criticism and a wish to bring the ‘ex-centric’ to the center makes the genre of magical realism a very attractive one to Harvey, who, through this novel, is presenting the world with his indictment against the marginal position of Newfoundland in Canadian national history and present-day Canadian society:

> It was always interesting to read about how mainlanders got everything all arsed-up about Newfoundland. Uppity snobs, most of them, looking down on the dumb Newfs. (TFB 214)

In *The Cambridge Companion to Gothic Fiction*, Punter argues that the best way of implementing folklore in the Irish and Scottish – and, as has been explained above, the Newfoundland – Gothic is by means of “local knowledge”, which can be seen as a combination of song, the use of local dialect – in this case Newfinese, most obviously found in Eileen Laracy’s speech –, and the inclusion of elements of “folklore and legend” (2011, 108), such as the black crow superstition; one for sorrow, two for mirth (TFB 10). After having dealt with the monsters and mythological creatures in *The Town that Forgot to Breathe*, a closer look needs to be taken at that part of “local knowledge” that is music. In his novel, Harvey has invested Irish ballads – Irish, because they refer to the Newfoundland heritage and the Irish ancestry of its inhabitants – with a healing power, because they “prompt[…] memories [and] inspire[…] recollections” (338). Healthy people – i.e. people who do not suffer from the loss of a sense of self and the breathing disorder that is the physical manifestation of this crisis of identity – like Doug Blackwood and Kim Blackwood are familiar with Irish ballads such as “In Dublin’s Fair City”, “Danny Boy”, or “When Irish Eyes Are Smiling”. Singing, Kim is healing Joseph:

> At first, [the sound] resembled an extremely faraway ting or tinkle. Glass against glass. An audible glimmer of light. While his ears focused on the sound, and his eyes were drawn back from the blackness, he determined that the sound was not glass against glass

> at all, but the high melodic chirping or what he thought might be a miniscule flying creature. [The sound] called to him, beckoned him back through solemnity. (336)

Apart from these Irish ballads, Harvey has also included one Newfoundland song in his novel, "Bury Me Not in da Deep Deep Sea," which according to Gregory is "a local adaptation of the cowboy lament *Bury Me Not On the Lonely Prairie*" (18).

Besides music, colour too plays a significant role in the preservation of the Newfoundland spirit. Throughout the novel, it becomes clear that colour is of vital importance to the Bareneed residents' health. It serves as a link with past, heritage, culture and the Otherworld, and stands in direct contrast to the grey of the satellite "disc[s] intrud[ing] upon the old architecture" (180) and to the black of the dark sea or the black of the *cu sidhe*, herald of death. Grey is the 'colour' of post-Confederation Newfoundland, of modernity and urbanization. "Donna blandly regarded the colours. They were less vibrant than she remembered, losing their essence, fading toward grey" (18). When Joseph is beginning to be affected by the breathing disorder, he is staring at a phone: "Why? It was a phone like any other. It was grey. Hadn't it been blue?" (146). Similarly, Tommy, when at the hospital, is watching the other people and their auras: "Those with grey light hanging near them saddened Tommy for they knew nothing of what they had become, what they had allowed to leave them" (312). This stands in direct contrast to Dr. Thompson's patio, which is "edged with flower boxes on three sides":

> [C]lusters of teeny purple lobelia, yellow marigolds, the little faces of light-blue and white pansies staring up at him, red petunias not fully bloomed even in June, but they'd last into the fall, as would the pink impatiens. They were strong – unlike the pansies, delicate creatures. (84)

It is worth mentioning that pansies are widely regarded as the flowers of remembrance, union and togetherness. Thus, the fact that the pansies are the most delicate of Dr. Thompson's flowers is indicative of the loss of community feeling in Bareneed and of the lost lineage.

Another way in which attention is drawn to the significance of colour is through the description of the sea creatures and monsters. Since these represent the authentic Newfoundland identity, they are very colourful:

> [Doug witnessed] a huge tail, slim and *green* with broad *bluish* scales, slide under the water. […] The sleek *orange* hair wet and dripping, the wide adoring *brown* eyes, the face of an angel and the bare breasts shimmering with cascading water in the sun. The creature raised her *coral-pink* supple arms above her head and curved her spine, diving backward, her *turquoise* tail rearing out of the water and then flicking into the air as she disappeared […]. (154, emphasis added)

Having established the importance of the black versus colour dichotomy in Harvey's novel, it is relevant to take a closer look at some of the colours that have been used, more specifically the colours pink, white, green and amber. "The soldier could see things, just like Robin. The full glow of his pink colours told her as much. They were the same shade of pink that had been around the old woman who took the lilacs" (155). This passage demonstrates that pink is the colour of those who are *not* 'out of touch' with their heritage and with the so-called 'true' Newfoundland culture. The colour reminds one of the iconic Pink, White and Green,[39] Newfoundland's older and unofficial flag, now "seen as an authentic Newfoundland product associated with both nativism and independence. It has become a badge of pride, defiance and identity, and is probably more widely flown now than at any time in the past" (Hiller 131). Like the colour amber (cf. below), the Pink, White and Green refers to the origins of the island nation:

> The pink the rose of England shows, / The green St. Patrick's emblem bright, / While in between the spotless sheen / Of Andrew's cross displays the white. / Hail the pink, the white, the green, / Our patriot flag long may it stand / Our Sirelands twine their emblems trine / To form the flag of Newfoundland.[40]

Moreover, Claudia, who has been argued to be the personification of the unique Newfoundland culture and identity, is usually dressed in white, and is said to have pink eyelids and green eyes (57). This subtle allusion to the Pink, White and Green supports the connection between Claudia

[39] Though always flown with the green at the hoist, this flag is widely known as the "Pink, White and Green".

[40] *The Flag of Newfoundland*. Hymn written by bishop Michael F. Howley around 1900 (see Hiller 2007). Though popular, this story is historically untrue, and the flag's origins lie elsewhere.

and the island. A much stronger reference would be the albino shark, another symbol for Newfoundland (cf. above), who, bleeding, causes a large pink, rather than the usual dark red, stain (195). This instance of foreboding shows that the authentic Newfoundland identity will find its way back to Bareneed.

Having discussed the colour pink, it is worthwhile to take a look at the colours of the Pink, White and Green. There are several figures in *The Town that Forgot How to Breathe* that are associated with the colour white, all of which are connected to the authentic Newfoundland or its cultural origins. There is the albino (i.e. white) shark, who brings pink back to Bareneed, and Claudia Kyle, who, usually dressed in white (TFB 37, 38, 188), bears a close resemblance to the Irish folkloristic figure of the banshee. Furthermore, when Kim feels like she needs to take a break from sitting at her computer, writing academic papers, she "grab[s] a white T-shirt and a fairy-tale book" (111). In other words, when Kim trades the modern rational world of academics for the world of folklore and superstition, she feels that white is more appropriate, because, as mentioned earlier in this essay, white is the colour associated with the Celtic Otherworld and with the supernatural in general.

Green is probably one of the most mentioned colours in *The Town that Forgot How to Breathe*. This is because it is "the colour of fairies" (334), and thus refers to the more folkloristic pre-Confederation Newfoundland rather than the rationalized Canadian Newfoundland. Further, it is *the* colour of the most dominant group of immigrants to the island – the Irish. The mermaid Doug witnessed is described as having a green tail, and Eileen Laracy, one of Bareneed's oldest residents, who is still very much aware of her 'true' identity, is wearing a "green and white striped dress" and "green bandana" (9) throughout the entire novel. Moreover, when matters are coming to a head and the army has to go and "make certain the residents are in good health," they have to put a sticker on the doors of the healthy residents: "[…] a green symbol of three thick waves stacked atop one another" (293-294). Here, we have a connection between health and two motifs which have been argued to be essential to the authentic Newfoundland: water and the colour green.

A final detail pertaining to the Irish heritage in Newfoundland is the fact that in Harvey's novel, there is talk of "the blaze of their ancestors, lineage that trailed after them like a stream of unbroken dusty amber" (10). The colours amber and orange (cf. the orange fish slipping from Jessica's mouth, TBF 260) represent lineage, ancestry, and a connection with Newfoundland's

forgotten past. In going with amber (or orange), Harvey has chosen the only colour that the Newfoundland Tricolour does not have in common with the flag of Ireland.[41] Moreover, amber is the colour of eternity: when people "trap something in amber", they are trying to preserve it for perpetuity.

[41] The original Tricolour of Ireland is green, white and gold or amber, as opposed to the current green, white and orange.

CONCLUSION

"We have joined a nation that we do not know, a nation that does not know us. The river of what might have been still runs and there will never come a time when we do not hear it."(p.560)

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Wayne Johnston, The Colony of Unrequited Dreams

The Town that Forgot How to Breathe is an excellent example of how "Western civilization's progressive secularization [can create] a locus of terror, an empty crypt haunted by the ghosts of spiritual entropy" (Voller 9). To that spiritual entropy, Harvey has added a loss of historical and communal identity. In his postmodern Gothic novel, the ghosts of the past rise and revolt against the many constructions that have been imposed upon them and their land since the Confederation of 1949, which brought with it secularization and urbanization. These constructions are the direct consequences of modernity and industrialization: technology (i.e. cars, electricity and microwaves), legal constraints (i.e. fishing regulations), or even what Rosemary Jackson calls "the ego as a cultural construction" (89). The latter means that those people who have become out of touch with their Newfoundland heritage (e.g. "townie" Joseph) are the ones most likely to suffer from the breathing disorder, which ultimately leads to a loss of sense of identity: "What am I?" When one reads Joseph as the incarnation of modernized, urbanized and 'mainstream-ized' Newfoundland, then the existential question can be rephrased as: "What are we? A province? A nation? Canadian?" In order for them to regain their identity – both individually and as a community or nation – the Newfoundlanders need to remember and share their story.[42] Interesting in this respect is the theory of narrative identity, defined by McAdams and McLean as "a person's internalized and evolving life story, integrating the reconstructed past and imagined future to provide life with some degree of unity and purpose" (233). This is what Harvey has managed to achieve in *The Town that Forgot How to Breathe*.

[42] Blackmore, G.C. "Sense of Place: Loss and the Newfoundland and Labrador Spirit." (2003).

In a first section, this thesis has attempted to explain some aspects of the postmodern Gothic and of magical realism that are of relevance to the purpose of Harvey's novel. A closer look has been taken at the links between aforementioned genres and anxieties of the self, and due attention has been paid to notions and concepts such as the grotesque, horror and trauma.

A second section has been devoted to a textual analysis of *The Town that Forgot How to Breathe*. It has been argued that the breathing disorder and the ensuing loss of a sense of self of the Bareneed residents is a reflection of Newfoundland's ambiguous position after the 1949 Confederation. By comparing the 1707 Union between England and Scotland with the 1949 Confederation between Canada and Newfoundland, it has been shown that, like those of Scotland and Ireland, Newfoundland's history is one of "What if?". Thus, it has been considered worthwhile to compare *The Town that Forgot How to Breathe* with the Scottish Gothic and the Irish Gothic, and, consequently, Harvey's novel has been defined as a postmodern *Newfoundland* horror Gothic. The many Irish – and, to some extent, Scottish – immigrants have left their stamp on the island, and it is because of this that Harvey has included many references to Celtic and Irish folklore and mythology, believing that these are more inherent to Newfoundland than the present-day mainstream Canadian culture. These references include Irish ballads, figures of Celtic folklore such as the banshee or the *cu sidhe*, and the Fenian story of Finn and the Salmon of Knowledge. Further, the protagonist, Joseph Blackwood, has been linked to the historical figure of Joseph Smallwood, so-called father of Confederation and first Premier of Canada's tenth province. Joseph Blackwood has been analysed as a Gothic hero-villain, which makes him the latest in a long line of hero-villains such as Walpole's Manfred or Brontë's Heathcliff. It has been argued that the ambiguous figures of Claudia Kyle and her daughter, Jessica, can be said to represent either pre- or post-Confederation Newfoundland, which emphasises Newfoundland's splintering of self. Further, close attention has been paid to the motifs of water and fish, the latter of which has been linked to both Celtic mythology and Christianity, two belief systems that have had a considerable impact on the authentic, pre-Confederation Newfoundland. Parallels have been drawn between the Bible – the stories of Noah and Jonah in particular – and *The Town that Forgot How to Breathe*, and the supernatural monsters Harvey has chosen to include in his postmodern Gothic – in particular the albino shark, symbolic of Newfoundland – have been dealt with. The final pages of this thesis have been devoted to the importance of the black and white versus colour dichotomy, and to the link between colour, health and knowledge of one's ancestry

and origins. By investing the colours pink, white, green, amber and orange with meanings of knowledge, origin and ancestry, Harvey has once again stressed the importance of Newfoundland's Irish origins and highlighted the ties between Ireland and the island of Newfoundland, *Talamh an Eisc*.

With *The Town that Forgot How to Breathe*, Kenneth J. Harvey has given the island of Newfoundland a sense of new-found identity and purpose by writing the story of its post-Confederation regression into a place of hybridity and ambiguity and of its successive overcoming of said trauma:

> And, for generations to come, grandmothers and grandfathers sat their grandchildren upon their knees and told the story of the time when there was an absence of spirits. They told to show themselves. They told the story of the time that the people of Bareneed forgot how to breathe, until they came to recognize who they truly were and, through the turmoil of calamity, *reclaimed* their lives as their blessed own. (TFB 470-471, emphasis added)

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SUMMARY IN DUTCH

Deze thesis betoogt dat Kenneth J. Harvey in zijn roman *The Town that Forgot How to Breathe* (2003) gepoogd heeft Newfoundlanders te waarschuwen voor de toenemende homogenisering van het Noord-Amerikaanse continent sedert de Confederatie van Newfoundland met Canada in 1949 en het daarbij horende verlies van de typische Newfoundland cultuur en identiteit. In deze hedendaagse horror-Gotische roman geeft Harvey uitdrukking aan dit conflict op het niveau van het individu. Wie zich niet langer bewust is van zijn oorsprong – m.a.w. wie te veel beïnvloed is door de homogene Canadese mainstreamcultuur – krijgt te maken met ademhalingsproblemen. Later weten ze – net als Newfoundland – niet meer wie of "wat" ze zijn.

In het eerste deel van de thesis worden enkele aspecten van de postmoderne Gotische roman en van het magisch realisme geduid die relevant zijn voor Harvey's roman, waaronder het verband tussen deze genres enerzijds en de versplintering van de eigen identiteit anderzijds, alsook concepten zoals het groteske, horror en trauma.

Het tweede deel van de thesis biedt een tekstuele analyse van *The Town that Forgot How to Breathe*. De Confederatie wordt vergeleken met de Unie van 1707 tussen Engeland en Schotland, en vanwege de vele gelijkenissen tussen Newfoundland enerzijds en Schotland en Ierland anderzijds wordt het relevant geacht om aandacht te besteden aan de parallellen tussen Harvey's roman en de Ierse en Schotse Gotische roman. De Ierse immigranten hebben een grote invloed gehad op de ontwikkeling van het eiland, en de vele verwijzingen naar Keltische folklore en mythologie (van Ierse ballades en de banshee tot het verhaal van Finn en de Zalm der Kennis) reflecteren dit. Na een grondige analyse van de hoofdfiguren – Joseph, Claudia en Jessica – worden de motieven van vis en water behandeld. Ook wordt de symboliek in *The Town that Forgot How to Breathe* vergeleken met de Bijbelse verhalen van Noah en Jona. Ten slotte wordt aandacht besteed aan het belang van kleur voor de gezondheid van de Bareneed bewoners, en wordt via kleurensymboliek nog een laatste verband gelegd tussen Ierland en Newfoundland. *The Town that Forgot How to Breathe* geeft Newfoundlanders een kans het trauma van de Confederatie in 1949 te boven te komen en hun authentieke identiteit te herwinnen.