Uncanny Water: Entangled Bodies Of Water In Fictions Of The Northern Atlantic Littoral

Caroline Emily Rae

A thesis submitted to the School of English Literature, Language & Linguistics

in fulfilment of the requirements

for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

March 2022

ABSTRACT

My thesis calls for representations of the Northern Atlantic Ocean that offer a nuanced understanding of this ocean as a body of water upon which myriad other bodies depend. The anthropogenic climate emergency is stressing the urgent need to centre the oceans in our collective consciousness so as to ensure their – and, by extension our – continued survival. Representations of the Northern Atlantic have been regulated and controlled by western nations who have utilized it to further the interests of capitalism and colonialism. Reorienting ourselves toward this space, so as to better care for it, requires representations that are not based upon human mastery and power – but how can this be done without claiming to speak for the nonhuman and in ways that acknowledge our own situated and contingent position as humans? I assert that littoral fictions provide a means through which the ocean can be imaginatively salvaged. I identify an area I term the "Northern Atlantic Littoral", namely Eastern Canada and the western Atlantic coast of the U.K. Fictions from these rural, liminal littoral communities offer embodied representations of the Northern Atlantic Ocean based in lived experiences and cultivate understandings of this space as complex and nuanced, and the liminal position of these spaces make them ideally placed to negotiate the borders between habitable and unhabitable spaces, and the limitations of knowledge that run alongside this. I offer "uncanny water" as a conceptual tool for reading these oceanic fictions of the Northern Atlantic Littoral. I identify resonances between the uncanny's continuing referentiality and the notion that feminist transcorporeality interrelates the subject into networks of materiality which extend across time and space in unknowable ways. Both transcorporeality and the uncanny work against the conceit of the individual through the dissolution of boundaries, and, crucially, both require a suspension of assumptions of the self as whole, discrete and impermeable. I assert that uncanny water engages in processes of mimesis that work to actively reveal the sense of mastery and control implicit in dominant epistemologies of the Northern Atlantic Ocean, before then transforming this into a more relational and generative understanding of bodies as implicated in the being and becoming of others. In creating uncanny moments of displacement and uncertainty, these fictions harness the affect produced to reveal human/oceanic interconnections and foster a sense of responsibility and compassion toward the ocean. Uncanny water is consequently a particularly potent literary tool for destabilizing anthropocentric privilege, and I assert that iterations of uncanny water can create a transoceanic milieu that shifts constructions of subjectivity away from national and terrestrial boundaries to one more akin to the fluid and relational nature of bodies of water.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

CONTENTS PAGE

CONCLUSION

INTRODUCTION

TRACING UNCANNY WATER IN THE NORTHERN ATLANTIC LITTORAL

~ David Griffing Johnson, '[Joseph Hutchins] Colton's illustrated & embellished steel plate map
of the world on Mercator's projection'
(1854)

Observing a world map like the Mercator Projection, one notices how detail is ascribed to land, while the oceans remain a near-featureless blue – a blank canvas upon which countries and land have ostensibly been drawn. The land is mapped – it is epistemologically known and present – while the oceans remain largely un-mapped and associated epistemologies attached to these spaces become predicated upon land-based assumptions and understandings. The 'absences' of the ocean consequently betray a blatant terracentrism in the western psyche; that is the way in which place is ostensibly tied to *terra firma* in the western cultural imagination, to the point at which interior land-based interests are continually favoured over coastal, or even aquatic ones.[1] The repeated representations of the ocean as *aqua nullius* have permitted the ocean to remain largely "out there" in the cultural imagination, separate and abstracted

---

[1] This is a point John Gillis (2012) underscores in *The Human Shore: Seacoasts in History* in which he discusses how '[w]estern civilization is landlocked, mentally, if not physically' and that '[i]n the Western world we imagine human history as beginning and ending on terra firma' (7).

from human experience. However, the neglect of all things aqueous has become untenable; anthropogenic climate change and its accompanying impact is stressing, with increasing urgency and consistently, the inseparability of humans and the oceans. Terracentric representations that convey a clear separation between humans and bodies of water are no longer viable against the backdrop of rising sea levels, climate refugees and the wide-spread extinction of species. What is required is a paradigm shift that acknowledges – and accounts for – the interconnected and interdependent relationships that exist between bodies across land and sea. I posit that this shift in representation is an ethical imperative that acknowledges how power is deeply connected to who and what gets to be symbolized in the western cultural imagination.

Yet underpinning all of this runs a paradox – that even while our oceans have been cast as 'extra national', they have always nonetheless been controlled by richer western nations through (and across) which the project of modernity has been enacted (Cohen 2010, 657). With the Atlantic Ocean, this particular paradox is writ large. As the Mercator Projection so evocatively demonstrates, the Atlantic Ocean is the central focus, flanked by western powers. Developed in 1569 by the Flemish cartographer Gerardus Mercator, the Mercator Projection was the standard projection for maritime mapping.[2] Non-navigational use of the map increased across the centuries, and it eventually became the 'standard world map for nineteenth-century atlases and wall maps' (Monmonier 2004, 122-123). The dominance of the Mercator Projection as a world map prevailed for centuries and has only, in the latter half of the twentieth-century, been superseded by other projections.[3] Mercator's purpose in designing the map was for maritime navigation at a point when European nations were beginning to expand their empires. The centrality of European nations and the Atlantic Ocean on the map is hardly surprising. However, the issue with the Mercator Projection – and, indeed, almost all world map projections – is that it is not an accurate representation: not least of all since it is a flat projection of a spherical object. In the projection, areas further away from the equator appear enlarged and distorted; for example, North America appears larger than Africa, and Britain is the same size as Madagascar. The map has been critiqued for privileging western powers over developing nations, whose appearance on the map is diminished in comparison.[4] However, the usage of the Mercator Projection in classrooms and other spaces has meant that, for many in the west, it has become their 'mental image of the world' (123). That, in the 'mental image of the world', the Atlantic Ocean and its bordering western nations are the focal point speaks to the subtle ways in which western representations of the earth's geography have become etched into a cultural imaginary. It reveals the insidious and discursive ways power and meaning have been literally and figuratively attributed to these

---

[2] See John Parr Snyder (1993) *Flattening the Earth: Two Thousand Years of Map Projections* for a detailed description of the design and navigational usage of the Mercator Projection.

[3] Subsequent projections that are in more common circulation include the Robinson Projection, which was developed in 1963. See Mark Monmonier (2004) for more on this, and other projections.

[4] See Monmonier (2004) *Rhumb Lines and Map Wars: A Social History of the Mercator Projection* for a fuller discussion of the critiques launched against the Mercator Projection.

spaces; it is in the Mercator Projection's subsequent repetition and distribution – not least of all its placement in classrooms – that power and meaning become associated with who and what get to be symbolized.

The endurance of the Mercator Projection is a testament to how representations of the Atlantic have been continually constructed in relation to discourses of power. The Mercator Projection was created as a tool through which European powers could navigate the Atlantic and furnish their empires. Richer nations controlled many of the trade routes and coastal access, allowing them to transport goods, people and information between countries and expand their wealth. Over the centuries, as the Atlantic has been traversed to facilitate colonialism and the slave trade, it has become indelibly connected to the capitalist world system. In the twentieth-century, these power dynamics remained firmly embedded as many nations capitalised on their proximity to (and power over) the Atlantic to expand their territories out to sea and claim ownership of the subsea bed.[5] Maintaining control over discursive perceptions of the Atlantic is therefore in the best interests of wealthier western nations for whom this space is intimately tied to power and capital. Yet the capitalist control of the Atlantic Ocean and its representations comes at the expense and exploitation of human and nonhuman others. Whether through the horror and trauma of the slave trade, through practices such as extraction and overfishing, or merely through the waste produced through quotidian life in the twenty-first-century – the currents of power and meaning that circulate across and through the Atlantic are both disproportionately anthropocentric and nationalist in nature. In the context of the Atlantic Ocean, these currents are deeply embedded in the ocean's history, materiality and politics. Through reconfiguring representations of this space to show how bodies might be connected across and through it, these deep-seated currents of power and mastery are exposed, allowing them to be scrutinized, dismantled, and for the production of something different and more relational to arise.

How can the interconnected relationships between humans and the ocean be brought to the fore when, for so many people, knowledge and understanding of the oceans remain fundamentally abstracted and terrestrial? As humans we are limited in our knowledge of the oceans precisely because we cannot comfortably inhabit water – our embodiment prevents us from fully grasping the depths of what lies in the depths of our planet's oceans. While technological advancements in oceanic mapping and deep-sea diving have allowed humans to explore some of the most inaccessible depths of our oceans, our knowledge of these spaces is still relatively limited. According to the American National Oceanic and

---

[5] Elizabeth DeLoughrey (2007) gives an overview of the increasing territorialisation of the Atlantic in the twentieth century following the war when advanced maritime oceanographic technologies allowed for advancements in extraction and militarisation. When Harry S. Truman annexed Micronesia and tripled the territory of the United States, it triggered an international scramble to territorialize the oceans, which, in turn, led to the establishment of the 1982 U.N. Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) and the establishment of the Economic Exclusion Zone (EEZ) allowing all coastal sovereign states to extend their territories by the same 200 nautical miles as the U.S., and draw upon the resources that lie within this space (31-33).

Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) (2021), over eighty per cent of the oceans on the planet remain 'unmapped, unobserved, and unexplored' (n.p.). A strange contradiction emerges between a dependency upon the oceans for sustaining and retaining life, and a need to control, master and understand these spaces intimately. Even as humans endeavour to uncover more about our planet's oceans, under the pretence of illuminating our reliance upon them, a rhetoric of control still underlies the attempts to "map" and "explore" them. Water and the oceans have become something that need to be managed: a resource to be commodified, privatised, and controlled. Astrida Neimanis (2017) points out that our 'perverse antidote to waters out-of-control is *more* control and managerialism' (161; emphasis in original), highlighting the irony in attempts to contain and dominate water while anthropogenic changes are triggering the current crises. So how might these discourses be elided? In this thesis, I argue that for representations of the Atlantic Ocean to capture fully the entangled interdependencies of ocean/human relationships, they cannot replicate the rhetoric of mastery and control that has so far governed them. To prevent this, depictions of ocean/human relations must relinquish human exceptionalism and embrace the unknowable nature of the ocean.

My Ph.D. project attends to the absences on the map but in such a way that acknowledges their uncertainness and elusiveness as bodies of water. I propose such alternative representations of the Atlantic Ocean can be found in fictions that represent embodied and situated relationships with this body of water. Narratives that depict the material, historical and political interconnections shared between ,through,and across the ocean offer a way through which the mutual dependencies between bodies of water are exposed and illuminate how the hierarchies which have historically defined these might be effectively challenged and disrupted. I argue that fictions set in and around the littoral provide a means through which ocean/human interactions are writ large. In my definition of the littoral I draw on Michael Pearson's (2006) concept of the 'littoral society', which expands the littoral to encompass the lives of those who live on, and inhabit, 'the coastal zone, not just the beach' (355). For Pearson, people who are littoral often 'live on the shore but work on the sea' (356): he articulates a form of intimacy that means they are very much preoccupied with the sea, in the very sense that their lives and work are oriented around its currents, tides and nonhuman inhabitants. Defining the littoral within this framework is significant because, as John Gillis (2012) observes, coastal populations are increasing: a decade ago, more than 'half of the world's population living within one hundred miles of an ocean' with this number only set to increase (1).[6] Coastal communities now represent more than half the world's population so being attentive to these spaces is a pertinent issue – made even more so under the pressure of the climate emergency.

---

[6] This data is accurate as of Gillis' publication in 2012. Subsequent work on the demography of coastal areas by George A. Maul and Iver W. Duedall (2021) estimated a 12% increase in populations living within 100km of the coastal zone between 2017 and 2020 (n.p.).

Living on the coast does not necessarily equate to being littoral since there is a difference between 'living *on* coasts and living *with* them' (2; emphasis in original). Similar to Pearson, Gillis identifies a distinction between those who are occupied (in the very literal sense of the word) with the ocean and its movements and those who merely reside upon the coast and its surrounding zones. Gillis suggests that

> [t]hose who have learned to live with as opposed to just on coasts know that it is folly to believe that they are wholly in control of their own destiny. There are not fatalists, but they are respectful of tides and currents that set the tempo and scale of their world. (98)

Gillis outlines a respect for the sea found in shore folk, who acknowledge how the pace and rhythms of the sea very much inform their lived experience. For littoral peoples, the livelihoods and economies of their communities depend on a deep-rooted and embodied knowledge of the sea and they allow this to set the pace and structure of their lives. As Pearson (2006) outlines, the littoral demonstrates 'a *symbiosis* between land and sea' (355; emphasis mine). Pearson describes is a symbiotic relationship between shore folk and the ocean: I would extend this symbiosis to encapsulate all of the bodies that exist on the space of the shore and in the ocean itself; the nonhuman bodies – such as fish, crustaceons, plankton, seaweed, flaura and fauna, microbes and bacteria etc. – whose lives facilitate, sustain and comprise the space of the littoral. Considering the more-than-human assemblage that exists between shore folk, the ocean and the nonhuman bodies who live in and beside the ocean, mitigates any notion of human exceptionalism.

Learning to live better with our oceans is necessary under the increasing challenges presented by the climate emergency. Rising sea levels, tsunamis, flash flooding and super storms are felt most forcefully at the coast and so learning how to adapt and respond to these changes may prove vital. Turning to the embodied and lived epistemologies of littoral assemblages can facilitate a challenge of understandings of the oceanic imaginary that privilege land-based subjectivities and interests, and *centre* the ocean in the western cultural imagination. The shore is the space where land and sea meet and represents the convergence of the knowable and habitable space of land with the unknowable and uninhabitable space of the ocean. The shore signifies a boundary but (crucially) a mutable one; as Virginia Richter and Ursula Kluwick (2015) outline, 'the beach is a liminal zone. On the most basic level, its topography is determined by its shifting boundaries, the imaginary lines which divide the sea from dry land. As the tides advance and retreat, the shore is alternately claimed by, and indeed becomes the land and sea' (2-3). What Richter and Kluwick observe is how the shore is not fixed; it is defined by a tension between land and sea and alternately mediates between the two. The reality of the shore runs contrary to representations like the Mercator Projection where clean lines govern the purportedly neat border between land and sea. Instead, shores are spaces of constant negotiation between land and sea – between what is knowable and unknowable – they are the grounded space that quite literally shore up the limits of terrestrial epistemologies: I argue that we must understand how situated and contingent relationships with the ocean can and will transform hegemonic representations of the oceanic imaginary.

THE NORTHERN ATLANTIC LITTORAL

In this thesis I focus on fictions from an area I describe as the Northern Atlantic Littoral. These are fictions that from anglophone areas of Atlantic Canada and the westernmost parts of the U.K, including Cornwall and the west coast of Scotland. My rationale for examining these spaces arose from the beginnings of this project when I identified shared mythographies and tropes across fictions from these areas. These tropes were often connected to particular folklores that were set against contemporary anxieties about the socio-economic and ecological struggles of rural communities; for example, anachronistic figures of ancestral ghosts appeared as portends of the decline of particular communities, and monsters gestured toward inherent anxieties about identity or the climate emergency. I read the occurrence of these tropes in contemporary fictions from these spaces as emerging from their shared histories of migration across the Atlantic Ocean. Migrations between Atlantic Canada and the English "West Country" – including the Cornish coast – date as far back as the seventeenth-century when English ships partook in seasonal fishing that followed the migratory patterns of the cod to Newfoundland.[7] Scottish settlement in Canada also extends back to the seventeenth-century with the colonizing of Nova Scotia in 1622. Scottish migration to the Maritime Provinces peaked in the nineteenth-century, largely due to the booming fishery – which attracted wealthy lowland Scots – but also due to the Highland Clearances in the north of Scotland that saw highlanders emigrate to the Maritimes in search of their own farmland. Centuries of migration from Celtic areas of the U.K. to Atlantic Canada is still very much reflected in the language of the Maritimes. In Newfoundland, for example, the dialect is heavily influenced by the English "West Country" accent.[8] Likewise, Scottish Gaelic is still spoken by many across the region – particularly on Cape Breton Island where many institutions offer courses taught entirely in the language.[9] In fiction, Nova Scotian author Alistair MacLeod is recognised for referencing Scottish Gaelic in his work *No Great Mischief* (1999) which follows the story of the fictional MacDonald clan who emigrate from Scotland to Cape Breton in 1779. Similarly, Ann-Marie MacDonald's novel *Fall On Your Knees* (1996) features Gaelic in its account of four generations of the fictional Piper family who originate from Cape Breton. There is a shared Celtic history and culture that registers in the language and literature of Atlantic Canada and gestures to these centuries-old migratory patterns.

---

[7] The Newfoundland and Labrador Heritage (https://www.heritage.nf.ca/) website contains further information on migratory patterns to and from this province.

[8] Further information about the Newfoundland dialect can be found on the Newfoundland and Labrador Heritage website, which charts the history of migration and speculates at the impact this has had on dialect. The Newfoundland Historical Society (2007) has also produced *A Short History of Newfoundland and Labrador* which further documents migratory patterns and considers the influence this has on the Newfoundland accent.

[9] The Gaelic College (https://gaeliccollege.edu) in St. Ann's, Cape Breton in Nova Scotia is the only institution of its kind in North America that offers courses taught fully in Scottish Gaelic.

I read the appearance of these tropes as more than simply the result of unidirectional migration across the Atlantic. When I began this project, I initially read these tropes as Gothic, since the incursion of the past into the present is common to many Gothic fictions. However, what unified fictions from these spaces was the way in which the returning past unveiled an inherent duality – that the incursive past was not necessarily embodied in a "foreign" presence but an "other" within. This duality reads as a response to anxieties about how these "regional" Gothic variations from Atlantic Canada, Scotland and Cornwall are situated geographically and economically peripheral to more established centres of power. In each case, this is concerned with the complex histories through which these locations have had their regional identities subsumed under larger "national" ones – in particular "Britain", England, America and central Canada.[10] It is not within the scope of this project to delineate the specificities through which each of these regions respond to these structures of power that are often intimately connected to colonial and postcolonial histories, but it is important to note how an anxiety toward more dominant centres of power surfaces in these texts as a deep mistrust of hegemonic and linear representations of history and progression.

These anxieties about history and progression materialised in the figures of ghosts and monsters of the texts and, as I began my research, I realized that the anxieties arising in the texts' Gothic tropes often spoke to, and seemed to arise from, embodied relationships with the ocean. Across these fictions, I noted how ghosts appear changed and alien following their time in the sea, gesturing to how pollution and overfishing have circulated through bodies and are now "haunting" the ocean. I observed how these fictions often offered reimaginings of folkloric tales of mermaids and selkies. Where the male protagonist would often be lured to his death in the abyss of the ocean in the "original" version, these retellings complicated ocean/human relationships showing how these creatures might represent the entanglement between humans and the ocean. Underpinning all of these fictions was also an impetus to complexify the "abyss" of the ocean and show how it is a space through which all bodies are materially, historically and politically interconnected. This understanding upturned dominant notions and representations that abstracted humans from the space of the ocean. I concluded that these fictions were articulating anxieties about shared histories that interconnect the shore folk to the ocean and the figures created were gesturing to, and challenging, hegemonic representations of this body of water to illuminate how power circulates to and across the Atlantic Ocean.

---

[10] Definitions of Scottish Gothic often characterize it as showcasing the 'other' within and reference texts including Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886) and James Hogg's *Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* (1824) as examples of this. Alan Bissett (2001) describes Scottish fiction as one 'haunted by itself' (6). Joan Passey (2020) discusses at length how Cornwall, like Scotland, occupies a particular position in relation to England that, with its largely Celtic heritage and unique language, means Cornish Gothic fiction often depicts a negotiation of identity between 'Englishness' and 'foreign' (25). Canadian Gothic also largely depicts a sense of duality that results from being both colonizer and colonized; for a fuller discussion of the nuances of Canadian Gothic, see Cynthia Sugars, *Canadian Gothic: Literature, History and the Spectre of Self-Invention* (2014).

The geographical setting, the author heritage, and the cultures from which these fictions arise, mean I read these texts as all speaking to and across the space of the North Atlantic. In this regard, these fictions align with Pearson's (2006) assertion that one can 'go around the shores of an ocean […] and identify societies that have more in common with other littoral societies than they do with their inland neighbors' (353). It was through noting these commonalities that I came to define these fictions under the term the "Northern Atlantic Littoral". Grouping these fictions together acknowledges the shared histories of the Atlantic Ocean that they negotiate: how they respond to dominant representations of this space that have intentionally abstracted it from lived experiences in order to exploit it for colonial and capitalist gains. As these fictions enter into a dialogue across and through the North Atlantic Ocean, they shore up the myriad voices that contest this abstraction and demonstrate a more relational understanding of human/ocean interconnectedness. These stories and fictions present an understanding of bodies as mutually implicated in the material and historical currents that inflect the Northern Atlantic Ocean and the bodies that border it and depend upon it to survive.

This understanding of bodies as materially connected aligns with feminist posthuman methodologies of transcorporeality which show how the transferal of matter and agency through bodies 'reveals the interchanges and interconnections between various bodily natures' (Alaimo 2010, 2), and opens up a space in which the inextricable relationship between humans and the environment can be negotiated. In particular, I read how bodies are connected through the transcorporeal transits of water as exemplifying the figuration of 'bodies of water' outlined by Neimanis (2017), who argues for an embodied hydrological cycle that imbues all bodies of water into a 'more-than-human hydrocommons' (2) – an intricate system of intake, expulsion, relinquishing, and imbibing. As water is taken up and dispelled across bodies it becomes involved in processes of repetition and cyclicality that make tracing its origins and disseminations impossible. Both Neimanis and Stacy Alaimo establish that, alongside the material transits of matter, run currents of power and meaning. Neimanis (2013) describes how being attentive to how these currents run through bodies requires an understanding of bodies as partaking in an 'aqueous politics of location' (37) – that is, an awareness of how subjectivity is defined in relation to an embodied and contingent position, and how water might be redirected beyond this is ultimately unknown. An aqueous politics of location therefore asserts that '"where we are" as materially water is necessarily diffuse' and 'accounting for an aqueous politics of location is always a process with an uncertain end, rather than a finished project' (37). As water is disseminated across bodies, it carries with it traces of where it has been and continues to disperse without fixed or specific end; acknowledging this allows for an ethical orientation toward how one may disperse one's own materiality unto others.

I argue that fictions of the Northern Atlantic Littoral demonstrate an aqueous politics of location through their situated and embodied representations of ocean/human relations that depict both the material and political interconnections that exist across bodies of water. This self-consciousness is reflected in the metafictionality of these texts – a self-reflexivity and awareness that acknowledges their situatedness while simultaneously gesturing to their own production of alternative representations of the Northern Atlantic. The fictions I examine in this thesis all employ metafictionality in a variety of ways; for example, in their reconfiguring of folkloric tales of female sea creatures like selkies and mermaids, fictions like Kirsty Logan's *The Gloaming* (2018) and Melissa Barbeau's *The Luminous Sea* (2018) perform a kind of mimesis whereby they reflect the folkloric conventions that link these creatures to the feminine abyss of the ocean – a representation that has facilitated the othering and exploitation of both women and the ocean. However, Logan and Barbeau subvert these tales by displacing the male protagonist and complexifying the ocean/human relationship through stressing their shared materiality. Other texts offer intertextual references to preceding narratives of exploitation and survival, such as referring to Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719), which are then transformed to show how these understandings are not reflective of the lived reality of the Northern Atlantic Littoral. Such a strategy is witnessed in Michael Crummey's *Sweetland* (2014), in which a Government Resettlement Scheme leaves one man alone on his home island struggling to survive against the odds. The novel reads as a Robinsonade: but, instead of cultivating the land and demonstrating the success of economic individualism, Crummey's protagonist fails to cultivate anything and dies alone from disease and exposure thereby stressing the importance of community and assemblages for continued survival.[11] Through intertextual and metafictional strategies, fictions of the Northern Atlantic Littoral acknowledge their indebtedness to preceding narratives of the Atlantic Ocean while showcasing their own involvement in the production of alternative and more relational representations of ocean/human entanglements.

The metafictionality of these texts helps to challenge dominant imaginaries about the Atlantic Ocean. Linda Hutcheon's (1988) concept of 'historiographic metafiction' is useful for unpacking the significance of metafiction for challenging dominant epistemologies. I am careful here not to align too closely with the impetus of postmodern fictions, as to do so detaches and detracts from the material conditions of bodies of water which this thesis is trying to amplify.[12] However, my interest in challenging how fictional texts reveal the discursive strategies used to control and exploit (but also transform, regenerate and

---

[11] The 'Robinsonade' is a form of adventure narrative that takes it name from Defoe's novel. It often takes the form of an adventure-type narrative and typically features someone stranded on a desert island and surviving against (and conquering) the elements.

[12] While the largely linguistic and textual basis of this thesis might be attributed to postmodernism and its deconstructionist bent, my project is largely posthuman in nature – a point I discuss later where I align myself with Braidotti's critical posthumanities (2017) that takes "man" as the subject of critique and dismantles the hierarchies through which the humanist subject has been privileged. The relationship between this thesis and postmodernism is unpacked in further detail in my conclusion.

reproduce) bodies of water means there is some overlap between postmodern understandings of discourse and text, and the posthuman subject's embodied and contingent situation in lived and unfolding materialities. For Hutcheon (1989), historiographic metafiction – the mode through which fiction uses intertextuality to signpost and parody historiography – is significant because it

> demands of the reader not only the recognition of textualized traces of the literary and historical past but also the awareness of what has been done – through irony – to those traces. The reader is forced to acknowledge not only the inevitable textuality of our knowledge of the past, but also both the value and limitation of that inescapably discursive form of knowledge. (8)

In historiographic metafiction, the reader is forced to reckon with/confront how discourse has structured knowledge of the past as the text uses irony and parody to draw attention to those very traces. This practice of 'contradictory subversive inscribing' (1989, 16) is used throughout many of the texts I draw upon here: practices of mimesis, the use of particular ghosts and monsters, and through calling attention to the very act of writing itself, all work together to emphasize how systems of knowledge have been used to control and regulate understandings of bodies of water. It is in the practice of subverting these that I suggest they reconfigure them to mirror the fluid and relational nature of bodies of water.

The fictions of the Northern Atlantic Littoral discussed in this thesis regularly signal their metafictionality through generic shifts or through changing or altering the narrative voice; for example, in Logan's *The Gloaming*, the narrator interrupts the story to reveal that it has been the ghost of a drowned boy narrating the story all along and that he is now unable to narrate the rest of the story. In Crummey's *Sweetland*, a generic shift allows the text to break with the conventions governing both styles and demonstrate the instability of genre as a whole. The novel sets up a Robinsonade through a realist first half that establishes the quotidian lives of people on a small Newfoundland island and the circumstances that lead to the protagonist remaining alone there. However, the novel then switches to a more "Gothic" second half infused with tropes of ghosts, haunting and madness to suggest the impossibility of remaining there and surviving alone; through this, the novel also points to the absurdity of the capitalist Robinsonade to adequately describe the lived reality of the littoral experience. In stressing the constructedness of the narrative, fictions of the Northern Atlantic Littoral point to the instability of any representation to adequately capture or depict the entangled and interconnected nature of bodies of water.

Identifying that these fictions were highlighting the circulations of power that ran through the ocean, rather than necessarily or wholly to more terracentric national concerns, in the opening year of this project I found myself also moving away from defining these texts under the heading of the 'Gothic'. The tropes that necessarily define the regional and national variations of the Gothic from which these fictions originate seemed not to adequately capture the fluid and transnational interconnectedness of bodies of

water, and bound these fictions too closely to the national histories against which they were writing. Even while Gothic in itself is a 'transgressive genre' that is 'restricted neither to a literary school nor historical period' (Botting 1996, 9), it is still largely identified *as* a genre.[13] As such, it runs too closely to the 'centralized totalizing systems' of 'established generic classifications' which were constructed through and out of texts emanating from imperial powers (Slemon 1988, 10). Therefore, even while the Gothic elements of these texts are useful for parsing through the anachronism and anxieties they unveil, to classify these texts too firmly as Gothic is restrictive and largely terracentric.

The metafictionality, ghosts, monsters and concern with the folkloric might also facilitate readings of these texts as examples of magical realism. The mode of magical realism is useful in illuminating the qualities of these texts that speak directly to a 'resistance to central assimilation by more stable generic systems' (Slemon 1988, 10). These texts often play with, and shift, genre and narrative style in order to destabilize established genres. This de-centering that the texts enact is attributed, in magical realism, to their ex-centric position. Writers of magical realism often originate from spaces outside of 'privileged centers' (D'Haen 1995, 195) and their writing sought to displace the discourses of these centres. According to Theo D'Haen (1995), magical realist writing both appropriates the techniques and then creates an 'alternative world correcting so-called existing reality, and thus to right the wrongs this "reality" depends upon' (195). Playing with the genre and narrative style is a way through which magical realist writers can upturn the narrative constructed by hegemonic powers and can 'invade and take over dominant discourse(s)' (D'Haen 1995, 195). This is often achieved through their offering of 'multiple and contradictory' versions of reality by way of their inclusion of the folkloric (Durix 1998, 3), which functions as a subversive power that infiltrates often "realist" narratives by suggesting the possibility for alternative worlds and discourse. Magical realism is a potent tool for disrupting the dominant discourses of the Northern Atlantic and is one that many of the writers I discuss in this thesis employ. However, I am conscious that while many of these writers are writing from spaces that are coastal and often economically subsumed by larger powers – and in this sense, geographically ex-centric – to align too fully with this genre would be to perhaps elide the privileged (white, male/ female, middle-class) positions many of them speak from. Moreover, not all the fictions I examine offer the particular and necessary combination of magic and realism that the "genre" requires with some occasionally presenting elements that would be more readily associated with the dystopian or horror genres. Nonetheless, the tools and techniques afforded by magical realism do provide a useful means through which to consider the deterratorialising impetus of uncanny water and a broader shift away from established terracentric discourses toward more relational understandings of bodies of water.

---

[13] See, for example, Jerrold E. Hogle (ed) *Cambridge Companion to Gothic Fiction* (2002) and Catherine Spooner and Emma McEvoy (eds) *Routledge Companion to the Gothic* (2007), both of which implicitly define the Gothic as a "genre" in their Introductions, even while an unstable and composite one.

Considering all of this, it became imperative to conceptualize *how* these fictions were necessarily offering alternative representations of the North Atlantic, the means through which they revealed the material interconnections that exist between humans/ocean/nonhuman *and* how they conveyed the uncertain unfolding potential of bodies of water associated with an aqueous politics of location. With the Gothic and magical realism framing removed, what remained nonetheless still presented something decidedly *uncanny* – a conflation of the familiar within the unfamiliar that reared its head through the anachronistic appearance of ghosts, the folkloric monsters conjured, and via the narrative instability presented in their metafictionality. The uncanniness of these fictions allows for the profusion and proliferation of uncertainty which is a critical element of how bodies of water connect transcorporeally with one another but it is also, crucially, the counterpoint to discourses of anthropocentrism and nationalism that have so far governed representations of the North Atlantic Ocean. Uncanniness allows for these fictions to be situated within their particular contingent locales while also refusing to replicate any rhetoric of mastery and control. In this way, uncanniness refutes anthropocentric privilege in ocean/human relations while nonetheless *never* claiming to speak for the nonhuman. It also enables these fictions to illuminate and augment the uncertain origins and transits along which – and across – bodies of water flow. The operations of the uncanny across these fictions, and how it emphasizes the nuanced entangled nature of the bodies of water described, is what has prompted me to term the conceptual underpinning of this thesis 'uncanny water'.[14]

THE METHODOLOGIES OF UNCANNY WATER

My concept of uncanny water shows how the uncanny is best placed to represent this peculiar state of interconnected, aqueous materiality. Uncanny water is a necessary intervention, I argue, and responds to concerns that the embodied experience of our wateriness can lie beyond easy comprehension, that it might be 'too submerged, too subcutaneous, too repressed, or too large and distant (or even too obvious, mundane and taken for granted' (Neimanis 2017, 55). Neimanis advocates for stories and art which grant 'access to an embodied experience of our wateriness' (55) and argues that these stories 'amplify' a watery embodied state (55). I therefore posit that uncanniness can be the means via which material interconnectedness through water is best amplified and represented. Central to Neimanis' figuration of bodies of water is the notion that water is constantly implicated in processes of repetition across bodies that mean it is impossible to trace water's transits across the more-than-human hydrocommons. I map this referentiality onto literary and psychoanalytic definitions of the uncanny that define it as a relational signifier, whereby attempts to pinpoint its origin regularly result in a process of continual substitution that displace one meaning for another. The continued referential nature of uncanny water enables it to displace

---

[14] A version of the theoretical underpinning for this thesis was published in *Feminist Review* 130 in March 2022.

and reconfigure understandings of the Atlantic Ocean that are grounded in human exceptionalism, terracentrism and control.

My concept of uncanny water follows a decidedly feminist posthumanist trajectory. This definition follows Neimanis (2017), whose conceptualisation of bodies of water is defined in her book's title as a 'Feminist Posthuman Phenomenology'. She states that it is *posthuman* precisely because the kind of 'ontologies it inaugurates – connected, indebted, dispersed, relational – are not only about correcting a phallogocentric understanding of bodies, but also about developing imaginaries that might allow us to relate differently' (10). A feminist posthumanities is an ethical imperative to create and understand how our embodiment is produced through relations with others, and how this cannot be conceptualized within the phallocentric ideologies that have so far dominated humanist ontologies. This understanding of posthumanisim develops from Rosi Braidotti's (2017) concept of critical posthumanities, which

> unfolds at the intersection between post-humanism on the one hand and post-anthropocentricism on the other. The former proposes the philosophical critique of the Western Humanist ideal of 'Man' as the allegedly universal measure of all things, whereas the latter rests on the rejection of species hierarchy and human exceptionalism. (22)

Braidotti notes how 'Man' has been at the centre of humanist ideologies and in order to move past epistemologies and ontologies that are constructed only in relation to this, one needs to flatten hierarchies and adopt more relational models. Following in the tradition of Donna Haraway's (1985) figure of the cyborg, which demonstrated the inseparability of nature and culture, my concept of uncanny water is about how representations hold power and how the construction of an imaginary is predicated upon developing epistemologies and ontologies that are grounded in the co-presence of our bodily interactions with others.[15]

This idea of a feminist posthumanities is a *critical* posthumanities. This understanding of posthumanities gestures toward a purpose as a critical methodology that interrogates the very category of the human and the implications of this for nonhuman others. Stefan Herbrechter (2018) asserts that this adjective 'critical' in the discussion of critical posthumanities distinguishes it from 'a more or less uncritical or *popular* (e.g. in many science fiction movies or popular science magazines)' posthumanism and 'a *philosophical* and reflective approach that investigates the current *postanthropocentric desire*'. This desire often manifests as a form of 'anticipated *transcendence* of the human condition (usually through various scenarios of disembodiment – an approach […] that is best designated by the term "transhumanism")' and 'through a

---

[15] Haraway's *A Cyborg Manifesto* (1985) proposes the figure of the cyborg who is a 'hybrid of machine and organism […] simultaneously animal and machine' (7). Haraway's cyborg, with its blend of nature and culture, offered the possibility for thinking beyond identity politics in binary terms. Haraway advocates for writing and language as the tools of the cyborg to transform 'the central dogma of phallogocentrism' (34) through the power of the material-semiotic metaphor to construct more generative and relational imaginaries.

(rather suspicious) attempt by humans to "argue themselves out of the picture" precisely at a time when climate change caused by the impact of human civilisation (cf. *Anthropocene*) calls for urgent and responsible, *human* action' (95; emphasis in original). In other words, this is an approach that foregrounds the necessary critical work that interrogates the category of the human, and which considers the human's embodied situation amidst the current climate emergency and actively advocates for human action that might counter anthropogenic destruction. Defining a critical posthumanities is imperative if we are to demarcate it from strands that elide or evade the necessary work required to unpack human impact on the planet and nonhuman others. It is consequently a useful approach for my project in that it is a provocation to remain critical – to 'stay with the trouble' as Haraway (2016) would say – of what it means to be human in the climate emergency and how this informs and mediates our interactions with human and nonhuman others.

As a literary project, uncanny water is focussed on interpreting the representations of human/oceanic relationships and understanding how these might be transformed through the frameworks of critical feminist posthumanism. Uncanny water also responds to the call for an 'oceanic turn in literary studies' (Yaeger 2010, 524), as issued in a 2010 special issue of *PMLA*. The special issue's publication heralded a challenge to dominant epistemologies that had hitherto privileged more territorial-based narratives that served the formation and interests of the nation-state.[16] The contributions were more attuned to globalisation and the ways in which late capitalism and its development holds resonances with the Early Modern era of exploration and colonialism. Arguing that the immaterial language of late capitalism, with its focus on 'flows' and 'currency', is derived from the very material reality of commerce, which depends upon the ocean for the transport of goods (Yaeger 2010, 523),[17] many of the issue's contributions seek to reintroduce materiality back into the study of the oceans. Patricia Yaeger (2010), for example discussed the ways in which humans are 'not geo- but aquacentric' since 'we emerged from the sea—our blood a tide of oceanic ions' (524): her focus emphasized how the oceanic should not be elided in favour of a more terra-based approach due to human embodiment holding mutual characteristics with the ocean. Elizabeth DeLoughrey (2010) also focussed on the ways in which the water of the Atlantic mirrors human bodies, stating that the accumulated waste of modernity in the Atlantic Ocean is anthropogenically caused so that the ocean has now become 'humanized by the way it absorbs our waste' (708). The turn to the materiality of the ocean in these contributions marked a shift toward a more ontological approach which

---

[16] In the issue, Hester Blum (2010) described the sea as 'central to the hemispheric and transnational turn in American studies' (670), suggesting the oceanic turn accompanies a shift away from understanding the bounded nature of countries as 'self-contained' (670) entities.

[17] See also Janine MacLeod (2013) who makes similar parallels in her essay 'Water and the Material Imagination: Reading the Sea of Memory against the Flows of Capital', in which she discusses the metaphoric language used to discuss the movements of capital in conjunction with the metaphoric 'sea of memory' (41).

aligned with the emergent field of new materialism and its focus on interconnectivity and entanglement across species.[18]

I place uncanny water alongside these literary turns to the ocean that question the material synergies and interconnections between humans and nonhumans as they are represented in fiction. Why the focus specifically on the Northern Atlantic Littoral? And can uncanny water be applied to other littoral societies and shores – or is it specific to this locale? As I mentioned above, this project arose out of an interest in the shared literary tropes between and across Canada, Scotland and Cornwall – as such the project is drawn from the literature of these spaces and the shared mythographies and tropes they present. What I identified initially as particularly Gothic tendencies in these fictions means they are indebted to a European genre and my focus on the primarily "uncanny" nature of these texts means I am drawing upon a psychoanalytic framework that is also fundamentally Eurocentric in nature, and the psychoanalytical framework of this thesis emerges from Freudian understandings of the uncanny. I consequently appreciate that uncanny water emerges as a phenomenon of the Global North that responds to particular anxieties about identity, belonging and culture that are specific to these Anglo-American spaces.

That being said, uncanny water's focus on the Northern Atlantic Littoral is a paradigm shift that moves representations of the ocean away from nationalist and terracentric ideologies and, as such, there is scope to develop it, as a concept, and apply it to readings of fictions from other littoral societies. For example, it would be remiss not to consider the potential for readings of uncanny water between and across other shores in the North Atlantic – and indeed, the Southern Atlantic – that are connected via the transatlantic slave trade. Reading diasporic fictions of the Black Atlantic through the lens of uncanny water can offer the opportunity to decentre Anglo-American epistemologies of the Atlantic Ocean and would be an important intervention through which the dominance of the Global North might also be undermined. To do so would be to contribute to an already rich body of work in this field that is recovering and reinventing perceptions of the Atlantic through the lens of slavery and race. Paul Gilroy's seminal *The Black Atlantic* (1993) is a crucial example of such work: his use of the imagery of the ship is an important prompt through which to 'rethink modernity via the history of the black Atlantic and the African diaspora into the western hemisphere' (17). Gilroy's work draws attention to the ways in which not only the Atlantic Ocean is absent from American constructions of identity, but the transatlantic slave trade has been elided completely and, as such, he offers an interrogation of how this might be reconstituted and reframed. Gesa Mackenthun's

---

[18] This shift toward a more material-oriented oceanic studies is notable in the 2017 ACLA Forum on 'Oceanic Routes' in *Comparative Literature*. Articles in this issue reframed the oceanic turn within the pressing concerns of the climate emergency and the Anthropocene and sought to examine the intersection between materiality and history. The articles included DeLoughrey's 'Submarine Futures of the Anthropocene' in which she formulates her 'sea ontologies' as a more ontological and integrated approach that 'binds life with nonlife, the sea-as-history and the sea-as-materiality' (40). This approach incorporates human and nonhuman histories and offers a more relational understanding of the embodied entanglements present across species.

Fictions of the Black Atlantic in American Foundational Literature (2004) is another important intervention in the field that examines the aesthetics of canonized American texts and seeks uncover metaphors of the transatlantic slave trade. Mackenthun also points to the potential of the uncanny for the 'analysis of the uneasy presence of disavowed histories in fictional texts' (23) and so aligns with my reading that the uncanny might be used as a tool through which particular epistemologies might be recovered. However, Mackenthun's uses the uncanny to trace the absences in canonized texts, while my own concept of uncanny water engages with how these absences are carried through, via particular discursive epistemologies, into contemporary fictions and how the uncanny itself might be used to reinvent and reconfigure these same epistemologies and produce more relational representations.

The work of uncovering, recovering and reconstituting is the driving impetus behind uncanny water, but the parameters of this thesis mean that my focus is restricted to what I perceive as one case study of a littoral community among many possibilities – not least of all, and perhaps most significantly, including slavery, post slavery and diaspora communities. Much work has been done on the colonial legacy of both Scotland and Canada – and the relationship this holds with the Northern Atlantic Ocean. Michael Morris writes extensively on Scotland's transnational slavery legacy, and has specifically commented on how reframing the United Kingdom as an 'Atlantic Archipelego' might 'open up history to an oceanic scope where its amnesia around Atlantic slavery can be more easily overcome' (2014, n.p.). For Morris, reframing Scotland's position within the collective geographical consciousness, could facilitate a greater understanding of it as interdependent upon 'global networks of exchange' (n.p.). Similarly, Alexandra Campbell (2019) has drawn upon the archepeligic nature of the U.K. to draw comparisons between Scotland and Canada in order to access and critique transoceanic networks of colonial and capital exploitation (195). Through an examination of poets including Édouard Glissant, Kamau Brathwaite, Derek Walcott, Kei Miller, Jen Hadfield and Kathleen Jamie, Campbell parses through the politics of waste, materiality and the legacy of capitalism and colonialism. From a Canadian perspective, Winfried Siemerling (2015) highlights the significance of the Black Canadian literary canon to Canadian history and how this may 'implicate Canada in hemispheric and transatlantic stories of modernity' (8). Siemerling seeks to bring Black Canadian literature into conversation with the broader history of the Black Atlantic, from which, he claims Black Canada is regularly elided. These scholars all bring together the transatlantic and transnational nature of the Atlantic Slave Trade and illuminate its lived legacy in the intersection between literature and materiality – highlighting, in particular, how these Northern Atlantic spaces are implicated in the longer histories of the Black Atlantic and slavery. What this thesis consequently aims to do is to complement this work and to contribute to a larger project of refocussing the oceans within the cultural imagination so as to 'recover in the history of the sea a paradigm that may accommodate various revisionary accounts – revisionary in the sense of seeing things in new ways, of seeing them differently – of the modern historical experience of transnational contact zones' (Klein and Mackenthun 2004, 2). My

project of reading uncanny water within fictions of the Northern Atlantic Littoral acknowledges that the histories and representations of the Atlantic Ocean I examine here are co-present with myriad other histories and bodies – of both human and nonhuman others.

To close the reading of uncanny water off to simply the Northern Atlantic Littoral would be to undermine the project's relational impetus. I recognise that any reading of bodies of water must acknowledge one's own situated and contingent position. This is why the littoral is such a helpful tool in recognising embodied emplacement as implicated in both national and terracentric histories, and the fluid and relational dialectics of transcorporeality. Texts from the Northern Atlantic Littoral examined here demonstrate a preoccupation with – and orientation toward – the ocean that arises from longstanding historical and material connections to coastal life. The sea becomes the focal point from which all the other events of the fictions are derived, and it is in this way that the texts place the ocean at the forefront of all ocean/human interactions. Moreover, by focussing on the ocean's pathways and currents, these fictions construct the ocean as a space of connectivity that implicates them into a relationship both with the ocean itself and within a transoceanic dialogue with other "shore folk". However, the proximity of these coastal spaces to the Northern Atlantic and their own histories of migration mean they are implicated in longer and complex histories of capitalism and colonialism, and how these are manifest and reproduced across bodies of water. Therefore, even while fictions from the Northern Atlantic Littoral attempt to offer transatlantic narratives of interconnection and responsiveness, they must do so within a framework that acknowledges their role in darker histories in the marginalization and exploitation of others.

The fictions used in this thesis all illuminate and challenge the power dynamics that have historically run to and across the Northern Atlantic and its concomitant bodies of water. What I identify as common to all of these are the ways in which the uncanny, as a particular narrative mode, is used to highlight both the unknowable material potential of bodies of water, while still acknowledging the situated and contingent nature of these texts. The texts all consequently reveal the strange co-mingling of the familiar within the unfamiliar that is peculiar to our material existence as bodies of water, while exposing how hitherto hegemonic representations of bodies of water has sought to suppress and control the interconnection this facilitates. As these texts address the uncertain and interdependent nature of bodies across the Atlantic Ocean, they offer new and more generative representations that displace anthropocentrism and nationalism. This thesis is certainly not prescriptive and is guided by the uncertainty that uncanny water precipitates: I only purport to offer one interpretation of how littoral societies might be connected – and the fictions I offer in support of this are by no means exhaustive – but all of these fictions do employ the uncanny to offer generative alternatives to hegemonic representations of the

oceanic. In what follows, I show how uncanny water manifests, how its operations are radical and how they might better orient us better toward the planet's oceans, and indeed, all bodies of water.

CONCEPTUALISING UNCANNY WATER

Uncanny water, as a framework, recognises how representations of the Atlantic Ocean establish its accompanying imaginary and so utilizes the uncanny's pertinent relationship to fiction to offer an alternative for the Northern Atlantic. I argue fictions of the Northern Atlantic Littoral utilize uncanny water to destabilize assumptions of the oceanic imaginary as fixed and unchanging. They do this by acknowledging the ocean as material semiotic and recognising that the networks of power and meaning that flow through the ocean are not fixed but relationally comprised. Uncanny water consequently demonstrates that the ocean is a body of water in its own right and, as such, participates in the exchanges of materiality that condition the possibility for the lives of others. However, uncanny water also recognises how the flows of power and meaning that operate across these processes of interconnection and relationality are not evenly dispersed, nor fully knowable. I identify three interrelated strands, which pull together to create the overarching concept of uncanny water, and how these iterations manifest in fictions of the Northern Atlantic Littoral: the use of uncanny tropes of ghosts and doubles; the processes of mimesis that subvert preceding representations of human/ocean relations, and how these compound to produce difference through drowning and "engulfment". In tangential ways, each of these iterations invokes the uncanny to make strange understandings of human/ocean separability before showing how these might be reconfigured to emphasize the uncertain and interconnected pathways of water. In this way, uncanny water prompts a renegotiation of territorialized understandings of the ocean and how bodies are oriented toward water. For that reason, the fictions discussed in this thesis are placed in dialogue with one another in each of the chapters to demonstrate how uncanny water operates in divergent and discontinuous ways. Uncanny water is predicated upon these conditions of discontinuity because it relies so heavily upon the engendering doubt and hesitancy in the reader. In order to dispel understandings of the ocean as something "out there" which can be exploited through the networks of late capitalism and power, it must evade being subsumed into structures that presuppose total knowledge and control. Subsequently, uncanny water is about depicting the relational capacity of bodies of water, but in ways that do not presume to fully *know* how this might extend.

Central to the concept of uncanny water is its emphasis on the unknowability of water and how this holds a radical potential to destabilize the nature/culture binary that has been reinforced by historical, cultural and political representations of the Northern Atlantic Ocean. This unknowability is highlighted in fictional depictions of human/oceanic relationships that invoke the uncanny to destabilize epistemologies and ontologies that privilege the human. This is achieved through the uncanny's ability to defer meaning so that certainty and closure is denied. In this section, I discuss how psychoanalytic theories of the uncanny

can (and should) be read alongside feminist theories of transcorporeality to produce uncanny water. I elaborate on the uncanny's referential capacities and consider how this is similar to the repetitions and virtual potential of water – which are defined by relationality and uncertainty. I consider how this functions in fiction, arguing for how the uncanny is a narrative mode which, in its production of particular affects, might better orient us toward bodies of water. With this conceptual underpinning in place, I then discuss how the various iterations of uncanny water can be read across fictions of the Northern Atlantic Littoral. What is critical to uncanny water is the way in which it treads the line between materiality and metaphor – how stories amplify the material interconnectedness of water.

At the heart of representations of the Atlantic Ocean was the drive to expand empire and its associated interests. In order to do this, the Atlantic Ocean was frequently cast as 'other', as the oceanic imaginary 'positioned masculine subjects as normative travellers who rely upon a feminized sea in order to imaginatively regenerate across time and space' (DeLoughrey 2007, 5). Through images of reproduction, the ocean was constructed as a 'feminized sea' in order to further the interests of capitalism and colonialism. This phallocentric and anthropocentric outlook relied on perpetuating representations including the 'colonial maps' – like the Mercator Projection – which positioned ocean as an 'unmarked, atemporal and feminized void' that was only made meaningful when 'traversed and/or occupied by (male) European agents of history' (DeLoughrey 2007, 22). Demarcating both the ocean and women in this way disallows their representation and negates their agency; reclaiming and reconceptualising the 'feminized void' of *aqua nullius* so as to recognise the shared fluidity of the ocean and women's bodies, but without collapsing the two, becomes intrinsic to reconfiguring the oceanic imaginary of the Atlantic Ocean. Central to refiguring these bodies of water is an understanding of their othering and a disrupting of the terms by which this exploitation occurred.

DeLoughrey's description of how the western cultural imagination demarcated the ocean as a 'feminized void' is useful for my argument here as it relates to perceptions about unassimilable difference and the threatening potential of bodies of water. The image described by DeLoughrey of the masculine sailor traversing the feminized sea is an example of how sexual difference becomes manifest in powerful material metaphors. I read this feminizing of the ocean as a key strategy through which both woman and ocean have become "othered" within the western cultural imaginary. The strategy for this is manifold but I broadly conceive of this as related to both the fluidity of the ocean as a body of water and its abyssal or 'void'-like nature. Characterising the sea as a 'feminized void' attributes to it the characteristics by which woman have been excluded from representation and denied entry into the symbolic order.[19] In *Speculum*

---

[19] Irigaray considers how Freud's theories overlook sexual difference and his conclusion that women are an inverse of men; she follows his theorisation on the feminine Oedipus-complex and claims it is modelled on a masculine paradigm whereby a little girl's psychosexual development is predicated on understanding herself as the inverse of the masculine and her perception that she and her mother are already castrated. According to Irigaray, the specular opposition between woman/man, daughter/

of the Other Woman (1985a), Luce Irigaray outlines how the strategies by which women are denied entry into the symbolic have been predicated upon Freudian 'problematics of sameness' (26) that presuppose women are the inverse of men and therefore deny women adequate representation or terms through which to construct their subjectivity. The notion of 'sameness' predicated by Freud is also that which designates the female genitals missing in the castration complex, and through which the privilege of the penis is 'elevated to the status of a Phallus' in Jaques Lacan (Whitford 1991, 88). [20] In Lacanian psychoanalysis, where the phallus is a signifier for discourse, women's subjectivity presents as problematic in this phallocentric configuration.[21] Denied the terms that constitute Being, women emerges 'within discourse […] as lack, deficiency, or as imitation and negative image of the subject' (Irigaray 1985a, 78). Women are thus able only to occupy the position of the Other and as negative image or absence. Perceiving the ocean as 'void' or abyssal evokes the terms by which women are Othered, particularly when placed in relation to the image of the masculine traversing it for his own gain, and consequently denies both women and ocean symbolization.[22]

In highlighting the feminization of the ocean, and in drawing upon psychoanalysis, I do not mean to lean into the terms of binaristic gender and to equate gender with bodily morphology and sex. My intention here is to highlight the ways in which discursive strategies have often too readily enabled the conflation of women and the environment – and through this relegated them from representation. This argument follows from Judith Butler's (1990) assertion that gender is the 'discursive/ cultural means by which

---

father as proposed by Freud results in the erasure of the mother/daughter relationship and the suppression of the maternal as a site of origin. With reference to Freud's theories on the loss of the object (separation from the mother), and to mourning and melancholia, the little girl has '*no representation of what has been lost*' (Whitford 1991, 86; emphasis in original) and so she cannot mourn the loss of it and remains in the state of melancholia because there is no representation of this loss. Irigaray (1985a) elaborates that '[t]his effective castration […] prevents woman […] from ever imagining, conceiving of, representing, or symbolizing […] her own relationship to beginning' (83). Without adequate symbolization, the mother and daughter are relegated to the space of non-differentiation. However, she also notes that Freud's theories of the Oedipus-complex are predicated upon 'the metaphysics of presence' (83) that privilege the sight and the visual over absence.

[20] It is beyond the scope of this project to provide an overview of the critical debates that circulate around the primacy of the phallus in sexual difference and its relationship to the penis as a part of male anatomy; I am more interested here in the terms by which phallocentrism emerges and comes to be the discursive power of the patriarchy through which bodies of water are othered. I am, however, inclined to believe that, in following Freud – whose argument on the castration complex is very much embedded within psychosexual development – that the relationship Lacan (2005) asserts between the phallus/penis is not as contingent as he claims. He positions the phallus as 'the privileged signifier of that mark in which the role of the logos is joined with the advent of desire. It can be said that this signifier is chosen because it is the most tangible element in the real of sexual copulation, and also the most symbolic in the literal (typographical) sense of the term, since it is equivalent there to the (logical) copula' (220). Lacan's references to sex ('copulation') make a more direct link between the phallus and penis and so his argument seems somewhat more determined than he claims.

[21] Lacan claims to mark a shift from the more biologically determined psychosexual development of the child proposed by Freud by offering the phallus as the privileged signifier. One's entry into the symbolic and attainment of subjectivity is predicated on this stage in development. Rather than Freud's 'penis', the Lacanian phallus is a signifier that represents the other's desire. However, for 'woman' in this mother/child dyad, the penis only ever represents the imagined desire to 'be' the phallus and be the object of desire of the Other, woman is only ever perceived as the object through which man may achieve his own subjectivity.

[22] I return to this question of the 'void' or abyss in Chapters Two and Three where I discuss them in relation to Lacanian anxiety. For Lacan, the void produces anxiety because it reminds the subject of their precarity and that they owe their origins to the Primordial Other (mother); however, I argue for the productive potential of reimagining the void to demonstrate how transforming the material metaphors of fluidity and the abyss, respectively, might actually allow for a more ethical and relational model to emerge.

"sexed nature" or "natural sex" is produced and established as "prediscursive", prior to culture, a politically neutral surface on which culture acts' (7). Butler's claim may seem at odds with my drawing upon psychoanalysis – particularly given Lacanian and Freudian understandings of a prediscursive sex – but in revisiting the very terms by which both women and the ocean have been conflated and othered, I hope to show the potential for salvaging both from the realm of non-differentiation.

Recuperating the ocean from this space of non-differentiation becomes a task of reconfiguring the terms by which woman has been othered and extending this across bodies of water. This work involves parsing through the exclusion of women from the symbolic and producing new and alternative imaginaries to displace the dominant masculine paradigm. This is something acknowledged by Margaret Whitford (1991) who notes there is a 'tension in feminist thought between the need to create positive images of women, and the arguable impossibility of producing images which are not immediately captured, or recapturable, by the dominant imaginary and symbolic economy' (97). Whitford observes that images, which diverge from the dominant (masculine) imaginary, are immediately subsumed into that paradigm and read only in relation to that. She provides a reading of Irigaray, who argues that woman as 'fluid' is denied entry into the symbolic, which remains a masculine paradigm.[23] To resolve women's absence from the symbolic order would require systemic revision – something Irigaray advocates for across her work.[24] However, as Whitford observes, 'Irigaray is also concerned with the possibility of a female imaginary, which would necessitate images or representations of women in which women could recognize themselves, or with which women could identify' (97). Transforming the imaginary is a means by which women might effectively be re-symbolized as they are represented in their own terms. While Irigaray's and Whitford's focus is on "woman" and her bodily processes, the material metaphor used by DeLoughrey shows how this has power to seep into the cultural imaginary and exclude all bodies who do not conform to the dominant paradigm. The ocean, by way of its fluidity and abyssal nature, threatens the bodily discretion of the masculine subject and is consequently, like woman, relegated to the domain of non-representation. In Chapter Two I parse through the power associated with fluidity, the complexity of its associations with the ocean, and the way in which I combine uncanny water with Irigaray's own discursive strategies to allow for alternative subjectivities to emerge; in Chapter Three, I discuss how woman and ocean as abyssal can be deployed to generative ends that mobilise their relationship to reproduction, but for now, it is

---

[23] For Irigaray, phallocentrism perpetuates a solid logic that others femininity in her fluidity and permeability – both materially and symbolically in language; see, for example, in 'The "Mechanics" of Fluids' (1985b) where she argues that fluidity is what excludes woman from the 'ruling symbolics' and 'proper order' (106). To recover woman from the space of non-representation, Irigaray offers material metaphors, which she deploys via mimetic strategies. This is a point I elaborate upon in Chapter Three, where I discuss in more detail the power of material metaphors for transforming the fluid feminine to encompass all bodies of water and show how fictions of the Northern Atlantic Littoral draw upon uncanny water to such ends.

[24] The recovery of 'woman' from the space of nonrepresentation is a theme that runs across Irigaray's *oeuvre*. She advocates particularly for mimetic strategies that can counter the masculine paradigm. I discuss one example of this strategy in Chapter Two, where I draw upon her notion of the 'two lips' from 'When Our Lips Speak Together' (1985b) – a model that replaces the centrality of the phallus with the labia and lips that speak in order to offer an alternative imaginary to phallocentrism.

important to recognise how reimagining bodies *because* of their unassimilable difference might be the way through which dominant (masculine) representations of bodies of water can be overcome.

Neimanis' intervention proposes that bodies of water are always implicated in the production of difference and this allows for relationality. Being as a body of water depends upon the interchange and diffusion of water across the hydrocommons. Through the continual displacement of water across bodies, we are both affirmed in our aqueous commonality with others and in our unassimilable differences. It is water's capacity to always repeat differently across bodies that sustains water's unknowability and demarcates the limitations of embodiment.[25] This is particularly prevalent when considering the ocean as a body of water – a body that participates in the exchange of water across the hydrocommons while also remaining beyond what humans can understand. Neimanis (2017) stipulates, 'any body's orientation to water as material substance, and as geographical location, serves as a *limit* that determines which milieus are habitable, withstand-able, and thus knowable. Water remains one step ahead of, and beyond, the limits of any body' (42; emphasis in original). Water exceeds the body – both in relation to ontological being and epistemological understanding. Both Alaimo (2012) and Neimanis (2017) articulate the limitations of embodied knowledge as a kind of 'suspension' (Alaimo 2012, 487) which holds humans in a moment of near-stasis by refuting the terrestrial and bounded nature of the discrete human individual. Through this affective and in-between state, the watery interconnections between humans and nonhumans are revealed, since in this moment 'material agencies and ontologies of intra-action and perpetual becoming deny us the security of knowing what will happen next' (Alaimo 2012, 488). Bodies of water therefore do not place difference in hierarchies but offers the more-than-human hydrocommons – the intricate assemblage, defined by Neimanis, of dispelling and gathering water between human and nonhuman bodies across time and space – as the milieu through which difference is actually produced and understood.

I posit that uncanny water offers a highly significant alternative imaginary through its invocation of the uncanny's affective power to speak to our inherent material interconnectedness and the difference this both verifies and produces. It is via this uncanny affect that the dominant imaginaries surrounding the Northern Atlantic Littoral are then reimagined and recast into more relational models that implicate all bodies of water. This figuration relies on the referential capacity of the uncanny which, I argue, mirrors the relationality of bodies of water. Freud (1919) establishes this referential aspect of the uncanny when he asserts that the uncanny is the anxiety created through the coexistence of the unfamiliar within the familiar. He discusses, at length, the various etymological origins of the word before also establishing that '*[h]eimlich* thus becomes increasingly ambivalent, until it finally merges with its antonym *unheimlich*' (134;

---

[25] Water's finite nature on the planet emphasizes this: it can only ever be taken up and repeated differently across other bodies (Neimanis 2017, 3).

emphasis in original). Freud's etymological exploration serves to show how it is this stretching of what is familiar that eventually produces its converse. But, critically, the uncanny holds an affective power in this co-existence; the uncanny is described as the '*species of the frightening* that goes back to what was once well known and had long been familiar' (124; emphasis mine). For the uncanny to arise, in Freud's terms, it relies on the subject to establish a familiarity with something, only for that to be subverted and that is where the uncanny holds a frightening affective power. This affective power is found in the uncanny's revelatory properties whereby it represents everything that was 'intended to remain secret, hidden away, and has come into the open' (132) and consequently becomes correlated with 'the return of what has been repressed' (155). The uncanny therefore is the revelation of something long since familiar but which has been repressed.

Freud's conclusions about the uncanny emerge through fictional analysis, scientific reasoning and psychoanalysis; he offers a consideration of E.T.A Hoffmann's short story 'Der Sandman' (1816) in which he posits that the uncanny emerges as castration anxiety. This leads him to conclude that the uncanny is the return of the repressed infantile complexes (141).[26] Following this, Freud moves into a discussion of the double whereby he argues, drawing on the work of psychoanalyst Otto Rank, that doubles incite the uncanny because they are the source of primary narcissism of the child. When this phase is 'surmounted', the appearance of the double changes and becomes an uncanny 'harbinger of death' (142).[27] Freud's discussion of what produces the uncanny is intriguing, and not necessarily for the psychical reasons he identifies; rather, his attempts to pinpoint the uncanny are always implicated in processes of substitution and seem to diverge from fiction (*e.g.* his discussion of Hoffman) to psychoanalysis (*e.g.* Rank) without much explanation to link the two ideas.

Freud's inconsistency and inability to arrive at a satisfactorily consistent definition of the uncanny is what leads Hélène Cixous to accentuate the ambivalence of the uncanny. She offers a deconstructive reading of Freud's essay in 'Fiction and its Phantoms' (1976) in which she stresses the continued self-referentiality of the uncanny. She notes how Freud's attempts to contain the uncanny within classifications of psychoanalysis, literature and scientific discourse result in a process of continual substitution whereby Freud constantly displaces the uncanny's meaning so that he never truly arrives at a satisfactory definition but only serves to leave 'one nonproof for another' (536). The meaning of the uncanny therefore seems

---

[26] Freud (1919) arrives at this conclusion by connecting the uncanny to the idea of being robbed of one's eyes. He asserts that in dreams and fantasies the loss of the eyes is equated to a fear of castration. Freud reads the moment where Nathanial's father protects his 'eyes' as symbolic of him protecting him. However, his father's murder at the hands of Coppelius supplants the good father and makes Coppelius the castrating father (140). The story's repeated symbolism of 'eyes' therefore come to represent this repressed psychosexual moment for Nathanial.

[27] Freud (1919) discusses how in early childhood, children project multiple versions of themselves in order to ensure their mortality. However, once this stage of childhood has been overcome, the double no longer is an insurance against mortality but a signal of death (142).

to hinge on doubt as it continually recedes amidst attempts to capture it. Cixous interrogates Freud's own analysis of Hoffman's short story, suggesting that his painstaking analysis of the story inadvertently suppresses its uncanny elements which leads Freud to the conclusion that castration is the most uncanny part of it. But, as Cixous shows, by trying to deconstruct and reconstruct the fictional text to fit within the confines of scientific discourse, Freud's attempt to represent the uncanny paradoxically means it emerges as that which he has repressed – his own inability to arrive at a suitable definition and continually defer its meaning onto something else. This leads her to posit that 'the effect of uncanninnes reverberates (rather than emerges) for the word is a relational signifier' (536). Through this she stresses that the uncanny will always refer to something else, exceeding what it is and seeping into something else. The uncanny appears in these moments of its excess and slippage, she argues that '[i]t is in fact a composite that infiltrates the interstices of the narrative and points to gaps we need to explain' (536). The uncanny arises in the absences in narrative and illuminates the need to attend to these gaps.

Bodies of water and the uncanny share in their capacity to always refer to something beyond themselves so that attempts to determine and define what they *are* in a specific moment will always recede and slip into something else. I identify this as part of uncanny water's prerogative – the ability to emphasize this slippage and uncertainty in our own embodied state. To do this, the uncanny has to conjure a particular affect in order to incur a state of ontological anxiety and uncertainty. As Freud and Cixous both acknowledge, fiction is where the potential of the uncanny to achieve this affect is at its most potent. Freud (1919) states this explicitly when he claims 'fiction presents more opportunities for creating uncanny sensations than are possible in real life' (156). Cixous concurs in recognising that it is in Freud's close analysis of 'Der Sandman' that, while his summations are perhaps too hasty, he comes closest to revealing the nature of the uncanny. For both Cixous and Freud, the ability of storytellers to conjure or inhibit a text's uncanny effects lies in its proximity to a lived reality; Freud discusses how fairy tales do not elicit feelings of uncanniness since the reader is already suspending their disbelief to adjust to the fantasy world created where magic and the supernatural are anticipated tropes (156). Uncanniness is, according to Freud, most keenly felt in fictions that bear the closest resemblance to a lived reality but where the author can 'intensify and multiply the experience far beyond what is feasible in real life' (157) and then, as readers, 'we react to [the storyteller's] fictions as if they had been our own experiences' (157). What Freud describes is the amplification and augmentation of uncanniness in fiction, which goes beyond what is possible and understood in a lived reality, and when these moments occur, they incur the powerful negative affect of fear and anxiety as much as any "real" experience of the uncanny would.

As a concept, uncanny water compounds water's unknowable relationality with the uncanny's transgressive potential to augment the lived material reality of bodies of water. This is why I read the appearance of uncanny water in fictions of the Northern Atlantic Littoral: they offer a specific and lived

account of how being and becoming as a body of water might be interpreted. They provide a territorial perspective that grounds and adheres to ontological and epistemological expectations, but their proximity to the ocean, and preoccupation with this body of water, allows for them to cast out into the depths to imagine how they might become with other bodies. In fictions of the Northern Atlantic Littoral the uncanny arises in particular encounters with aqueous others (usually in the form of ghosts/doubles) who emerge on the shoreline to cast doubt on epistemologies and ontologies that frame the Northern Atlantic as a knowable and comprehensible space. As these figures emerge, they also carry with them vestiges of power and meaning that show how these have been sedimented in the ocean's very materiality. These figures consequently function as reminders of the material interconnection between humans and the ocean while simultaneously highlighting the legacy of colonialism and capitalism. Whether characterized as spectral figures or nonhuman doubles, the figures of uncanny water illuminate how the pathways of water *might* extend across bodies, but ultimately *as uncanny figures*, they show that attempts to follow these pathways with any certainty is futile.

Not only do the figures of ghosts and doubles offer the opportunity through which water's unknowability is made visible, but these are produced in a framework that acknowledges its indebtedness to material semiotic understandings of the Northern Atlantic, which have their foundation in modernity's beginnings and its accompanying capitalist and colonialist trajectories. These fictions often offer an explicit or implicit intertextuality to demonstrate how narratives that perpetuated a control and mastery of the Atlantic Ocean have been assimilated. These texts often implicitly reference familiar narratives of either oceanic conquest and expansion – a "Robinsonade" or adventure type story – or they draw upon tales that perpetuate the image of a 'wild, lawless, eternal, and quasi-infinite' ocean through vast and sublime imagery (Yaeger 2010, 540); for example, where "doubles" of characters are framed through the material semiotic associations of sirens, selkies and mermaids whose mythical and folkloric appearances have closely associated these figures with the danger and allure of the ocean. But, crucially, these contemporary fictions of the Northern Atlantic Littoral demonstrate that these narratives are no longer viable and show how these can be reconfigured to stress this: Robinsonade characters who attempt to perpetuate 'economic individualism' when pitting themselves against the harsh elements of the Northern Atlantic instead find themselves succumbing to these elements and even dying and becoming ghosts themselves. Figures of mermaids dive into the abyss with their accompanying doubles but, rather than death by drowning, reveal the permeable boundaries of bodies to be an affirmative opportunity for interconnection and entanglement. In evoking and amplifying the uncanny associations held in representations of mermaids and ghosts, these fictions show how these figures have been so far governed by discourses of mastery and control, while also indicating the possibility for recovering them from those very discourses.[28]

---

[28] The ecofeminist impetus of this project to retell patriarchal stories and narratives differently – and with a feminist and relational bent – is indebted to Marti Kheel (1993). Kheel noted that patriarchal images defined women and the nonhuman

Often, however, the endings of these fictions neither affirm nor deny whether or not these figures are in fact the uncanny figures of mermaids/ ghosts/ other. This uncertainty denies closure, thus holding the reader in a state of suspension and uncertainty. It is this moment of uncertain suspension that compounds all of uncanny water's prerogatives: by denying any sense of mastery or control over the text's effects, the reader is held in a state of ready responsiveness that shows how embracing unknowability might offer new possibilities for being and becoming as a body of water. I argue that this sense of suspension is a deterritorializing – de-*terra*-torializing - impulse that reorients bodies toward water and deprivileges the human as the primary site of embodiment. This process of deterritorialisation is what transforms the negative affect of the uncanny into a more positive affect associated with the generative potential of bodies of water. In this way, uncanny water can be read as an ethical imperative, whereby I assert that the negative affect produced via the uncanny is transformed to reorient bodies toward one another. Rather than closing off against difference, the text opens up, via the uncertainty produced, the possibility for multiple co-existing subjectivities that align with the unfolding and interdependent nature of becoming as a body of water.

Uncanny water is therefore about what happens when one remains in the abyss. It illuminates how the "nothingness" is actually composed of absent presences. Through the deferral of meaning and continual positing to something other than itself, the text produces gaps and absences that themselves produce meaning. Since the meaning of the text is never fixed, it is constantly evolving, and involved in, processes of negotiation and relation with the reader – it is that which allows the reader to 'wander until the end, without any defense against the Unheimliche' (Cixous 1976, 547). But it is this wandering that allows for the uncanny to be transformed as the text mirrors and produces the relational nature of bodies of water.[29] Since bodies of water are always exceeding, moving and shifting into something else, they are constantly in an active state of interpermeating with other bodies of water. Uncanny water consequently enables and preconditions moments of active transformation where the negative affect is transformed into a more positive and generative moment of becoming with and unfolding as a body of water.[30] My project

as something either to be subdued, or something that was already subdued and somehow enslaved to the masculine. To counter this, she proposed to reconceptualise nature differently so as to 'rescue nature from the aggression that is thought to ensue without these conceptual restraints' (247). To do so involves cultivating an 'ethics' which 'begins with our own instinctive responses' and which occurs in a 'holistic context in which we know the whole story within which our actions take place' (260). Ultimately, for Kheel, it 'means rethinking the stories that we have come to believe under patriarchy' (260). This project of cultivating an ethics that revisits and reconfigures patriarchal narratives so as to move women and nature from the images of either passivity or unruly is one that uncanny water is aligned with. In retelling stories differently, and in pushing them beyond the space of knowability, a new more relational ethics can emerge.

[29] I discuss this in more detail in Chapter One in relation to the figure of the ghost, considering the possibility of how to attend to imagined futures produced through uncanny water.

[30] I appreciate that this description of the transformation of negative affect might resonate with an 'affirmative ethics' as outlined by Braidotti (2011). Braidotti sees negative affect as eliciting a stoppage or 'an arrest, blockage, rigidification' that does 'not merely destroy the self but also harm the self's capacity to relate to others – both human and nonhuman' (288). However, I propose that it is only in lingering in the gaps and absences that opportunities for becoming-with others might emerge. While

demonstrates how the various iterations of uncanny water I identify facilitate feeling 'out of place' and deterratorialized in relation to the waters of the Northern Atlantic Ocean. As Cecilia Chen (2013) notes, 'moments of feeling out-of-place are important to renewing our sense of orientation and to discovering other ways to relate to place that escape habitual assumptions' (290). Feeling 'out of place' affords the opportunity to reorient subjectivity toward being and becoming with water and, in the instances of uncanny water I discuss below, it reorients this toward the Northern Atlantic and disallows habitual assumptions about this body of water.

UNCANNY WATER'S ITERATIONS

The chapters of this thesis each explore a different iteration of uncanny water: the use of ghosts and haunting, the intertextual references to folkloric sea monsters, and submersion (or engulfment) in the ocean itself. I demonstrate, with each of these iterations, how fictions of the Northern Atlantic Littoral use uncanny water to recast the oceanic imaginary of the Northern Atlantic. In Chapter One – 'Haunted Bodies of Water' – I discuss the ghosts of uncanny water who bring warnings of loss: both loss of life and extinction. They also signal the loss of moments of aqueous interconnection through and across the more-than-human hydrocommons. Much of this loss is incurred through the systems and processes of late capitalism. Environmental destruction, economics, production and consumption continue to push vital entanglements between humans and nonhumans further into jeopardy. The relational nature of the hydrocommons means that when bodies become damaged or destroyed, the effects echo forward in time and space, often detrimentally affecting others. Crucially, these effects are neither easily predictable nor foreseeable. Ghosts grant access to this unknowability through their function as relational signifiers. Ghosts offer an imagined possibility for how these effects *might* extend across bodies of water. I focus on how these ghosts represent material damage and harm to the ocean. I explore how the loss implied through the appearance of ghosts resonates across the hydrocommons. Throughout the texts explored in this chapter, both human and nonhuman ghosts are conjured to demonstrate an explicit material connection between humans and the ocean, which is presented as destroyed or threatened by environmental destruction. Ghosts emerge from the ocean radically changed by the by-products of late capitalism including marine waste, digital technology, and overfishing. In doing so, they make strange and uncanny the banal and quotidian objects and processes of everyday western life including plastic bags, telecommunication, and even food stuffs, and consequently demonstrate how the impact of much of these reverberate in often unpredictable and unseen ways but can register as material harm upon bodies in the hydrocommons. This is part of uncanny water's prerogative – to illuminate the haunting potential of bodies of water and to show how water's unfolding potential across time and space always carries with

---

I appreciate that Braidotti's ethics emerges from a place that seeks to be grounded in the material, I do not believe this needs to be entirely abstracted from the spectral and I develop this point in Chapter One where I discuss the figure of the ghost in relation to uncanny water, deriving my ethics from Jacques Derrida (1994) who emphasizes the positive potential in attending to absent presences.

it the flows of power and meaning that stress the unequal distribution of agency in the Anthropocene. Following these ghosts can draw attention to the bodies too often overlooked or marginalized by narratives of oceanic progress and show that continued neglect of these bodies will have lasting and devastating consequences.

To follow the ghosts of uncanny water is not to lapse into metaphor but to heighten the spectral qualities in bodies of water *as they exist materially* and thereby augment understandings of the relationality inherent in bodies of water. In focussing on these ghosts, I attend to some of the tensions at play within oceanic studies currently. One concern is that while oceanic studies has enabled an extra-national reframing of literatures, there is a risk that this allows them, and attendant scholarship, to lapse too readily into metaphors of fluidity that undermine the materiality of the oceans themselves. Such scholarship would only then serve to 'mimic and endorse the offshoring practices by which global capital disentangles from local conditions' (Samuelson 2017, 16).[31] That is, that in advocating for an extra- or trans-national focus, oceanic literatures detach too readily from the local material conditions from which they are borne and instead mimic the language of globalisation which reduces the sea to a 'metaphor of transnational fluidity' (16). Counter to this runs the idea that 'if oceans are mediums, not metaphors, then the worldliness of oceanic texts does depend to some extent on the real-world, trans-oceanic commerce between peoples' (Price 2017, 51). Uncanny water operates somewhere between these two schools of thought, whereby it focusses on the representations of bodies of water as they are situated and contingent (with a focus on the littoral by way of example). However, by engaging with discursive strategies that have historically implicated the ocean within discourses of capitalist and colonialist power, it also uses these to show how new relational models might be created that interconnect bodies of water across the ocean. I posit that the uncanny waters of the Northern Atlantic Littoral offer material metaphors in the ghosts who emerge out of more-than-human assemblages that are damaged or destroyed entirely by the momentum of late capitalism. The Northern Atlantic Ocean has repeatedly relied in the west upon the figures of absent others, in the past four centuries, through which to perpetuate the project of modernity. The Atlantic Ocean partakes in the processes of watery exchange with other bodies of water and carries with this the complex dynamics of power and capital that are sedimented in its very materiality. Thus, any relational framework that aims to place the Atlantic Ocean at the forefront of ocean/ human interactions, has to consider how water's hauntology is embedded within the very material and historical fabric of the ocean itself. Fictions set in and around the Northern Atlantic Littoral attend to this by regularly presenting bodies suffering under the burden of late capitalism's anthropocentric thrust – a burden that is inescapably material.

---

[31] Meg Samuelson (2017) posits that the growing interest in oceanic studies is partly driven by a 'sustained interest in capacious frames for analysis beyond the nation-state' (45).

In Chapter Two – 'Monstrous Bodies of Water' – I argue that the seeds for recovering and reconstituting the oceanic imaginary of the North Atlantic might already lie within narratives of power and mastery constructed in relation to it. I look to contemporary texts from the Northern Atlantic Littoral where folkloric sea creatures are reconfigured so as to displace the rhetoric of mastery and control that hitherto constrained them. Like the ghosts of bodies of water, I argue that figures of mermaids, huldra and selkies provide an opportunity for amplifying the mutual and interconnected affect of bodies of water. Each of these creatures is a different iteration of a part-woman/ part-creature: the mermaid, for example, is typically figured within the western cultural imagination as part-woman, part-fish; the huldra is a creature from Scandinavian folklore whose embodiment is usually described as part-woman, part-troll who has an 'abyss' or vacancy at her back,[32] and the selkie who emerges from Celtic folklore as a woman who is able to transform into a seal by slipping on a sealskin.[33] These tales of these womanly sea creatures regularly show how the creature is able to straddle multiple, and opposing, realms: one the symbolic masculine paradigm, and one that defies representation (normally the forest or the ocean) that represents an abyssal space of non-differentiation that cannot be integrated into the symbolic. They threaten the masculine because they signify the possibility of non-representation and serve as a reminder of the precariousness of his bodily integrity. Fundamentally, they are desirable in their female form and it is only upon pursuit of them that the men potentially fall pray to the 'abyss'. The representation (or lack thereof) of these creatures in the folkloric underscores female sexuality as beyond representation in a masculine paradigm. I suggest that as the narratives from which these creatures are recovered are rewritten within contemporary accounts of the Northern Atlantic Littoral, this enables a re-symbolisation of these bodies, moving them beyond and apart from the discourses that oppressed and confined them to a 'feminized void'.

The feminization of the ocean is attributed to both its abyssal nature and as a medium for the possibility of colonial regeneration. These elements of its feminization gesture explicitly toward the ocean's originary and reproductive capacities. Stories of life's beginning on this planet regularly signal to the generative and

---

[32] This definition is provided by John Burnside (2012) who, in an interview for *Granta*, described the figure of the huldra as a 'troll who appears as a beautiful woman to beguile a young man, drawing him away from his safe world and into danger, usually leading to his death' (n.p.). For Burnside, the huldra represents a moment of looking past the illusion into the 'void' of nonrepresentation.

[33] Stories of the selkie emerge in the folklore from Orkney, Shetland, Norway, Iceland, the Faroe Islands, mainland Scotland, and Ireland. She is a half-woman/ half-seal creature who, unlike her mermaid sister, has the ability to switch between the two forms by donning or removing a sealskin. Stories of the selkie have developed a 'trans-cultural topos known as the Seal-Wife' (Le Couteur 2015, 66). The Seal-Wife plot emerges in stories across Ireland, Scotland, Iceland and the Faroe Islands. The main tenets of the Seal-Wife plot are that a man happens upon a group of selkies who have shed their skins and are dancing naked in a cave. He becomes transfixed by one particular selkie and steals her skin, so she is beholden to him. They marry and have children but the selkie longs to return to the sea. One night, she steals her sealskin back from her husband and returns to the sea never to be seen again. The Seal-Wife plot is also one variation among many stories of 'animal brides' where 'supernatural women' marry a 'mortal man' (Darwin 2015, 123). For more information on the variation and wealth of these stories, see Gregory Darwin's article 'On Mermaids, Meroveus, and Mélusine: Reading the Irish Seal Woman and Mélusine as Origin Legend'.

primordial nature of water and this has aided in the ocean's categorisation as a feminine space. In Chapter Three – 'Engulfing Bodies of Water' – I work through the connotations of situating the ocean as point of origin and regeneration; I ask what this means for bodies of water materially, but also question what the implications are for producing and reproducing stories of our material interconnection? Central to this theorisation is how the association of the ocean with regeneration and reproduction might actually facilitate the production of difference – both materially through aqueous embodiment and metaphorically through the production of new representations of bodies of water.

The production of difference is a key notion in uncanny water that unifies the iterations I have outlined so far: bodies of water acknowledge difference in their relationality, and this is shored up through the appearance of ghosts (who gesture to how material violence creates negative difference), and through sea monsters whose transformation through the folkloric is incurred through discursive strategies that resymbolize fluidity. The final chapter – 'Engulfing Bodies of Water' – reads moments of drowning and engulfment in the abyss of the ocean and demonstrates how, instead of these being a return to the womb, they are, in fact, framed as re-birth. The deterritorializing impulse of uncanny water is compounded as the negative affect of the uncanny is triggered through the presumed possibility of non-differentiation via drowning; as characters – and readers – are held in suspension, moments for interconnection then emerge and work to then transform the negative affect into a more positive and generative moment of becoming-with other bodies of water. For these 'rebirths' to fully realize the relationality inherent in the *more-than-human* hydrocommons, the idea of reproduction and gestation must then be detached from its sole association with the maternal body. I draw upon Barbara Creed's (1993) notion of the archaic mother, and Neimanis' (2017) theory of posthuman gestation and an onto-logic of amniotics to elaborate upon this. Both scholars posit radical ways through which bodies of water might gestate and produce difference when detached from the masculinist understandings of sexuate difference.

RECONFIGURING THE NORTHERN ATLANTIC IMAGINARY

Leaning into the negative affect created by uncanny water can produce new and more generative models for becoming-with bodies of water in the more-than-human hydrocommons. This "leaning in" is an active and conscious movement toward other bodies of water and suggests that uncanny water, as a concept, is about the transformative *action* that leads us to think differently, and orient ourselves differently, toward other bodies of water with the hope that we might act more ethically toward them. Uncanny water's affective capacity relies on fiction to elicit something relatable within the subject in order to recast this toward more generative and relational modes. Therefore, it has to negate and destabilize the arrest or blockage that negative affect could elicit; it does this by drawing attention to the processes of being and becoming that already exist within bodies of water. Through figures of ghosts, monsters and moments of engulfment, uncanny water amplifies how, as bodies of water, we are already all imbued and implicated

in processes of material aqueous exchange, interconnection and transferral with others. In highlighting how, where and to whom we are indebted, our implicit and inherent fluidity (or wateriness), and our own watery hauntology, uncanny water emphasizes how bodies of water are co-constituted.

This thesis takes as its focus the Northern Atlantic Ocean and demonstrates how uncanny water draws attention to our mutually implicated bodies of water through focussing on fictions of the Northern Atlantic Littoral. These fictions demonstrate the discursive strategies through which the precarity of bodies of water have historically been othered; the figures of ghosts and sea monsters, and the depiction of the ocean as site of reproductive potential, all illuminate how the Atlantic Ocean has been invariably connected to projects of colonialism and capitalism and how all of this has become sedimented in its historical representations and material properties. In focussing on fictions of the Northern Atlantic Littoral, I stress how texts that actively engage with reconfiguring and reconstituting these representations through the uncanny might better reimagine our interconnection. Since the littoral already is preoccupied with the oceanic, it offers a model through which one can be cast imaginatively out to sea without losing a grip on the embodied and situated perspective from which, as terrestrial beings, our ontologies are borne. The Northern Atlantic Littoral is only one framework through which uncanny water can be read and my aim and my hope, is that the iterations I outline in this thesis serve as a model through which alternative oceanic imaginaries can be created outside of Anglo-American trajectories. Although it focusses on literatures that emerge from Anglo-American spaces, this thesis shows how uncanny water decentralizes the nationalist and anthropocentric focus that has thus far determined and controlled the representations of the Northern Atlantic Ocean in the Anglo-American imaginary. In transforming this and moving it toward more relational models, I reframe understandings of bodies of water that necessarily tie them too firmly to national and terrestrial epistemologies. As I move through the discussions of the iterations of uncanny water, I show that the seeds for recovering and challenging representations of the Northern Atlantic are always already present and that in allowing ourselves to be vulnerable to our permeable embodiment through feeling 'out-of-place', we might be able to recover and centralize the ocean in our imaginations.

CHAPTER ONE

HAUNTED BODIES OF WATER:
ABSENT OTHERS IN THE NORTHERN ATLANTIC LITTORAL

[I]t near sickened her what they were saying about how [the ghost nets] hung like curtains in the water, catching fish by the gills in their mesh, and how they were made from a modern kind of fibre, from nylon, and never rotted—which was a good thing, except that they were always breaking from their moorings and then floating about for years in the sea, filling up with fish till their weight sank them to the bottom, and how, when all the fish rotted or were eaten by other fish, they rose again, fishing themselves full, till their weight sank them again, and again, fishing and rotting, fishing and rotting, and entangling other things in their mesh like sharks and seals, and becoming a floating larder for other fish to feed on as they drifted by with their fresh and rotting carcasses.

~ Donna Morrissey, *Sylvanus Now* (2005)

In coastal communities it used to be thought that death could only come during the ebb. Survive the turn to flood, and all was well, at least for the next twelve hours.

~ Linda Cracknell, 'Lunar Cycling' (2020)

INVISIBLE CURRENTS OF MATERIAL VIOLENCE

The cyclicality of life and death are reflected in the oceans – a notion observed by both Cracknell and Morrissey. In 'Lunar Cycling', Cracknell describes her experiences of walking along the coastline at the Roseneath peninsula in Scotland during the lowest point of the tide. She references a commonly-held superstition in coastal communities across Britain that death only occurs during the tide's ebb.[34] Cracknell highlights how, amongst shore folk, life and death are deeply connected to the ebb and flow of the tides and to ideas of recurrence: to 'survive the turn' is only a matter of timing. The 'ebb' is largely an unseen space – only visible for the duration of low tide and so death, in this instance, becomes associated with this liminal and unseen space. The "unseen" is hinted at by Morrissey as well, who references the unseen violence of ghost nets that become implicated in cycles of death and decay as they float indefinitely in the ocean. Morrissey's novel touches upon the beginnings of trawler fishing in the North Atlantic in the

---

[34] This is reflected in William Shakespeare's *Henry V* (1599) when Mrs Quickly comments of Falstaff's death, '[a]' made/ a finer end and went away an it had been any/ christom child; 'a parted even just between twelve/ and one, even at the turning o' the tide.' (ii.3.10-13). Likewise in Charles Dickens' *David Copperfield* (1849), Mr Peggotty explains to David that 'people can't die, along the coast […] except when the tide's pretty nigh out. They can't be born unless it's pretty nigh in—not properly born till flood. He's agoing out with the tide—he's agoing out with the tide. It's ebb at half-arter three, slack-water half-an-hour. If he lives till it turns he'll hold his own till past the flood, and go out with the next tide' (1081).

mid-twentieth-century and explores the issue of the anthropogenic damage that the ghost nets create. The trawlers are a metaphor for late capitalism's impact upon the environment, demonstrating its far-reaching consequences for both nonhuman oceanic life, and the shore folk communities in Newfoundland. These communities were detrimentally affected by the trawlers whose nets dragged the ocean floor so there were fewer fish for smaller boats to catch. While the actual process of trawling largely remains unseen, as it operates in the ocean's depths, its repercussions are felt forcefully as a species loss that resonates across the more-than-human hydrocommons. This pattern of recurrence, and its connection to our oceans, is central to this chapter and the idea that all bodies of water are implicated into cycles of repetition that mirror, imitate and intermingle with other bodies of water. This pattern of repetition and recurrence is what enables bodies of water to haunt and be haunted by other bodies of water – both human and nonhuman.

The haunting potential of bodies of water is determined by the finite nature of water on our planet and water's own capacity to "return" through hydrological cycles that sustain and facilitate life on earth. Neimanis (2017) describes how the planet 'neither gains nor relinquishes the water it harbours, but only witnesses its continual reorganization, redistribution, and relocation' (66). Since water on the planet is finite, it is only ever taken up and repeated differently across bodies. This constant process of watery "recycling" means the water that constitutes bodies has always been elsewhere before; as Neimanis points out, the water that 'temporarily comprises and sustains all of these bodies brings with it a history that is at least 3.9 billion years old' (67). Bodies of water are facilitated and brought into being by water that has been disseminated by bodies different to one's own. The repetitions which water enacts make it impossible to trace the origins of the water that compose any body. Water's unknowable and repeated extensions are not teleological, nor are they mappable, and so water constantly evades assimilation into terrestrial epistemologies: the water that comprises my body comes from myriad human and nonhuman bodies before it. It is in this way, I argue, that water haunts: we are forever indebted to the absent others whose wateriness is disseminated into our own. However, access to this "haunting" is limited: daily lived embodiment does not readily allow for connecting with the deep watery parts of the self that may be drawn from bodies so drastically different from one's own – both human and nonhuman – so how can this ontological reality be conveyed? Neimanis advocates for stories and art which grant 'access to an embodied experience of our wateriness' that lies beyond easy comprehension (55). Drawing on these stories demonstrates that they are 'pulled from a material world' but 'given back to us so we can more readily access and *amplify* them, anew' (55; emphasis mine). Amplifying and augmenting the haunting properties of bodies of water can be achieved through following the figure of the ghost whose resurgence and incursion into the present frequently exemplifies matter's recurrence through and as aqueous transits.

So who, or what, are the ghosts of uncanny water, and how do they haunt the Northern Atlantic Littoral? In Morrissey and Cracknell, cycles of repetition and recurrence in the North Atlantic are often intimately connected to the unseen – to spaces and bodies that are invisible to terrestrial humans. In the case of Morrissey's *Sylvanus Now*, this unseen element is a material violence that nebulously extends across the hydrocommons and registers on bodies of water: the ghost nets act as a material reminder of the ways in which overfishing echoes forward in time, destructively resonating across bodies in and surrounding the Atlantic Ocean. I read the ghost nets as a signifier for the violence incurred through late capitalism – a violence that is both inflicted upon bodies both directly and indirectly. Many of the "ghosts" I focus on in this chapter operate similarly to the ghost nets – they signal how harm might register on bodies of water and are shown to be a consequence of late capitalist power structures that reverberate across the Northern Atlantic Littoral. In the fictions I discuss, rural littoral communities are often suffering under the homogenizing momentum of late capitalism;[35] for example, in Kenneth J. Harvey's *The Town That Forgot How to Breathe* (2003), like *Sylvanus Now*, explores how the closure of the fishery has left a town devoid of customs, traditions and values that circulated around the operations of the small fishing community. The closure of the fishery speaks to a broader history in Atlantic Canada regarding the implementation of trawler fishing and the mismanagement of fish stocks and quotas by the Canadian government that devastated rural communities.[36] I also consider Crummey's *Sweetland*, in which a Government Resettlement Scheme, which mirrors those in operation in Atlantic Canada in the latter half of the twentieth-century, moves rural Newfoundlanders to urban centres that are deemed more economically viable.[37] I also discuss Logan's *The Gloaming* where the community of a rural Scottish island struggles to make ends meet in changing economic circumstances. The promise of a new bridge connecting the island to the mainland offers the opportunity for new potential tourists and guests as a boost to the economy, but the bridge is also perceived as something that threatens the island's integrity; one character stresses ominously that '[t]here always needs to be a bargain. We can't know what this

---

[35] I refer here to processes of cultural homogenisation: the 'process by which local cultures are transformed or absorbed by a dominant outside culture' (O'Connor 2006, 391). This is an effect of globalisation that subsumes local communities under a more dominant hegemonic power. The extension of capitalism from inland centres of power radiate outward in the Northern Atlantic Littoral to subsume rural, coastal communities.

[36] The cod moratorium of 1992 had a devastating impact across Atlantic Canada and hugely impacted Newfoundland: it resulted in the closure of large numbers of fisheries across the region. Factors in the closure of the fisheries included government mismanagement of the fisheries and competition from large corporations to 'develop ever more effective but capital-intensive ways to catch more fish, continuing to believe in the endless bounty of the sea even in the face of declining catches' (Wylie 2011, 36).

[37] The 'Household Resettlement Program' began in 1954 in Newfoundland and Labrador. Under the government of Joseph Smallwood, resettlement began with centralisation in 1954 when those who volunteered to resettle in larger cities and towns were offered small sums of money as an incentive (Martin 2007, n.p.). A decade later the Fisheries Resettlement Program was introduced, and residents were moved to designated 'growth centres' where 'industries would be established, services centralized, and people regulated' (Kelly 1993, 22). These programmes had, and continue to have, lasting impacts on Newfoundland and Labrador since they frequently divided communities and families. The Household Resettlement Programme was renewed in 1970 under the Federal-Provincial Partnership, and (officially in place only until 1977), many small communities continue to seek government assistance in relocating.

bridge will cost us' (175). The question about the 'cost' and 'bargain' of the bridge suggest it will take something from the community and strip it of its values.

What all of these examples indicate is how the centralizing thrust of late capitalism incurs losses. These losses are those that are felt in community, place and bodies of water, and are deeply related to the littoral and the ocean. This loss is where the ghosts of uncanny water emerge; they are the absent presences that gesture to how material harm unfolds transcorporeally across bodies in the Northern Atlantic Littoral. The first section of this chapter outlines a 'hauntology of water', considering how the ghosts of uncanny water make present and visible the absences created via late capitalism's impact on the ocean. Reading a hauntology of water is, I argue, an important intervention in centralizing the oceans in the cultural imagination, and complexifying a space that was hitherto cast as *aqua nullius*. The subsequent two sections of this chapter discuss the conditions through which the ghosts of uncanny water arise, looking not only to how structures of capital subsume and flatten the rural littoral spaces described but also how the consequences of these structures produce "waste" that then haunts the human and nonhuman bodies of the texts – I look specifically to both material waste and also the material impact of digital technologies. The final section considers how these ghosts are produced within the world of the text in order to mirror and evoke uncanny water's effects. I demonstrate how the texts themselves are haunted; in offering intertextual references, and through subverting generic expectations, the texts play with readerly anticipations and create absences through which meaning and connection might be produced. This is one of the central facets of uncanny water that recurs – in its own spectral fashion – across all the chapters of this thesis: how the boundaries of the text open up through the uncanny's affective power to speak to the reader's own implication in the more-than-human hydrocommons.

A HAUNTOLOGY OF WATER

Water's hauntological properties emerge through the relational nature of bodies of water and transcorporeality. Bodies of water are not only conditioned by the material return of water from the past into the present, but are also able to extend forward into the future to condition and "haunt" the bodies of others. This is part of a body's virtual potential – the way in which '[a]ll of the potential expressions of a body are latent in one of its actualizations' (Neimanis 2017, 53). This suggests that a body's potentialities are those *that it was*, but nonetheless *persist* unseen in the present, those it *never became*, but *might have*, and those it *could still become* in the future, and all of these are manifest in a body's present actualization. With water, these potentialities are never fully known because of water's capacity to recur and always become different – perpetually drawing on this latent virtual potential to exceed itself and become other (Neimanis 2017, 89). This means that bodies are haunted by the lingering (yet undefinable) presence of water's past expressions and simultaneously hold the potential to extend forward and haunt others in unknowable futures. The watery extension of oneself into the future acknowledges that one's bodily matter is

implicated in the conditioning of the life of another and thus instigates an ethical imperative to radically reorient oneself toward the figure of the Other. With uncanny water, the reappearance of ghosts from the past often triggers this ethical awareness amongst characters in the texts. The anachronism of ghosts means that they 'do not just represent reminders of the past – in their fictional representation they very often demand something of the future' (Buse and Stott 1999, 14). In signifying the return of material violence, the ghosts of uncanny water simultaneously offer anticipatory gestures toward a bleak and uncertain future for the Atlantic Ocean and consequently 'demand' a more relational ethics that considers bodies of water as coterminous with one another.

I consider this relational ethics as utterly central to water's 'hauntology' – the Derridean neologism of 'haunting' and 'ontology' whereby the liminal figure of the ghost supplants presence and existence. By conditioning existence through the figure of the ghost, Derrida suggests that being is facilitated through absent others and there is an ethical imperative to be attentive to them. He emphasizes this at the beginning of *Specters of Marx* (1994), when he claims that '[i]f I am getting ready to speak at length about ghosts, inheritance, and generations, generations of ghosts, which is to say about certain others who are not present, nor presently living, either to us, in us, or outside us, it is in the name of justice' (xviii; emphasis in original). The ghost therefore stands in for those not currently present, but who have conditioned and facilitated the lives of others. Derrida stresses that any proper ethical orientation toward absent others would be to 'learn to live with ghosts' so that one may learn to 'live otherwise, and better […] more justly.' (xvii). Living *with* ghosts means to recognise how existence and presence (and the present) is conditioned by them. This also has implications for an imagined future since to live 'justly' requires living 'beyond the living present' (xix). Derrida defines justice as kind of relational debt, it is 'always owed to another, and takes the form of an unconditional duty to do justice to the other. Yet the debt of justice is incalculable, excessive, such that one can never fulfil it […] This means that justice is a duty to the other which can never be satisfied, yet must be attempted (Litowitz 1995, 328).[38] Justice is therefore an awareness of our indebtedness to others and so to live with ghosts – and to do so in a manner that is truly just – requires attending to the ghosts and absent presences of the past, but also those who are yet to come, and those who will never be.

I argue that this relational hauntology is expressed through the ghosts of uncanny water who highlight the material interconnection between bodies of water and call attention to the absent others who have facilitated existence – and how bodies of water, in turn, may go on to facilitate the lives of others. Uncanny water utilizes ghosts to exemplify the agency of these absent others and to advocate for a more relational ethics that is alert to that which "haunts" the hydrocommons. By asserting a kind of hauntology

---

[38] Derrida differentiates between justice and law, whereby his concept of 'law' is that which is more arbitrarily connected to a set or system of rules that, if traced backward, are not in themselves predicated on justice but established via custom.

present in water, I do not mean to deny the lived moments of situated embodiment that water facilitates, but rather amplify water's uncanniness so as to better understand bodies as conditioned by the bodies of others. Thinking through water with the uncanny illuminates the liminal and uncertain qualities of bodies of water. Being, as a body of water, depends upon the interchange and diffusion of water across the hydrocommons – the moments of both its absence and its presence. Just as bodies assimilate the waters of absent others, they disseminate to other bodies their own aqueousness in unknowable and uncertain ways. Ghosts offer a manifestation of the hauntology of water by exemplifying water's potential pathways and interconnections between bodies. The ghost is neither dead nor alive, neither present nor absent, a kind of absent presence – its "existence" conditioned by its intangibility and elusiveness. Consequently ghosts, by their very nature, show that water's pathways are themselves uncertain, unstable and always changing. As such, uncanny water compounds the ghost's inherent liminality and transgressive potential with water's unknowable extension across time and space.

In the Introduction, I discussed how maps like the Mercator Projection are predicated on creating absences – on eliding and erasing others – in order to further the project of modernity.[39] I ask here how the figure of the ghost can illuminate these absences and how it might afford ways through which the marginalized bodies of water in and around the Northern Atlantic Littoral might be brought to the fore in such a way that lingers *with* them? This means acknowledging and accommodating their "existence" without asserting hierarchies or replicating discourses of mastery and control that were hitherto responsible for their marginalization. Uncanny water enables and facilitates this by creating the conditions through which the ghost recurs and emerges in the text and drawing on the affective power of its anachronistic appearance to haunt both the protagonists of the text and the reader themselves. Through drawing upon the uncanny and haunting nature of bodies of water as they exist materially, the ghosts of uncanny water illuminate this potential in all bodies.

One of the key ways through which these "absences" are made present is by emphasizing the flow of toxicity and violence across the hydrocommons. The ghosts of uncanny water regularly signal the disproportionate ways in which harm extends outwards and is diffused through bodies. As shown in the epigraph from *Sylvanus Now*, patterns of violence recur across bodies in the Northern Atlantic Littoral. The ghost net is the "ghost" through which this recurrence is made visible as it becomes the signifier through which this violence is writ large. The net's nylon composition means it will float through the ocean, pulling bodies repeatedly into it and then drifting to the surface, becoming a grotesque reminder of the cycles of destruction it is implicated in and the loss this creates. The ghost nets are also a metaphor for how "toxicity" can intercept bodies of water and have lasting repercussions. As it floats through the

---

[39] The project of modernity is in itself spectral: maps like the Mercator Projection become the tools that make its presence felt and are used as a means to establish and justify western capitalist control and power.

sea, the plastic net mirrors the toxic transference of plastic across bodies of water. The far-reaching consequences of this extend nebulously, impacting others in often unseen or unpredictable ways. In the example from *Sylvanus Now*, Morrissey shows how impact of the trawlers and their plastic nets detrimentally affects the lives of small coastal communities. While the impact on the shore folk in *Sylvanus Now* is not the final destination or "end point" of such toxic transferral, it nonetheless shows how toxins like plastic highlight the inseparability of humans and nature. Shore folk, fish and the ocean are shown to be entangled with one another, and the repercussions of environmental damage are seen to echo forward in time, impacting all the bodies in this entanglement. Toxic bodies reveal 'the trace of history, social position, region and the uneven distribution of risk' (Alaimo 2008, 262). For Alaimo, the toxins carried across bodies demonstrate the relationality of bodies and how they carry with them currents of power and meaning. I read this notion of toxic bodies as emanating across the Northern Atlantic Littoral through the violence of capitalism that registers as loss on bodies of water. In the next section, I discuss instances of these toxic bodies in fictions of the Northern Atlantic Littoral and the transferral of material violence through and across bodies of water in and around the Northern Atlantic shores. I consider both the ubiquitous nature of plastic waste, and how more insidious forms of violence pervade across the Atlantic Ocean. In particular, I look at how these cycles of violence and destruction are made visible through ghosts who emerge at the shore, and ask whether their emergence in this space challenges terrestrial epistemologies by offering a mode through which human/ocean interconnection is no longer cast out into the murky depths. I ask what we gain from following the ghosts of uncanny water: what can it tell us about the entanglement of bodies in the more-than-human hydrocommons?

GHOSTS, COASTS AND JETSAM

The shore represents a site where the unknowable depths of water converge with habitable and knowable terrestrial place. The purpose of this chapter is not to reshape the unknowable depths and extensions of water into more epistemologically palatable forms that resonate more with a land-based subjectivity as this would render the radical potential of their unknowability obsolete. Rather, I propose ghosts as imaginative framings through which this unknowability is amplified and exemplified. I suggest this can be done through positioning the shore as a site of negotiation between the situatedness of one's experience as a body of water, and how this extends in unknown ways across time and space. Kluwick and Richter's (2015) conceptualisation of the beach as a site of 'encounters' – a 'contact zone' for 'interactions' (2) – is particularly useful in this regard as it frames the shore as a space of mediation between parties. A 'contact zone', is used in imperial encounters to denote the 'time and space where subjects previously separated by geography and history are co-present' and offers a perspective which 'emphasizes how subjects get constituted in and by their relations to each other' (Pratt 1992, 7). Considering the shore as 'contact zone' denotes it as a relational site of encounter and cooperation where subjectivity is reconfigured through interaction with the other. Encountering the ghosts of uncanny water

requires a reconfiguration of the self as a body of water and consequently entangled with absent others across time and space: it involves a negotiation of the pull between being grounded and at sea, between emplacement and extension of the self. I argue that encounters with ghosts on these shores articulate the nuances of this internal and embodied dialectic.

The shore is a site of colonial and capitalist encounters and interactions. To 'encounter' the shore as a colonizer establishes the point at which the sea as "transport surface" ended and the possibilities for further colonial expansion and exploitation began. Late capitalism has supported this perception, functioning under similar pretences and using the ocean as network and resource. In situating the ocean in the periphery of the western cultural imagination, the systems and processes of late capitalism have been able to exploit its material properties while simultaneously naturalizing these processes through watery language: "flows" of capital and currency circulate unseen around the globe, often removed from their material consequences.[40] The climate emergency is demonstrating how the consequences of this are beginning to encroach on land with rising sea levels, flash flooding, superstorms, and tidal waves all threatening terrestrial life. What all of these impacts have in common is that the shore is the site at which their impact is felt most forcefully. It is the space where humans and nonhumans are now encountering and *confronting* the reality of late capitalism's systems and processes. While rising sea levels, flash flooding and superstorms demonstrate the dramatic and immediate consequences of the climate emergency, marine waste is one of its more insidious and pervasive effects. Toxins can be one of the ways through which the entanglement between humans and the ocean can be mapped and understood. Traces of micro-plastics and mercury are being found in bodies across the world – both human and nonhuman – demonstrating how harmful substances are being disseminated across bodies transcorporeally.[41] I read these toxins as "waste" that moves across bodies of water: much of this waste originates in the planet's ocean, suggesting that the transit of these harmful substances is propagated through bodies of water. Yet, the results of this are mostly unseen and invisible – and unknown – owing to the ways in which bodies of water extend across time and space.

This notion of "waste" as a critical feature through which the entanglement between humans and the ocean can be traced and understood is elaborated on by DeLoughrey (2010), who offers an account of how the Atlantic Ocean is 'is humanized by the way it absorbs our waste' (708). Through examples such as the slave trade, the 'wasted lives of the Middle Passage' (703), and the sea's increased militarisation

---

[40] Janine MacLeod (2013) notes the profusion of watery metaphors used to describe the movements of capital. She discusses how the '"flows of capital" metaphor contributes to the aura of naturalness' surrounding the effects and methods of late capitalist modes of production through which capital is generated (41).

[41] A 2018 study by the Environment Agency Austria detected microplastics within human bodies (Medical University of Vienna, n.p.).

post-World War II, she stresses how the ocean's own material properties are altered by centuries of industrialization and modernity. Following waste illuminates how history and materiality are inseparable and positions the ocean as a body of water in its own right through which history, politics and meaning are sedimented into its very materiality. DeLoughrey argues for a reconfiguration of waste in the Atlantic 'as a constitutive material residue of history that might be imaginatively salvaged' (708). To consider the ocean within these terms is not to reduce the ocean to simply a part of the project of modernity but to complicate and complexify it and to recognise the ocean's own status as a 'body of water'. I consider how following waste might 'imaginatively salvage' the losses incurred through the systems and processes of late capitalism and argues that the ghosts of uncanny water make visible these losses.

Ghosts of the Northern Atlantic Littoral speak to the detritus and waste of late capitalism and force a confrontation with the material violence of late capitalism's processes and systems. Often this may take the form of seemingly banal objects of the everyday: yet through these uncanny encounters with ghosts in the contact zone, I argue that protagonists must reconfigure their subjectivity to recognise it as mutually constituted with others and acknowledge their own body's implication in the more-than-human hydrocommons. In Harvey's (2003) *The Town that Forgot How to Breathe*, strange and monstrous sea creatures begin to wash up on the shores of a small outport community that has been devastated by the cod moratorium. While the novel is mostly concerned with the lasting legacy of the collapse of the cod fisheries in Newfoundland (a point I will return to later) and the impact of late capitalist modes of fishing and governance which led to its demise, one particular scene gestures toward the contamination of the hydrocommons through marine waste and pollution. During the scene an oversized red sculpin is pulled from the ocean; monstrous in appearance, the fish is described as 'exceptionally ugly'. It is covered in unfamiliar red markings that 'leak along its sides' (66) As the hook is disengaged from the fish's mouth, '[f]lesh-coloured fluid seeped from the sculpin's wide mouth. A solid object began edging out [...] a flesh-coloured sculpted orb, topped with something that resembled hair, matted in mucousy clumps [...] a small doll's head' (66). This scene creates a morbid link between the fish and humans, whereby the doll's head is an uncanny replacement for that of a human. Humans and fish thereby become imbued in a visceral and messy entanglement. Cynthia Sugars (2010) remarks that this scene emphasizes a 'continuum between fish and human' (21).[42] It constructs an unusual human/fish hybrid that interconnects humans, nonhumans and water in a visual assemblage. The monstrous fish demonstrates the ways in which material harm and waste moves transcorporeally through the hydrocommons, re-emerging on the bodies across time and space. Reflecting on the incident later in the novel, the man who catches the fish remarks

---

[42] The imagery of fish-human reproduction is also present in Crummey's *Galore* (2009): the novel begins with a man being "discovered" in the body of a whale on the shores of the fictional town of Paradise Deep in Newfoundland. Sugars (2010) connects the imagery of fish (or whale)/ human hybrids in the novels of Harvey and Crummey, arguing that the novels attempt to trace a genealogy of Newfoundlanders back to an almost primordial source in the ocean. This is a point I return to later in this chapter, and also in Chapter Three where I discuss origins and archaic mother ocean.

that the reason fish's horrifying appearance may be because the ocean is 'full of toxins' (78), and that '[t]hey dump everything in the ocean these days' (79). The fish's appearance is thus attributed to human waste and pollution. The monstrous sculpin vomiting the human head therefore acts as a morbid signifier of the harm done to the ocean by and through the human, in its visual and tangible representation of the very ways in which the sea is 'humanised' via anthropogenic waste. It shows how human activities are having lasting repercussions that linger and disseminate across the oceans. The "monster" produced might not be ghostly but the toxic effects that created it are what haunt the hydrocommons.

Wood's short story 'Flotsam, Jetsam, Lagan, Derelict', from her collection *The Sing of the Shore* (2018), offers a focus on the ways in which pollution and waste is having far-reaching consequences impacting myriad bodies across time and space. Her story charts how the ubiquitous and recurrent nature of plastic manifests as a haunting presence that disrupts teleological and material expectations as it washes upon the shoreline, recurring in the present. In the story, Mary and Vincent Layton move to the Cornish coastline in their retirement, with the retirement to the seaside signifying an end chapter in their lives. They believe that '[f]inally everything was sorted and in order: their work had reached its natural end point; finances were tied up; their children were married and settled. There were no loose ends' (109). Mary looks forward to her walks on the beach only to discover the plethora of plastic that litters the shoreline. As the story progresses, the vast and ceaseless nature of this plastic is revealed and the sense of irrevocable damage to the planet, which will continue to impact lives beyond their own, becomes one of the key motifs of the narrative. Removed from its former anthropogenic function, the plastic persists and recurs anew in the present. I argue it is this anachronism that allows it to function as a ghost and haunt Mary and Vincent as they are confronted with the plastic's return from the past. As such, it echoes Alaimo's (2012) assertion that as '[e]veryday ostensibly benign stuff' can become 'nightmarish' as it 'floats forever in the sea' (487). Like the ghost nets of *Sylvanus Now*, the plastic becomes a presence that recurs indefinitely, holding the potential to affect bodies across time and space in potentially damaging ways.[43]

Mary's first encounter with the plastic takes place during one of her morning walks on the beach. She spots a 'thing glinting further down the beach' and makes her way toward it. Upon arrival she realizes it is a 'half buried' plastic bottle, 'one of those small water bottles with ridges all around it' (110). The bottle's partial submergence denotes a sense of the uncanny – representing something hidden or repressed, which develops as Mary realizes '[i]t didn't look right. It didn't look like it was supposed to be there' (110). These remarks stress a material disjunction as the bottle is displaced from its anthropogenic

---

[43] This image of an ever present and monstrous plastic is present across many of the novels of the Northern Atlantic Littoral. It is mentioned in *The Luminous Sea* when Vivienne observes how plastic litters the shores and how the 'garbage has changed' and is now 'permanent' because 'you have all this plastic everywhere and it's getting harder to disappear us' (Barbeau 2018, 97) and in Scott Fotheringham's *The Rest is Silence* (2007) where plastic-eating bacteria mutate with devastating consequences for human life.

function into the landscape, creating a sense of the familiar within the unfamiliar: the bottle looks out-of-place and disconnected from the "natural" or expected landscape of the beach. Mary attempts to rectify this and restore the landscape to a more "natural" setting, free from plastic contamination. She attempts to bury the bottle in the sand, which in turn generates further uncanny results. Once she has completely covered the bottle, she examines her work and thinks that she 'couldn't even tell where it was any more. And later, the tide would take it away for good' (111). She strives to *re*-bury the bottle and thus repress her emotions toward it appearing it on the beach. A sense of satisfaction is felt by Mary when she represses it, indicating that its appearance had unsettled her. However, her satisfaction at burying the bottle is short lived when '[t]he next morning there were five bottles strewn across the rocks below the house (111). Mary's hope that the bottle will no longer be her responsibility is undermined when not only one bottle, but five return to litter the beach in the morning. This recurrence of the bottle functions as the uncanny return of the ghost and shows that attempts to repress the reality of the plastic on the beach will only yield uncanny results as the plastic multiplies.

Following this initial uncanny encounter, the pervasiveness of the plastic is revealed, confronting Mary and demonstrating its endurance into the future. She believes the beach is covered in seaweed that has been 'pushed in by the tide' (113) and that there are thousands of tiny 'blue and white shells' (113). When she reaches to touch the seaweed and pop it in her hands, she realizes it 'wasn't seaweed' but instead 'heaps of twisted nylon rope' (113). As she goes to pick up one of the shells the edge digs into her finger and she realizes '[i]t was a fragment of plastic. All along the tideline, as far as she could see, the beach was covered in small, sharp fragments' (113). Mary's expectations of the natural landscape are again subverted, and the anticipated nature of the beach is replaced with plastic. The sheer volume of the plastic overwhelms her expectations – visually, she believes it to be part of the natural environment, but it is only through tactile engagement that she realizes it is not; it has become the landscape through its ubiquity. Mary decides to embark on a daily beach clean where she collects all the plastic and it quickly becomes ever more present: she finds it 'tangled' in her hair and in her clothes (115) as well as 'stuck to her feet' (115). Mary's own body becomes entangled and merged with the plastic, echoing the ways in which the beach assimilates the plastic into its landscape. The plastic's ever presence that flattens and encompasses the environment, mirrors the ways in which ocean plastic is extending through the hydrocommons transcorporeally, transforming the environment in unpredictable ways.

Plastic "haunts" within the story because it functions as a warning of how it can extend transcorporeally through bodies of water. It functions as a signifier for the anthropocentric hubris of late capitalist consumer culture and how the consequences of this are wreaking untold damage upon bodies. Mary comes to this realisation lying in bed one night after having spent some time clearing the beach. She sits up suddenly, thinking:

> Where would it all go, after it had been collected? It wouldn't really be gone, would it? It would just be somewhere else, instead of here. Maybe, eventually, some of it would end up back on the beach. (117)

In this scene, Mary is acutely aware of the ways in which the plastic will not disappear entirely, but rather it is just transferred elsewhere. This hints toward the ways in which it could transcorporeally be transferred through the hydrocommons – it could 'end up back on the beach'. Its indissoluble nature means it will perpetually flow through time and space, never really disappearing from the environment, and therefore continuing to harm and alter all that it comes into contact with. For Mary, this scene marks a shift in her subjectivity as she begins to reorient herself more toward the other. Rather than the plastic being considered only in relation to her and her attempts to repress it, and its merging with her body, she begins to recognise how it might impact upon bodies beyond her own. Mary's realisation that the plastic will never truly disappear helps to establish the beach as a 'contact zone' – the site where her subjectivity begins to be more relational following her encounter with the "other". In this instance, the "other" is the plastic whose haunting presence gestures toward the interconnectivity of bodies across the hydrocommons and the material violence of late capitalism which threatens to disseminate in unknown ways across this assemblage.

The monstrous fish in *The Town That Forgot How to Breathe* and the plastic in Wood's short story haunt because they gesture to the ways in which bodies of water facilitate the transit of contaminating and toxic substances. These fictions use nonhumans and inanimate objects as relational signifiers, signalling the ways in which these substances will contaminate and pervade across bodies through water's transcorporeal currents. These examples of waste are useful for highlighting how harm to the ocean can extend across bodies and implicitly emphasize how particular actions – such as the disposal of plastic – has lasting effects. However, these examples do little to attend to agency of these absent others who may be impacted by this waste and read as somewhat detached from the conditions by which this waste was produced. While Wood's story is set on the Cornish coastline and Harvey's novel the Newfoundland one, there is little to distinguish them as such: they run the risk of situating the ocean as a vast expanse across which plastic impartially flows only to be evenly scattered across various shores. To ensure the shore is figured as a 'contact zone' through which subjectivities are reformed through encounters with the other, there needs to be consideration of the agency of both parties involved in the encounter.

This is achieved in many fictions of the Northern Atlantic Littoral not through configuration of inanimate waste but through the 'wasted lives' of those cast aside by the centralizing thrust of capital.[44] Both

---

[44] DeLoughrey (2010) connects the 'wasted lives' of the Middle Passage to the material waste of modernity to parse through historical-material interrelations. She constructs a 'grammar of heavy waters' that functions in contrast to the teleology and language of progression that dominates modernity, advocating for how these 'heavy waters' might disrupt our understandings of the sea as 'exterior to our terrestrial modernity' (708).

Sweetland and *The Gloaming* position the shore as a site of encounter with a ghostly "other". By drawing upon the hauntological properties inherent in bodies of water, these encounters illuminate the reciprocal nature of the hydrocommons: showing both how harm is disseminated and registering its effects on the bodies and agency of others. In the same way that the plastic haunted Wood's and Harvey's fictions, the ghosts of *Sweetland* and *The Gloaming* offer a reminder of the harm that late capitalism is causing the hydrocommons. Both novels depict island communities of the Northern Atlantic Littoral as neglected in favour of inland, urban spaces. The shore is a site of encounter with ghosts who make explicit capitalism's effects on other more-than-human bodies. In *Sweetland* this is figured through the Sri Lankan refugees who arrive on the shore of the fictional island 'Sweetland' in Newfoundland. The novel uses these refugees as 'harbingers of the destiny that awaits all the island's residents' (Polić 2018, 79) who will also find themselves displaced and scattered as a result of a government resettlement scheme.[45] In *The Gloaming*, the bones of three-year-old Barra, or 'Bee' as he is known, wash up on the shore near his family home on a fictional Scottish island. The discovery of Bee's bones reveals him to be the novel's narrator and he warns against conceiving of relationality as transactional. The revelation of Bee as narrator grants him agency as an absent other and he speaks also to the nonhuman lives who the rhetoric of capital marginalizes or neglects. While the examples from Harvey and Wood used waste to show how damage extends outward and speculated at how this could affect the lives of absent others beyond the self, *Sweetland* and *The Gloaming* bring these bodies forward into the space of the shore to consider their agency.

In *Sweetland*, encounters with "ghosts" at the shoreline are used to demonstrate how late capitalism's impetus is costing lives and *ways of* life: ghosts and ghost-like figures signify those who have become displaced and marginalized by the workings of neoliberalism and capital. In the novel, a government resettlement scheme seeks to move residents of a small Newfoundland island community to Canada's more urban interior centres. The resettlement scheme is based upon the Household Resettlement Scheme (1953-1977) and operated in much the same fashion as the one depicted in *Sweetland*, offering financial incentives to move Atlantic Canadians to purportedly more industrially viable centres. This highly terracentric approach devalues the lives and cultures of those who live and work in rural peripheral spaces, treating them as inferior to those in urban centres by virtue of the fact that, thanks to the fisheries collapse, these spaces have grown less economically sustainable. This perspective aligns with a neoliberal ideology that has 'frayed the [Canadian] national commitment to a system of fiscal redistribution that

---

[45] The resettlement program that the inhabitants of the island of Sweetland face is based upon the Household Resettlement Programme. Running from 1953 to 1977, it sought to move rural inhabitants of Newfoundland to purportedly more industrially viable centres in an attempt to reshape the provincial economy. Mired in controversy, the program was (and remains) divisive in many communities, forcing residents 'to make a decision that was shaped by financial incentives and, in cases where a united community decision was required by government, by peer pressure from friends and neighbours' (Vodden 2010, 225). The contentious program altered, and continues to alter, the face of Newfoundland and Labrador profoundly, and roughly half of an 'estimated 1,300 pre-resettlement communities remain' (225). There are numerous detailed studies of the socioeconomic impact of the Household Resettlement Programme; see, for example, Noel Iverson and D. Ralph Matthews who offer case studies of communities affected by the programme.

developed over the course of the twentieth-century to ensure relative parity of benefits and quality of life for Canadians in different regions of the country' (Wiley 2011, 4). An unequal distribution of wealth and benefits across the provinces has meant urban centres have seen economic growth and Atlantic Canada has seen a decline. *Sweetland* depicts the lived cost of the resettlement scheme, asking what is lost when these rural, coastal communities are disbanded.

In deploying tropes of ghosts and haunting, *Sweetland* explores how the dissipation of these communities dismantled their residents' subjectivities, resulting in a pervading sense of displacement and anxiety. The novel sets up this comparison through using the space of the shore as a site where these ghosts emerge and force a confrontation with the material violence of capitalism. The novel opens with a scene in which the eponymous character Moses Sweetland rescues a boat full of Sri Lankan refugees who have been drifting on the water off the coast of the island of Sweetland. In the scene, the Sri Lankans are depicted as ghostly; Moses hears disembodied '[v]oices' across the fog (Crummey 2014, 3). One voice shouts out from '[m]iles out on the water […] seeming to rise from the ocean itself' (3). The experience 'spooked' Moses who 'had to work up the nerve to respond' (3). Moses tows the refugees to shore where they are aided by Sweetland's residents. These descriptions characterize them as a kind of absent presence that unnerves Moses and positions them as spectral and displaced figures – liminal and in-between. In her diuscussion of the various forms of haunting that permeate the novel, Vanja Polić (2018) argues that the refugees adrift in the North Atlantic mirror the transient, extra-national nature of capital and globalisation and that the refugees will eventually symbolize the displaced islanders of Sweetland who will 'become internal exiles adrift in the spaces of Canada, all of them living ghosts' (80). Polić compares the experience of the refugees with the islanders of Sweetland. She acknowledges the ex-centricity of the Newfoundlanders and the spatial overtones of her comparison – that the Sweetlanders become 'internal exiles' – stresses that the movement inland *away* from the coast is a moment that will alter the subjectivity of the Sweetland islanders. They will become displaced figures who never fully assimilate into the more urban centres.

The comparison between the Sweetlanders and the Sri Lankans is not, however, unproblematic; the Sweetlanders retain their nationality and its accompanying privileges as they find themselves displaced across the country, while the Sri Lankans are figured as refugees. Using the Sri Lankans to foreshadow the Sweetlanders' fate also fails to acknowledge racial politics, and frames Moses as the 'white saviour' of these refugees – even suggested in his very name relating to the Biblical prophet who guided the Israelites out of slavery in Egypt. I am interested in considering this in terms of an encounter that establishes a kind of hauntology and offers an example of how the shore is framed as a site of encounter between uncanny and ghostly bodies of water that demonstrate the material violence of capitalism that operates bilaterally – both within, and extraneous to, the operations of the nation state. In *Sweetland*, Crummey's

characterisation of the refugees as ghosts from the novel's outset means that he is able to speak both to experiences of internal displacement within Canada – as a result of the resettlement scheme – whilst simultaneously acknowledging that this is an impact of the forces of late capitalism which exists beyond the structures and boundaries of the nation state. It is explained that the refugees had boarded a ship to North America and been cut loose on a lifeboat in the middle of the night (117). By virtue of their status as refugees, they embody displacement, and the descriptions of them as 'shadowy figures' – who are 'ghostly' – helps establish their position as spectral: threshold figures who function as portents of exile and dislocation. Their arrival on the shore signifies, for them, a moment of relief as they are recovered from the ocean and potential death. However, it also forces the Sweetlanders to confront the trauma of exile. The ordeal claims the lives of three of the refugees in total – it is stated that two die 'in the hold' (117) during the trip and one young boy dies on the lifeboat. The "discovery" and rescue of the Sri Lankans on the shore therefore brings into focus the violence of invisible forces of neoliberalism and capital that needlessly claims and displaces lives.

The foreshadowing of the eventual exile of the Sweetlanders also shows that the violence of capitalism and neoliberalism exist beyond and outside the parameters of the nation state. The shore becomes the space of interconnection – illuminating the paths between bodies and flows of capital/ power. This is demonstrated through Moses' eventual death. Moses vehemently refuses to accept the package offered by the government resettlement scheme and he decides to fake his own death – both so his neighbours and family can accept the scheme and leave (the scheme only pays out if everyone leaves) and so that he can remain on his eponymous island home. After months of battling against the elements, Moses eventually succumbs and dies of injuries and starvation. However, Moses returns as a ghost and walks out over the cliffs and stares across into the ocean. As he walks over the cliffs, 'companions' join him; figures who represent deceased islanders, his nephew and friend included among them (318). They stand atop the cliffs, 'a press of silent figures with their faces turned to the open sea' and Moses is 'anonymous' among them (318). The displaced islanders of Sweetland are now ghosts, their community and home pulled apart. The anonymous ghostly figures staring out to sea brings functions as a reminder of the Sri Lankan refugees' spectral characterisation. Rather than staring inward to land, the Sweetlanders stare outward to sea showing how the space of the coast can be a site that characterizes the material violence both from within and external to individual nation states. The Sweetlanders and Sri Lankans are connected by becoming the 'wasted lives' of capitalism and demonstrate the material consequences of the all-too-often unseen flows of power and meaning.

In *The Gloaming*, the inhabitants of a small Scottish island are characterized in much the same spectral fashion as the Sweetlanders. In the novel, the Ross family run a guest house on the island, and the house stands as a microcosm for the whole of the island as it battles against a shifting economy and declining

tourism. No guests frequent the house throughout the novel's entirety and the family is caught in the increasingly futile task of the house's upkeep, battling against damp, mould and general wear and tear. As the house falls steadily into a state of disrepair, the mother and daughters find themselves regularly referring to the supposed 'guests' as 'ghosts'. One of the daughters, Mara, claims that '[a]ll this damp would be no good for the ghosts. The guests' (Logan 2018, 255). When someone breaks a cup and saucer, Signe, the mother, remarks of their attempt to clean up the mess that '[a] cloth won't make it so that the ghosts can use it' (228). Like the house, the island too is described as 'peopled with ghosts' (263) and depicted as past its prime – with the church in 'ruins' and the pub and local shop barely scraping by. Mara compares the island and the home, stating that 'the house – the whole island – was a ramshackle pit of junk that was turning them all to stone' (255). The islanders and home are conveyed in a such a way that suggests they are disappearing, becoming gradually erased by a more terracentric worldview. As in *Sweetland*, the comparison of the islanders and guests as ghosts suggests an impermanence and disappearing way of life on the island.

This disappearing way of life is also hinted at through the building of a bridge that is intended to connect the island to the mainland. The bridge is a spectral presence in the text – it is discussed only infrequently and its construction is not central to the plot's development; it is viewed as that which might connect the islanders to the absent others of the mainland and offers an imagined promise of a potential bustling future for the island. Yet many are sceptical of the benefits of the bridge and I argue that this scepticism arises from their perception of it as threatening their way of life with erasure. The bridge offers Signe and the family the promise of business for the guest house; Signe exclaims '[i]t will be wonderful for the island. And the guest house! Just imagine. We thought we'd be scraping by […] Soon we'll be open to the whole of the mainland. Thousands of people – tens of thousands' (168). Signe projects an imagined future where the guest house is full and business is booming. However, her husband, Peter is more concerned at what the guest house will 'cost' them because there 'always needs to be a bargain' (169). Peter's apprehension frames the bridge in transactional terms. In doing so, he seems to suggest the bridge will take something from them – something unknown – in order to give something in return. The possible guests and future Signe imagines never arrive and so become the ghosts of the guest house. The bridge stands in as a metaphor for the promise of connectivity that capitalism might afford but this promise is never realized and causes more harm than good. At the end of the novel when a storm destroys the bridge and its connective potential, this is depicted as a restorative moment since, in its destruction, 'everything went back to how it had been once, long ago' (430) suggesting that without the bridge, a different way of life remains – one that is not so readily subsumed into the perceived terracentric and capitalist worldview of the mainland.

This disappearing way of life is marked in the novel by the death of the family's young child – a moment that moves the narrative from recounting idyllic scenes of family life and childhood on the island where everything was 'golden' and 'magic' (411) to one that shows the Ross family struggling to work through their grief. Near the novel's beginning, three-year-old Bee drowns at sea. Much of the plot follows his two sisters and parents as they attempt to continue in their lives with this tragedy overshadowing them. Toward the novel's end Signe discovers Bee's bones at the shoreline. Despite the bones being 'dirty from their time in the sea, caked in sand and wrapped in seaweed, their edges smoothed by the tumble of waves' (286), Signe knows they are Bee's and the narrative voice claims 'they were small and real and mine' (286), thereby proclaiming that Bee has been the narrator of the story so far all along and not an omniscient third person. This moment is highly significant because it acknowledges Bee as an absent presence who has been narrating the events thus far and consequently holds some agential capacity. The scene is framed in relational terms that support this and recognise the hauntological properties of bodies of water. The return of Bee's bones allows his family to move on from their grief. He says of his sisters, 'I think they were almost ready to stop dreaming and see the world for what it was. But […] How could that other world not be real, when there I was pulling them towards it?' (288). Bee stresses here a sense that the disappearing idyllic and romanticized view of life on the island that they had as children will hold his sisters and family back from moving on. He consequently recognises that he has to return some part of himself in order for his family to overcome their grief. He has to give over part of his own materiality, offered up from the hydrocommons so that his family can carry on into an unknowable future. This unknowability is stressed when Bee claims that he is no longer able to narrate their story because he does not 'know' and he leaves the narrative after the recovery of his bones (431).

Despite offering up his own materiality so that his family can move on, Bee's death functions as a warning of perceiving of relationality in transactional terms; it is not a "bargain" he is striking but a more thoughtful and responsive act. Throughout the novel the relationship with the sea and nature is frequently described in language that relates to exchange. At the beginning of the novel, the girls go to the shore and confess their 'sins' to the sea, asking the sea to 'take' them. These 'sins' are small grudges or problems like borrowing earrings from one another or spilling tea and blaming it on their brother (6). It is explained that this is a behaviour they learn from their mother, who every month went and 'unburdened' herself to the sea but 'did not expect anything in return' (157). Her daughters begin to copy her although they 'expect something in return' (158). They felt '[w]hy give something for nothing? […] They gave something to the sea, and because they expected it, they got something back' (158). The feeling of expectation, that the sea owes the girls something in return for these confessions, creates a one-sided relationship with the nonhuman and fails to acknowledge their anthropocentric privilege. This pattern, and relationship, is repeated throughout the novel – at various points the daughters feel that if they confess to the sea in some way, they will get something in return. The girls realize, however, that Bee's

death occurred as he tried to mimic their actions. When he goes missing from his bed one night, his sister Mara thinks he would never go to the beach 'unless, maybe, he'd given a beetle to the sea, and wanted to know what it had given him in return' (48). Mara realizes that Bee has mimicked them, and this has resulted in him wondering down to the beach alone and being pulled under by the waves. Bee's life is also framed as a tragic consequence of anthropocentrism and the result of conceiving of the world and hydrocommons within these terms.

Yet the discovery of Bee's bones prompts a renegotiation of this one-sided relationship with the nonhuman into something more relational. The daughters had framed their relationship with the sea in terms of bargaining and deal-making but had not recognised that these are anthropocentric impositions onto the environment, and that the environment holds its own agential capacities, that can be separate from that of the human. Bee explains the ineffectuality of perceiving of the world in transactional terms when he states '[h]owever hard we try to make a deal with the world, the world hasn't agreed. Nature can't love us back' (286). The language of exchange and bargaining used here shows the futility of trying to impose human capitalist values onto the nonhuman world. Bee's language also ascribes agency to nonhuman world; he states that nature '*can't* love us back' it '*hasn't agreed*' (287; emphasis mine) suggesting that attempts to anthropomorphize the environment are in vain. He goes on to underscore this point further and claims that when jellyfish sting, '[w]e might think, *Why did this happen to me?* But we might as well ask, *Why did this happen to the jellyfish?*' (287; emphasis in original). Bee advocates here as much for the agency of the jellyfish as for the agency of the human. This shift in rhetoric occurs when Bee's bones are discovered on the shore and he is revealed to be the narrator, thereby making the shore a space where a shift toward relational subjectivity is prompted. He asks through this moment that whoever he is addressing begins to think beyond relationality as transactional and recognise it as something nebulous, cyclical and continuous rather than teleological and progressive. Bee's explanation shows how transcorporeality considers the agency of others through relationality: as materiality extends, it does so in unknown increments across time and space so that the water and materiality of my body may be repeated across multiple bodies at multiple times but always these channels hold with them the flows of power and meaning that determine the agency granted to others. Bodies of water haunt because their materiality is anachronistic; as bodies transfer their materiality, they condition the lives of others and impact their agency, but this cannot and does not follow a linear temporality but is instead relational and cyclical.

In both *Sweetland* and *The Gloaming*, a sense of loss is articulated: loss of ways of life and lives triggered by the often invisible processes of capital. These processes include displacement incurred through neoliberalism and capitalist ideologies and through naturalizing language of exchange so as to create a one-sided anthropocentric relationship. Using these examples, both novels offer ghostly presences who show how these effects extend outward across the ocean and impact the lives of others – both human

and nonhuman. In both *The Gloaming* and *Sweetland* the ghosts are granted an agency that allows them to narrate how these invisible effects have rendered them absent presences and spectral figures who are often ignored. By deploying ghosts at the shoreline, *The Gloaming* and *Sweetland* emphasize the significance of relationality, stressing how absent others are so often responsible for conditioning life in the hydrocommons. By giving these ghosts agency, these novels offer an insight into the extension of harm across bodies in the hydrocommons that both Wood's and Harvey's narratives gesture toward. In their texts, plastic and pollution are used as relational signifiers to haunt the protagonists and demonstrate how this harm can extend beyond the self.

In the following section, I continue an examination of the material violence committed against bodies of water through charting the spectrality of digital technology and its production of ghosts.[46] While connectivity through digital technology is often coded as unseen or invisible, it is underpinned by a materiality that is both mapped onto and pollutes the oceans and bodies of water. This paradox of being both unseen and seen makes digital technology spectral. I examine how ghosts are used in fictions of the Northern Atlantic Littoral to map the material effects of digital technology on bodies of water and emphasize how connectivity through digital technology is neither benign nor passive but inherently bound up with the flows of capitalism and power.

RADIO/MICRO/TIDAL WAVES

In fictions of the Northern Atlantic Littoral digital technology is depicted as damaging communities as it disrupts connection to the ocean and rural ways of life. In the fictions discussed in this section – Harvey's *The Town that Forgot How to Breathe*, Wood's short story 'Cables', and Crummey's *Sweetland* – technology is seen to impinge upon ways of life and haunt the protagonists. I read a tension between the promise of technology's connective capacities and the ways in which the materiality of digital technology is actually harming bodies of water. In Wood's 'Cables', a man is driven mad by voices in his head which he believes come from the undersea telecommunications cables and so he repeatedly digs them up, only for the sea to fill in the holes and the cycle begin again. In *Sweetland*, obsolete digital technologies wash up on the shore and function as a metaphor for the growing economic obsolescence of the islanders' way of life. *Sweetland* also touches upon the virtual effects/affects of digital technology when radio broadcasts and internet searches demonstrate a disconnect between how the outside world perceives of the island versus its lived reality. In *The Town That Forgot How to Breathe* residents realize that radio- and microwaves have disrupted a material connection to the North Atlantic and Bareneed inhabitants' fishing heritage. In these texts, technology is presented as disconnecting bodies of water from one another, rather than connecting them across the hydrocommons.

---

[46] I use digital technology throughout this thesis to refer to devices or systems that process data.

The fictions examined in this section depict digital technology as a haunting presence and deploy their own ghosts to gesture toward a material disjunction incurred through this – whether that is its virtual and connective capacities or its material basis. In *Spectres of Marx*, Derrida posits a hauntology of digital technology and claims it as a space where ghosts manifest readily; he claims digital technology is 'neither living nor dead, present nor absent: it spectralizes' (51) Digital technology offers an unusual contradiction in that has a material basis but operates in unseen and unknowable ways. This virtual capacity of technology operates in myriad ways; for example, the digital extension of ourselves presented online is accompanied by algorithms that predict our own behaviours and preferences, while financial data and transactions seem to float free of their material basis. The virtuality of digital technology is nonetheless mediated through material devices – phones, laptops, tablets, bank machines *etc.*, which simplify the extensive virtual operations of these processes and increase the user's sense that this virtual world has a presence and bearing on the material. Line Henriksen (2016) argues it is this particular nuance of the digital's virtuality that makes it particularly spectral since these systems which are 'intended to bring about immediate, vast knowledge are to such a large extent made possible through such complexities that it is impossible for the average user to fully understand. Here, absence is indeed what makes presence possible, and it is the space of notknowingness that connects, but never fully explains' (25). Technology's hauntology is that it operates primarily in unseen and unknown ways that facilitate its presence in the material.

Digital technology's spectral nature means it echoes the hauntology of bodies of water – its operations across time and space are largely unseen but its absence is what facilitates its being and presence. Nonetheless, digital technology is placed at odds with bodies of water – a point I argue is related to the ways in which, in spite of its supposed immateriality, it can inflict material harm upon the hydrocommons and consequently produce ghosts who emerge as a result of its damaging influence. Access to, and representation via, digital technologies is heavily mediated by power and capital and so digital technologies become indicators of the inequalities that permeate the globe. The infrastructure which supports access to technology – both in terms of internet access and connectivity, and the hardware of products and devices – has largely been built upon pre-existing colonial systems and thus enabled a technological acceleration in the west: whether through the mines in Cerro Rico, Bolivia, which once supplied silver to the Spanish Empire but now provide tin for iPhones,[47] or through the fact that large swathes of the undersea telecommunications cables providing fibre-optic internet access across the world

---

[47] Brian Merchant (2017) discusses the relation between the Spanish silver mines and the mines that Apple use for iPhones in Bolivia in a piece for the *LA Times*. In the piece, he traces the raw materials that comprise iPhones and, across his journey, he uncovers the harsh conditions many workers for Apple endure.

are mapped onto the routes of the Middle Passage.[48] Implementing these systems has a cost; as humans labour to provide these systems, lives are lost and, as the materiality of these systems is mapped onto spaces, assemblages and ecosystems suffer as the landscape alters and species are lost in the process. The expansion of the virtual consequently facilitates a shrinkage in the material.

This section focusses on the ghosts produced in fictions of the Northern Atlantic Littoral through technological systems and products that have been implanted on the Atlantic Ocean. Material violence is felt through both undersea telecommunications cables and the imposition of technology onto human/ocean assemblages.[49] While the focus here is western, these texts use ghosts and haunting to show both how harm extends and how its repercussions *could* be felt. Like the plastic in Wood's 'Flotsam, Jetsam, Lagan, Derelict', technology is a ghostly signifier in these texts that demonstrates how harm might extend through the hydrocommons. As cables and computers are dug up or washed ashore, they become uncanny – disassociated from their connective capacities and virtual functions as they are rendered obsolete. Meanwhile, internet and radio representations of the coastal communities of the Northern Atlantic Littoral offer a disjunction to lived reality. In *Sweetland*, for example, an internet search to help a sickly cow yields millions of results but none that are usable by the Sweetlanders (Crummey 2014, 51), suggesting a growing disconnect between the situated and embodied epistemologies of the islanders and the modern world, and which feeds into the growing obsolescence of the islanders' way of life. Disjunctions such as this occur when technology is imposed onto the littoral communities and so all these texts thereby question the progressive promise of technology, gesturing to how its unseen effects have lived material consequences.

In Wood's 'Cables', the virtual and the material effects of technology converge on the shoreline with uncanny consequences. The story is a metaphor for the ubiquitous and pervasive imposition of the virtual onto the material as an unnamed man is slowly driven mad when he considers the overwhelming amount of information transferred via undersea telecommunications cables. The story interrogates the relationship between the virtual and the material through the man's supposed belief that the cables are responsible for his gradual mental decline, which is conveyed through him undertaking the fruitless task of digging holes on the beach every day to intercept the telecommunications cables, only for the tide to refill them with water and sand. The story illuminates both virtual's materiality and its haunting potential;

---

[48] Transatlantic undersea cables used for telecommunications in the west mirror the route of the Atlantic triangular slave trade: these can be traced this on the 'Submarine Cable Map', provided by TeleGeoraph (https://www.submarinecablemap.com).

[49] Nicole Starosielski's *The Undersea Network* (2015) speaks specifically to the intersections between undersea telecommunications cables, the contemporary world and human populations. The preface to her book documents a poignant moment during her ethnographic studies where she encounters a monument to the cable Honotua which links Tahiti to Hawaiʻi. The monument does not 'describe undersea cables as a new technology but instead highlights the continuity between the light waves that transmit information and the ocean waves that have carried islanders across the Pacific' (xii). In drawing a comparison between the materiality of these waves, the monument conveys how human/ocean/technology are all implicated in a complex material assemblage that connects them epistemologically and ontologically together.

its continued unseen presence drives the man mad as he attempts to locate its source and presence on the beach. The man is *haunted* by the virtual, but it is in the material that his madness manifests when the virtual takes a toll on his physical and mental state. Even as the man descends into madness and digs up the cables, he recognises that there is a material basis for that which is haunting him. Moreover, the story emphasizes that even humans are connected through the virtual, and that we are also connected across the ocean by material in the form of these undersea cables which *facilitate* its existence. The story therefore gestures to the material violence that the virtual is causing bodies of water by underlining its haunting potential and making uncanny the source of its production.

The story of the unnamed man is relayed through the dialogue between two acquaintances – Fran and Morrie. Their conversation, whilst seated on a bench overlooking the beach, speculates about the reasons behind the overnight appearance of several holes on shoreline. They suggest these have been dug by an unnamed common acquaintance of theirs. They state that one hole is so big 'you could climb a ladder down' it and that they have heard there is a 'systemic' pattern to the way in which they have been dug (Wood 2018, 170). Through this conversation, it is revealed that the unnamed man was something of a busybody who 'had to know everything' about the people in the community (171). There is an implicit irony throughout the story that Fran and Morrie's gossip about the man mirrors the man's own alleged busybody nature. Fran and Morrie insinuate that the man's desire to 'know everything' is what prompted him to start 'thinking about the cables' (171) and '[h]ow they come in under the beach. How they're passing by, right under his feet. With all that information. All those communications' (171). Yet Fran and Morrie demonstrate a similar motivation to 'know everything' that's going on in their very discussion of the unnamed man. Katleen Gabriels and Charlotte De Backer (2016) have discussed the relation between gossip and media usage, outlining how they share overlapping motivations, whereby both are used for 'passing on information, group cohesion and protection, entertainment and the manipulation of reputations' (684.) Fran, Morrie and unnamed man become related via their desire to 'know everything' and exchange information. These resonances between the online communication and gossip is reflected in a moment of fast-paced dialogue that parallels the medium of online messaging. The two acquaintances speculate on the nature of the information transferred via the cables:

> "I heard it's telephone calls."
> "I heard it's emails."
> "Financial transactions."
> "The stock exchange."
> "Internet searches."
> "Messages."
> "All of it."
> "Everything."

   "Right here, under the sand." (171-172)

The form of this quick conversational exchange is used to parallel the virtual exchange of 'everything' in the modern world. The vast and unseen nature of the virtual is highlighted as systems and processes that underpin modern life are shown to be circulating supposedly immaterially around the globe. Yet they have, nonetheless, as Fran and Morrie note, a very material basis in the sand below their feet.

The story therefore begins to correlate the material and the virtual; Fran and Morrie speculate that the virtual is the cause behind the man's unusual behaviour. They claim that this information existing below has begun to impact the unnamed man physically and mentally. Fran and Morrie claim he 'couldn't' and 'wouldn't stop thinking about it all' (172) and '[t]hen, one day, he heard a buzzing' (172). Fran and Morrie express that this buzzing is faint at first but begins to plague the man everywhere he goes and it starts to get louder. He allegedly becomes incredibly distracted by this noise – unable to sleep, read, watch TV or hold a conversation (173). His own mental and physical state is affected by the buzzing. The implication is that the virtual has begun to haunt the unnamed man; his busybody nature and desire to 'know everything' (171) has materialised and is recurring as an incessant and implacable buzzing in the present. Rather than offering a moment of connectivity, the man becomes disconnected and distracted by the virtual; he loses his job and, it is suggested, he now lives alone because of it (173). Fran and Morrie imply that this buzzing means he needs to work out how access the cables. However, the futile exercise of digging these holes adds to the haunting atmosphere and sense of madness, since the holes simply refill with water and sand after they have been dug (173). In his attempt to pinpoint the material source of his haunting, he becomes ever more haunted and driven into madness by the 'systemic' (171) nature of the virtual.

In digging up the cables, the man shores up the materiality of the virtual world of capital and information exchange, gesturing to the notion that humans are as connected materially through the cables as we are "virtually". Yet the cables themselves cause harm – both as the source of that which drives the man mad and that which must be 'dug up' in order to reveal itself. The uncovering of the cables is therefore an uncanny revelation, showing that which is normally unseen and hidden has a very real material basis. This mirrors the uncanny potential of bodies of water, demonstrating that, even as bodies are connected through their virtual potential, they are grounded in the material. Like the information transferred across the ocean via the undersea cables, bodies are interconnected materially through water and are a haunted by the unknowable extension of this water across time and space. The haunting sound of the buzzing in 'Cables' is a reminder of the futility of attempting to 'know everything' and that even as "we" are connected across time and space through technology and its virtual potential, there is no way to grasp all of this information at once. The virtual therefore haunts because it is a signifier for the unknowable

dissemination of bodies of water and it shows how harm can transfer via these transcorporeal processes and register materially on the bodies of others.

The story's ending compounds the irony of Fran and Morrie's gossip and attempt to 'know' exactly the rationale behind the man's digging. As they finish discussing him, Morrie remarks 'I don't know if I just heard something' to which Fran replies 'Maybe I heard something too' (174). The two think they can also hear the barely perceptible buzzing that the man had noticed and, in another fast-paced, exchange they muse:

> "What if you did start thinking about it?" Fran says.
>
> "All of it."
>
> "Everything."
>
> "Passing you by."
>
> "Every minute."
>
> "Every second." (174)

By focussing on the ubiquity of the virtual, the two also begin to recognise its haunting potential. By discussing and fixating on it, by 'thinking' about it, the two begin to feel its haunting presence permeate their own bodies as they *think* hear something akin to the 'buzzing'. The two acknowledge that the virtual could be permeating and impacting upon their own materiality, but the fact that the virtual is an absent presence renders it uncanny as the two do not know whether or not this buzzing is actually real. Like the unknowable dispersal of aqueous materiality across bodies, the virtual's actual presence is unseen but its influence is material and lived. Fran and Morrie quickly dismiss the sound, claiming they 'don't *think*' (174; emphasis mine) they can hear it anymore, but the uncertainty lingers in the story and there is no real clarity as to whether or not they actually heard the buzzing or not. The uncanny and haunting nature of bodies of water and technology are implicated in 'Cables', stressing how virtuality can extend materially – both technologically and aqueously – across bodies and impact upon them.

Harvey's *The Town That Forgot How to Breathe* offers a similar convergence of materiality, virtuality and water as it interrogates technology's supposed immateriality. *The Town That Forgot How to Breathe* conjures ghosts to forge a connection to place and to the Northern Atlantic. When the ghosts of this town begin to disappear owing to 'microwaves' intercepting the connection between the ghosts and the town's inhabitants (205), both lives and ways of life connected to the fishery begin to be lost too. Set in the aftermath of the 1992 cod moratorium, the novel depicts the inhabitants of the small town as out of work, listless and depressed as they struggle to cope with the moratorium's socioeconomic consequences. Harvey suggests that the moratorium has destabilized the Bareneed residents' identity, which had its basis in their fishing heritage and connectivity to the ocean. The novel firstly sets up a dependency upon ghosts and ancestry, which it then suggests has been severed due to the moratorium. The ghosts in the novel

appear to affirm familial and ancestral links to the community, with one character, at the novel's beginning, believing that the ghosts

> were filled with the blaze of their ancestors, lineage that trailed after them like a stream of unbroken dusty amber. This was the endowment when a mortal passed on – the melding of energy of familial souls linking the chain of spirits, augmenting their command of the absolute. (10)

Ghosts in the novel are vital connections that assert an ancestral link across history. There is a sense of responsibility that 'mortals' must join their familial spirits to strengthen this and its importance for the community. The novel thus foregrounds a sense of reverence for the ghosts, positioning them as a stabilizing , even empowering, influence over individuals from Bareneed.

The novel sets up the conditions for haunting to be felt by utilizing ghosts to situate the people of Bareneed into a longstanding relationship with the place and, more specifically, the North Atlantic Ocean. It is through disrupting the material conditions of this relationship that a sense of disjunction and shock is created when the ghosts that tie them to this place begin to disappear. The environment and North Atlantic Ocean are positioned as providing not just a livelihood and sense of purpose but a fundamental part of the Bareneed people's sense of self. Consequently, when this connectivity is broken, characters begin to lose the sense of self they have built up around place. Characters in the novel echo this sentiment at various points as they reflect on their lives. Unemployed and disenchanted, one character comments that she now 'had nothing. Nothing. […] No job. Bareneed, once a lively and warm place, now stank of drabness and heartbreak' (18). The character stresses a feeling of disenchantment with a place that she once felt intimately connected to but now, having been made redundant, she no longer views the town with the same affection she once did. Another character expresses a similar sentiment, stating that he 'hated where he lived, the land and the sea' before instantly connecting this with 'the sensations that he was losing his mind, losing his breath, losing who he was. A plague of pointlessness tormented his bones' (27). As he feels a growing disenfranchisement with the place he lived and worked, his sense of self and 'who he was' simultaneously begins to disappear. The novel consequently places a relationship with place as a foundational bedrock for constructing one's sense of self.

The ghosts of Bareneed offer a slight divergence from the hauntology of water in that they are already a manifestation of absent others – of deceased ancestors. It is the absence of these ghosts that haunts the protagonists. This is a common trope in the Canadian Gothic that attempts to construct a historicized relationship to the Canadian landscape by infusing it with Gothic elements. Sugars (2011) identifies this trope across Anglo-Canadian Gothic fictions in the twentieth- and twenty-first centuries, and describes the paradoxical use of Gothic to historicize place as a 'settled unsettlement' (59). She states that for many settler authors writing about Canada, they were 'plagued by the apparent absence of a legitimating folklore

that would authenticate their experience of the place' and so sought to 'infuse their world with Gothic presence, turning to the Gothic as a form of national substantiation' (65). Confronted with the lack of a history that might legitimize their settlement in Canada, these authors draw on and deploy Gothic tropes in order to construct and story their relationship to place.[50] However, as Sugars argues, the use of these Gothic tropes has unintended consequences that subvert the uncanniness normally associated with them. In the 'creation of a homemade tradition of self-invented ghosts' there 'yields up a paradox by which the inherited Gothic was defamiliarized by being rendered reassuring and "familiar"' (65). Since these tropes were intentionally placed to create a history that reassured settler descendants of their sense of belonging in Canada, they lost their traditional "Gothic" uncanniness. This is what happens in *The Town That Forgot How to Breathe*, wherein ghosts offer reassurance that the Bareneed inhabitants have a connection to the outport and, when this vanishes, the people of Bareneed are left adrift without a connection to the 'absent others' to whom their own existence is indebted.

The connection to place is consequently disrupted when the ghosts of Bareneed begin to disappear. Harvey suggests that technology – namely, 'microwaves' from modern technology – are disrupting the Bareneed inhabitants' connection to their ancestral ghosts and consequently to Bareneed itself. This is exemplified in a conversation between Miss Laracy, an elderly Bareneed inhabitant who communes with ghosts and has a very strong strong knowledge of Bareneed's history, and Kim, a young stranger to the town. The two women discuss the reason behind the ghosts' disappearance. Miss Laracy posits that it began when television came to the outport and that the spirits disappeared because 'stuff in da air dat slice da spirits ta pieces. It pains dem' (204). Kim suggests to Miss Laracy that this 'stuff in da air' is '[m]icrowaves' from 'televisions and cellphones and computers. Everything electronic' (205). Technology is depicted as shattering and destroying the residents' connection to their ancestry. This is a point that one of the ghosts of the novel, Jessica, also comments upon. She claims that the 'wirewaves' are damaging her connection to her mother (who is alive), and that these wirewaves are 'blocking spirits' from visiting their descendants (233). They block the connection because the spirits are 'just energy' and, as such, take on 'what's in the wirewaves' (233), thereby becoming a combination of different energies. Jessica explains to her mother that '[e]verything's going through me. People talking, all these people talking and channels, billions of channels, radio and TV. The noise! […] I can't be your daughter […] Not down here!' (234). Jessica suggests that the damaging effects of the technology are such that she becomes conflated with

---

[50] The strategy of constructing a legitimating folklore to embed oneself into the Canadian landscape has implications for indigenous communities. Sugars (2011) discusses how indigenous writers offer an important counterpoint to settler Gothic narratives, "writing back" through their deployment of ghosts, spirits and monsters who are specific to indigenous communities. The use of these Native spirits destabilizes the western Gothic tradition that the settler narratives deploy, and produces an '"unhomely" effect […] directed primarily at non-Native readers' as they signal the 'incompletion of the project of settlement' (75).

other energies and sources of information so that she is no longer the Jessica her mother knew. Through free indirect discourse, it is revealed that her mother recognises this. She senses that 'Jessica was changed, a mixture of her true self and other elements. Unsavoury elements. A corruption' (233). Jessica's altered state, and her compounding with other energies, indicate that there is some transcorporeal (or transspiritual) element that connects across bodies and spirits in Bareneed. The ghosts are susceptible to the transferral of energy and information through their "bodies" which can harm and damage them in some way. This, in turn, breaks their connection to their descendants and the people of Bareneed lose part of their connection to place.

The people of Bareneed begin to lose their connection to both the ghosts and, by extension, place. The lack of ghosts has a physiological effect on the residents as a mysterious breathing illness begins to inflict the townspeople. The illness causes respiratory problems that leave the sufferers quite literally "forgetting how to breathe" and leads to the hospitalisation, and subsequent death, of many of the inflicted. Furthermore, the illness causes sufferers to "forget" their sense of self: disconnected from the place upon which they have built their subjectivity, they no longer remember who they are. Whilst lying in her hospital bed, struggling to breathe, one character asks the doctor 'What am I?' (212). The doctor replies 'You're a woman. Donna Drover' (212). This is not sufficient, and she presses again 'No…*what* am I?' (212; emphasis in original). This question bothers the doctor, who cannot fathom why she did not ask 'Who am I?' but '*What?*' (213; emphasis in original). The slippage of pronouns shows an instability in Drover's sense of self – an uncertainty caused by her separation from place, the ocean and her fishing heritage. As the story unfolds, it is revealed that only those who worked in the fishery have been impacted by the illness, directly correlating the illness and the moratorium. I read this illness as being triggered by a disconnect from the ocean and water more broadly.

Crucially, both Miss Laracy and Jessica imply that the connection broken by technology is also an aqueous one, suggesting that the Bareneed inhabitants are otherwise connected in some way via water. Miss Laracy says of the new technology: '[d]at stuff dry out da body too. Make a person wickedly 'tirsty. I used ta watch television many a year ago and I'd be all shrivelled after. Craved water like nuttin' else' (205). Implicit within Miss Laracy's comment is the idea that technology not only has disrupted the Bareneed inhabitants' connection to place but that this connection is related to water. This is something Jessica supports, claiming that it is '[t]he water in your body' which 'moves the wirewaves all through you. The wirewaves make you sick. They make you feel like you're never at peace, don't belong, and you never know why' (233). Jessica's explanation is transcorporeal in nature, suggesting that the materiality of bodies is what enables the 'wirewaves' to move through bodies, impacting both one's sense of self by creating a feeling of displacement and making one physically ill. This connectivity through water is further outlined by Jessica's claim that there is a hole in the bottom of the sea 'where everything came from, where they

all [the ghosts and humans] came from once. Where water came from too' (365). The North Atlantic Ocean becomes the medium through which all bodies are interrelated and is the originary space from which bodies are 'bath[ed] into being' (Neimanis 2017, 68). As such, the transcorporeal and permeating capabilities of the Atlantic Ocean are emphasized in Harvey's novel.

The connectivity via water is reinforced in a scene where Jessica states that, "'[t]he rain is just part of the sea […] It knows. Water drags back to water and in its course carries the lot. In time, particles of everyone and everything end up down there." Jessica tipped her head toward the ocean. "There's not a single exception. Sea level"' (258). Through this slightly skewed take on the hydrological cycle, Jessica suggests everyone is materially implicated into the hydrocommons through a mutual elemental connection. The corruption and separation from place triggered by the moratorium is not simply a separation from Bareneed as a specific "place", but rather a break in a vital assemblage connecting people, the ocean and the nonhuman. The break in this chain between humans and ghosts inevitably reverberates across the hydrocommons and emerges as an illness that leaves the sufferers forgetting how to breathe, reinforcing the material dependency between and among all bodies of water. As with the technology in 'Cables', the technology in *The Town That Forgot How to Breathe* is a haunting presence as it co-opts bodies of water and utilizes these interconnections to transfer 'harm' across the hydrocommons.

The connection through water in Bareneed is underscored by a tidal wave which devastates everything on land but remarkably leaves the boats in the water undamaged (469). The tidal wave reconnects everyone in Bareneed into the hydrocommons through a mode of baptismal submersion. Its levelling effect brings families back together as 'children flocked to their parents, welcoming them home with open arms' (469) and the mysterious illness seems to disappear entirely. Aqueous interconnection is reinforced through the effacement of technology from Bareneed; the tidal wave blows out the power lines, forcing the Bareneed residents to exist by 'candlelight, oil, and kerosene lamp' (470). Even when the power is repaired, the residents reject it and 'every last person reverted to lamplight and wood stove, and a special sitting of the council was convened to order the removal of the new power lines' (470). With all the Bareneed residents now revelling in a technology-free community, they gather around telling stories to one another and eventually return to fishing as 'the fish were gradually replenished' (470). A lack of technology becomes correlated with an idyllic image of community – of reconnecting with one another, both human and nonhuman. *The Town That Forgot How to Breathe* suggests that the reinstatement of community via the effacement of technology can somehow overcome the breakdown of assemblages that late-capitalism and its accompanying modes of technology have enforced, and simply 'replenish' the fish stocks to the ocean. While the novel worked to establish the necessity of the human/ fish/ ocean interconnection across the hydrocommons, the proselytizing image it ends on elides entirely the flows of power that mediate the assemblage and returns to an image of the ocean as a vast space of infinite

resource. Instead of working through the entanglements of human/fish/technology that permeate and pervade the ocean, the novel rejects these ideas, preferring to end on an image of the ocean as separate to the flows of power and meaning that flow through late capitalist structures.

Crummey's *Sweetland* offers a similar image of technology and the systems of late capitalism as inherently disconnected from the lived reality of the Northern Atlantic Littoral. Systems that are supposed to reliably provide information or document life on the island prove unreliable on the island of Sweetland and set it apart from the inland centres. In the opening chapters Moses remarks to government officials that he will not be able to get a mobile phone signal on the island because the island is '[t]he edge of the civilized world' (6). The island is positioned as ex-centric and outside of the more ubiquitous systems and processes of late capitalism, like mobile phone masts. This positioning continues throughout the novel and becomes more pronounced after Moses is left alone on the island and "dies".[51] Through this disconnect, I read the erasure of Sweetland the island and the erasure of Moses as connected. As in both Wood's and Harvey's fictions, the virtual potential of bodies of water and the virtuality of technology become overlaid onto one another so that the flows of power and meaning which accompany technology's infrastructures and influence, impact and harm other bodies of water in the hydrocommons. In the same vein as Moses' own eventual ghostly transformation, the island too becomes a kind of absent presence that exists on the threshold of the internal spaces ordained as more economically viable. While the disappearance of technology in *The Town That Forgot How to Breathe* pulled the citizens of Bareneed together in a communal "harking-back" to more traditional modes of living, the lack of technology in Sweetland is seen to be its demise. Forgotten and alienated by systems and processes of late capitalism and its accompanying technologies – and absent of any people through whom the island might be storied – there remains no way through which the island can be made epistemologically present, and so Sweetland the island undergoes a spectralisation that haunts the Northern Atlantic Littoral. [52]

This spectralisation begins, as I have mentioned, by using a lack of technological capacity to position the island as ex-centric and separate to interior urban centres that have been deemed more industrious and economically profitable. Moses explains to the government official that the lack of mobile phone reception is down to a lack of a mobile phone mast; he describes how '[t]hey was talking about putting up a tower years back. Never got round to it' (6). Implicit here is the notion that the island's technological

---

[51] The moment of Moses' death in the novel is unclear – a point observed by both Laurie Brinklow (2011) and Paul Chafe (2017), the former discussing myriad moments immediately after the end of the novel's first half where this could possibly have happened (140). The ambiguity and uncertainty around Moses' death adds, I argue, to the second half's Gothic overtones and demonstrates a generic shift from the realism of the novel's first half to the gothic and uncanny second. I discuss the implications of this in Chapter Three.

[52] There is, of course, the bigger question here about what kind of epistemologies are required to make something knowable. The spectralisation of Sweetland corresponds to the Enlightenment project of mapping (of which the Mercator Projection that began this thesis is an example) as a means through which power and meaning are attributed to spaces. Its dissolution consequently signals the futility of these methodologies to adequately convey the lived reality of bodies of water.

infrastructure has been somewhat neglected by an external influence, conveying the impression that the island is somehow less economically viable and disconnected from the urban spaces of the mainland. However, Moses explains that the islanders still have some internet access which he uses for both his 'banking' and 'online poker' (6). Slightly later in the novel, it is explained that Moses has been taught how to use the computer by his great-nephew, Jesse. Prior to buying an old desktop off a fellow islander, he 'had never so much as used a telephone before his first trip to the mainland with Duke in 1962' and it 'seemed a minor miracle now to find himself in the house where he was born, Skyping with a twelve-year-old' (61). There is both a generational gap expressed here, through Jesse's implied knowledge of Skype, and there is a suggestion that the island has technologically lagged behind the mainland for some time and that telecommunications infrastructures are developed slower, if at all, on the island.

The technological disconnect becomes steadily stronger: Sweetland the island and its inhabitants become ever more marginalized as they lack access to appropriate representation. For example, as Moses searches for how to help a downed cow on Google, he finds '[f]ive and a half million results' for various products and systems that would lift the cow (89). However, he notes that even though there is an 'infinite library of information' at his fingertips, 'none of it is any practical use to them' (89) showing the strength of the disconnect between the virtual and the material. He remarks that this is almost symptomatic of life on Sweetland, where the internet is '[a] window they could peer through to watch the modern world unfold in its myriad variations, while only the smallest, strangest fragments washed ashore on the island' (89). The spatial connotations here emphasize Sweetland as existing peripherally, and on the threshold of more established and modern centres. Sweetland is only granted access to a small 'fragment' or part of the modern western world, and even at that it is often what is cast aside or 'washed ashore'. Life on Sweetland is gradually becoming erased and obsolete in comparison to the unfolding modern world. This is echoed in a moment where actual technological items are found cast aside by Moses next to the incinerator and near the water's edge. Moses notices 'strollers and playpens, paint cans, barrels, a freezer, a bathtub, old hockey skates, a Star Choice satellite dish, four or five computer monitors that even Sweetland recognized as archaic' (92). These discarded items represent teleology and planned obsolescence – structures which underpin late capitalist technologies. Along with the discarded 'strollers and playpens' which children eventually grow out of, there are the computers and satellites which have grown obsolete as newer models replace them. Moses thinks to himself, upon encountering these items, that '[i]t was the world's job, it seemed, to render every made thing obsolete' (92); showing that he recognises this planned obsolescence. Moses' observation of these items carries with it a feeling of futility, that Sweetland itself is also growing obsolete and disconnected, accumulating only 'fragments' and never enough to keep pace with the rest of the modern world.

When Sweetland the island struggles to keep up with the unfolding technological advancements of the modern world, it begins to haunt the peripheries of the Northern Atlantic. After everyone has been forced to resettle, only Moses remains on the island. He begins to notice a strange disjunction between the weather forecast on the radio and the lived reality on the island. While outside gales blow and snow drifts, the radio announcer calls for more 'moderate easterly winds' and 'scattered flurries' (269). Moses thinks to himself '[i]t had been comic at first, to see the forecast so far off the mark day after day. But there was something increasingly disturbing in the disconnect. It seemed like a sign of a widening fracture in the world' (269). While Moses initially finds the disconnect humorous, it gradually becomes darker and more uncanny. While every time he listens to the radio forecast it is familiar – since it refers to a place with which he is familiar – but it grows more jarring given its incorrect reporting of the weather. Polić (2018) also notes this growing disconnect between the lived reality of Sweetland the island and what the radio is claiming is happening. She argues that 'in this widening fracture, the island gradually transforms into an in-between space, a heterotopia, a counter-site' (85). The disconnect loosens the island from the lived materiality in which it exists and forces it to occupy a space of liminality. Polić's assertion that it is a 'heterotopia' emphasizes its uncanniness since heterotopias offer an inverse reflection of their utopian counterpart.[53] The island's neglect and its transformation into a heterotopia demonstrates the tension between the lived and embodied epistemologies of the shore-folk on Sweetland, and the teleological and progressive nature of late capitalism. Denied any means by which it might be adequately represented and made epistemologically present, it becomes an inversion of itself – a space against which the remaining terracentric and capitalist structures of the urban centres of Canada (and other interior western centres) are made possible. Like the Mercator Projection, the radio announcements function as a way through which understandings of Sweetland the island are controlled and mediated. Deemed quite literally economically unviable and uninhabitable, the island becomes an absent-presence that no longer requires accurate representation and can remain quite literally outside and abstracted from the systems of representation present in the rest of Canada.

All of this is compounded in the island's spectral transformation. At one point early on in his isolation on the island, Moses finds a map of Newfoundland and locates Sweetland on it. He annotates the map around Sweetland, 'adding missing names along the coastline, drawing in small islands that had been inexplicably left out' (248). This annotating of the map makes present the island communities in and around Sweetland. He demonstrates his embodied knowledge of the place when he annotates it further and, rather than using the established settler names of places, he uses nicknames and appropriates the space creating 'communities and features that didn't exist, naming them all after people he knew. Bob

---

[53] Heterotopias operate as worlds within worlds. For Michel Foucault (1984), the heterotopia is a 'counter-site' to the utopia since heterotopias are 'effectively enacted utopias in which the real sites, all the other real sites that can be found within the culture are simultaneously represented, contested and inverted' (46). Heterotopias function as real spaces that reflect and disrupt the worlds they are both a part of and represent.

Sam's Island. Jesse's Head. Priddle's Point. Pilgrim's Arm. Vatcher's Tickle' (248).[54] Moses' map literally maps over established epistemologies sustained by the Canadian Government and its concomitant structures. This cartographic practice runs counter to representations like the Mercator Projection and demonstrates a lived epistemology that tries to imbue the map and island with meaning relevant to the shore-folk community of Sweetland. However, toward the novel's close, he encounters the map again, but '[w]here he expected to see Sweetland there was nothing but blue water. And Little Sweetland beside it the same' (316-317). The erasure of the island here completes its spectralisation; its presence has become completely supplanted by absence and therefore it becomes an absent presence. Not only has the island disappeared but its spectralisation has been facilitated by water and by the North Atlantic Ocean so now, completely absent from the 'map' and from adequate representation, it becomes that which haunts the periphery of the North Atlantic. As the island becomes a ghost, so too do those other bodies of water connected to it through the hydrocommons – the bodies and spaces that Moses tried to keep alive in his own 'mapping' of the island. The scene directly following this marks Moses' own ghostly transformation. The spectralisation and erasure of Sweetland marks the loss of lives, ways of life and the very place upon which those lives are built due to the terracentric flows of power and meaning which marked the more urban centres as industrially and economically viable. These flows of power are carried across the technological systems and the hydrocommons and result in this profound loss.

What 'Cables', *The Town That Forgot How to Breathe* and *Sweetland* have in common is a concern with the ways in which technology haunts: its presence carries with it an anxiety about that which is unseen – whether in its material basis via infrastructure or in its virtual processes. The three fictions demonstrate that when technological advancements are imposed upon human/ ocean assemblages, these advancements disrupt the materiality of these assemblages by creating disjunctions within them. All three fictions correlate this damaging unseen presence with the aqueous in some way, demonstrating how the harm it can infiltrate bodies and register as harm that extends transcorporeally between and across bodies. *Sweetland* and *The Town That Forgot How to Breathe* acknowledge that this harm is not neutral and, by mapping the flows of power and meaning onto technological networks, they work to show how technology's infrastructure is not advancing at an equal rate and that those communities already marginalized by late capitalism are falling behind with the eventual result of their erasure and spectralisation. By using water to show how the harm of technology extends, it also shows how bodies are connected in these assemblages and how the spectralisation of these communities is precisely that: of whole communities and assemblages interconnected through the North Atlantic Ocean. This

---

[54] There is also something to be said for how Moses mirrors the Enlightenment epistemological project of mapping and the colonial process of naming places after people. This process maps over these spaces as also inhabited by nonhuman (absent) others and the concomitant bodies that comprise the more-than-human hydrocommons. However, I read Moses' actions here as a form of subverting these epistemologies, of reclaiming the space for the neglected community of Sweetland and resisting the capitalist power structures signified by the Government Resettlement Scheme.

spectralisation only serves to further support terracentric worldview and the more industrious inland spaces of power. In the final section of this chapter, I bring together the strands of this discussion to think more deeply about the hauntological impact of these texts: Derrida claims that hauntology is only ethical if one dwells with one's ghosts. What, then, are the implications for the Northern Atlantic Littoral in dwelling with the ghosts of technology or the waste and wasted lives of capital? How can these ghosts convey the radical potential of uncanny water by triggering an awareness of one's own embodied wateriness? How these texts dwell with or dispel their ghosts is imperative.

GHOSTS OF THE MARGIN: WRITING UNCANNY WATER

In the fictions I have discussed thus far, the objects and processes of late capitalism have been made uncanny via their ability to haunt the protagonists of these texts, gesturing to how bodies hold trancorporeal potential to disperse their materiality across other bodies in time and space. As bodies are permeated by their environment and vice versa, they hold the potential to disseminate toxicity and harm across them. In the examples above, I focus on the ways in which this material harm registers on the ocean and bodies of water, charting how it reads as a violence against the ocean and the bodies that depend on it in the Northern Atlantic Littoral. Yet, in order for these ghosts to be fully read as examples of uncanny water, they must draw upon the uncanny's affective power to speak to something of the reader's own situated and contingent experience before destabilizing it. While the examples of the processes and objects associated with quotidian life in the twenty-first-century help to stress the uncanny potential of bodies of water, these texts also draw upon narratives which have helped to propagate and encourage material violence against the ocean. These texts reference narratives of oceanic consquest – such as the Robinsonade I mentioned above – through constructing an image of the ocean that mirrors the blank spaces of colonial maps. Fictions of the Northern Atlantic Littoral undermine these narratives through their deployment of ghosts who gesture toward the violence these narratives hold. Through subverting generic expectations and deploying instances of intertextuality, these fictions play with the very boundaries of the text itself and the text becomes haunted by the previous iterations of stories which have gone before.

The resultant impact of this intertextuality leaves a lingering sense of the uncanny and this is compounded by whether the text offers closure to its readers by dwelling with or dispelling its ghosts. How the uncanny effects are generated are dependent upon the uncertainties created in the text: whether or not the text affects a sense of closure, or chooses to continue to 'multiply the uncanny effect by the interruption in the contract between author and reader' and consequently allowing the reader to 'wander until the end, without any defense against the Unheimliche' (Cixous 1976, 547). The latter method prevents closure by introducing doubt and hesitancy in the reader – the boundary between reality and fiction is blurred through a lack of resolution. This is most apparent in fictions of the supernatural and how and whether

these are "explained away" sufficiently or not. Yet, within uncanny water lies the understanding that for an ethical and relational reorientation of the self toward other bodies of water, there must be a moment in which one recognises the ways in which the self is haunted those absent others and lingering with the uncanny can amplify that sensation. To emphasize water's own spectral nature and hauntology also invites the ethical demand to 'learn to live with ghosts' (Derrida 1994, xvii). In their deployment of ghosts, these texts augment and amplify the uncanny potential of bodies of water. How they remain with these ghosts or not is thus highly significant as to linger with them means to refuse to dispel their uncanny potential and invites readers to sit with this uncanniness.

The haunted nature of these texts – the ways in which intertextuality and generic subversions permeate these fictions – also allows them to 'demand something of the future' (Buse and Stott 1999, 14), to see how dwelling with ghosts might be an ethical imperative to reorient oneself as a body of water toward the ocean and bodies that depend on it. Not only is this an imperative associated with the hauntological nature of bodies of water, but it is part of an aqueous politics of location. Through their production of these ghosts, these fictions are acknowledging the material violence of late capitalism, how it is enacted against the ocean, and how this violence is produced through currents of colonial, social, political and economic power and meaning. As I discussed in the Introduction, an aqueous politics of location is conscious of how a subject is borne out of flows of power and meaning, but also how one may redirect and reproduce these within the more-than-human hydrocommons. For uncanny water to work effectively it acknowledges both how these fictions are indebted in some way to narratives about the ocean which framed it as a space that could be exploited for capitalist and colonial gains, and how these narratives need to shift if understandings of the Atlantic Ocean are to be moved beyond those that are exploitative and anthropocentric. By remaining haunted by these narratives, and subverting them through the uncanny, these fictions can work to produce a more relational outlook that acknowledges the interconnected nature of all bodies of water.

Intertextuality offers a means through which the text itself is haunted; in demonstrating the permeability of form, the boundaries of the text open up and allow for an anachronism that mirrors the appearance of its ghosts. This intertextual haunting is particularly prevalent in the example of *Sweetland*, a novel which is haunted by the capitalist myth of "man against nature"' which helped expedite the exploitation of the oceans. Reading across this intertextuality, Caitlin Charman (2020) argues *Sweetland* should be read as 'anti-Robinsonade' (42) due to the similarities in plot and characters that the two novels hold – both novels centre around a male patriarch surviving alone on a remote island. She posits that while Crusoe was celebrated as both a 'quintessential heroic mariner' whose survival through 'practical reason' was due to the pursuit of profit for the individual (42), Moses Sweetland, on the other hand, 'reveals the failure of practical reason as a way to manage ocean environments' (42), showing instead how the pursuit of

capital for the individual instead 'leaves the wrack and ruin of capitalism and colonialism in its wake: emasculated men, displaced communities, destroyed relationships, and depleted ocean environments' (42). Charman suggests that the novel offers a critique of the 'economic individualism' which underpinned Crusoe's endeavours and exploits.[55] Crusoe's self-prioritization meant he sailed across the ocean to pursue profit and exploit new lands. The entrepreneurial and capitalist legacy of *Robinson Crusoe*, which ultimately pitted "man against nature"', has endured into the twenty-first-century and is being felt through the environmental devastation occurring today. Charman's reading of *Sweetland* argues that it offers an insight into the ineffectuality of economic individualism posited in *Robinson Crusoe* and charts its consequences on twenty-first-century Newfoundland. Drawing on Charman's suggestion that *Sweetland* is 'anti-Robinsonade', I argue that the novel is haunted by the myth of "man against nature" and, in its intertextual deployment of this "ghost" of *Robinson Crusoe*, attempts to deconstruct this notion through the use of the uncanny, so as to reconfigure a more relational oceanic imaginary.

Sweetland establishes its intertextual haunting through a generic shift from realism to Gothic which in turn adds to the uncanniness of the text. The novel is split into two distinct halves – 'The King's Seat' and 'The Keeper's House'. The first part of the novel mostly focusses on Moses' life before the resettlement scheme, while the second part offers the more 'Robinsonade' narrative where Moses remains alone on the island attempting to survive on his own against the elements. I have argued elsewhere that the division of the novel into these two distinct sections marks a stark generic shift from a realist first half to a more Gothic second (Rae 2018, 82).[56] This shift is significant for establishing the text's uncanny effects as the text's realist first half works to establish a sense of familiarity through a focus on the 'quotidian and a plot structured on "cause and effect' (82) before then undermining this through supernatural incursions that permeate the novel's second half. The uncanniness of the novel, incurred through the movement from realism to Gothic, works across multiple levels that emphasize how the novel is haunted by *Robinson Crusoe* and its accompanying capitalist myths of "man against nature" and economic individualism. Firstly, this shift marks the island as uncanny, and quite literally "unhomely", for Moses and through this it destabilizes any sense of the island as a space in which Moses can thrive, or indeed as a space where he might even survive. Charman (2020) contends that *Sweetland* and *Robinson Crusoe* can be read in much the

---

[55] Charman takes the term 'economic individualism' – in relation to Crusoe – from Ian Watt's *The Rise of the Novel: Studies in Defoe, Richardson and Fielding* (1957), in which Watt posits that western readers admire *Robinson Crus*oe because it perpetuates the idea of an individualistic society, the ideology of which advocates for political and economic autonomy for the individual – independent from other individuals and modes of tradition, which are 'always social' (60).

[56] During the first half – with the exception of some flashbacks – the novel depicts the daily life of Moses and his fellow islanders in the community of Sweetland. In this half, potentially supernatural occurrences are quickly explained away: the ghostly presences of the novel's opening are quickly established as Sri Lankan refugees; Moses' great nephew, Jesse, claims to see the ghost of Moses' dead brother but Moses and his niece, Jesse's mother, explain these away as a result of Jesse's autism (30). The novel's second half, however, offers no such reassurances with only Moses alone on the island so there is 'no one to provide reason besides Moses himself' (Rae 2018, 87). Moses' isolation means that such reassurances can only be filtered through his narrative focalization and as supernatural occurrences grow in frequency during 'The Keeper's House', the lack of obvious reason or explanation for these occurrences incites a feeling of uncanniness and unease.

same vein since Crusoe's 'very life depends on his ability to manage the environment and bend it to his will' (47). Throughout the novel, Moses too is seen to try to manage his environment and Charman documents a number of examples where Moses is unable to do so: whether that be through the fact that 'many of his caretaking activities prove to be, at best, directed at people and places that no longer require tending' (51) such as his role as unofficial custodian of the graveyard, watching over the decommissioned lighthouse, or through 'bungled attempts at propagation and animal husbandry' (51), which include the failed attempt to rescue Loveless' cow. However, it is in the second half of the novel that these attempts to manage his environment not only seem fruitless, but also illuminate the ways the island is now an inhospitable place, haunted by hitherto attempts at managerialism and control. The effect is that the island becomes a space where the myth of "man against nature" and economic individualism are utterly shattered.

One key example of the island's unhomely turn is when Moses realizes there are dovekies or 'bullbirds', as he calls them out at shore. At first he finds '[d]ozens' of them 'dead in the water' (Crummey 2014, 276) and takes some of them home to eat but realizes that the birds are all 'emaciated', having starved at sea with 'little flesh on their bones' (276). Moses himself is half-starved by this point and 'the thought of a single morsel of fresh meat was making his legs shake' (276). After making a soup from what little he can, he returns to the beach the next day to recover more of the birds. Upon his arrival, he notices the birds have multiplied, with '[h]undreds more of them on the surface beyond the breakwater, floating dead. The birds so delicately calibrated they'd starved within hours of each other, the organs shutting down one at a time' (277). The calibration of these birds is their homing and evolutionary instinct that allows them to follow the fish across the Atlantic. Moses attributes the death of these birds to climate change and the 'new world' that was 'being built around him' (277), a world which had

> apocalyptic weather, rising sea levels, alterations in the seasons, in ocean temperatures. Fish migrating north in search of colder water and the dovekies lost in the landscape they were made for. The generations of instinct they'd relied on to survive here suddenly useless. The birds and their habits were being rendered obsolete. (276)

As a result of the changing climate, the fish migrate and the dovekies suffer, dying as the fish they hunt are no longer there. The chain reaction felt across the hydrocommons is clear here as the assemblage of ocean/fish/bird/ human is shown to be in disarray. In the absence of the fish, the birds die, and Moses too is shown to be left struggling alone on the island, haunted by the carcasses of the birds and the absent fish. What was once a familiar occurrence that took 'generations of instinct' to perfect is now strange and unusual – a 'new world' that is unfamiliar and alien, where the bodies of birds stretch out across the surface of the ocean. The image of the dead dovekies also implicitly gestures toward the extinction of the great auk who were wiped out by European Settlers who prized them for their feathers. Crummey's depiction of the dovekies consequently gestures back toward settler colonialism and the extinction of

indigenous species. Unlike Crusoe, Moses physically cannot cultivate the island because there is nothing to cultivate, leaving an inhospitable and desolate landscape littered with the carcasses of the bodies that once depended upon it. The remaining image is a haunting one that links both contemporary climate change back across time to settler colonialism and the perpetual myth of "man over nature".

The carcasses of the birds act as a foreshadowing of Moses' eventual fate and demonstrates another example of the uncanny's functioning in the novel: the decision to linger with the novel's ghosts at its close and deny closure to its uncanny effects. The novel's end sees Moses perish as a result of starvation and illness. This offers a stark contrast to *Robinson Crusoe* where Crusoe is able to bend the landscape of the desert island to his will and go on to build a profit and expand his own wealth back home. Charman (2020) discusses that while Crusoe's efforts are often heralded as a consequence of his 'economic individualism', *Sweetland* demonstrates that solitary efforts to manage the land are 'inadequate for survival and prosperity' (55). Not only are they 'inadequate' but they are proven deeply futile. Moses' death is the culmination of his inability to properly manage the land on his own. Yet, in comparison to Crusoe, Moses' death actually demonstrates that collective networks of care are a more sustainable and responsive example of building human/oceanic relationships and that these offer a disruption to capitalist narratives of economic individualism. Moses' death is a result of an absence of the community of people who support and work sustainably and responsibly with the ocean. All these people have been cast aside by capitalism and in death he joins them and stares out across the ocean. In death, Moses is no longer "man against nature" but he re-joins his community of absent others whose bodies and lives sustained the more-than-human community of Sweetland. The final scene of all these spectral, dislocated and liminal figures uniting together provides a glaring contrast to Crusoe's individualistic pursuit of wealth. This moment solidifies the novel as a counterpoint to the damaging narrative of "man against nature" as it leaves an image of a whole community who have been spectralised by the homogenizing force of capitalism. While the scene ends on an optimistic sense of joy as Moses 'all of a sudden felt like singing' (Crummey 2014, 318), this still communicates an overarching message that becoming part of a wider assemblage that involves human and the nonhuman can foster a more compassionate relationship with the ocean and its accompanying communities.

Harvey's *The Town That Forgot How to Breathe* uses both storytelling and ghosts to interconnect the people of Bareneed into a more-than-human assemblage of human/fish/ocean. As I discuss above, the story suggests the people of Bareneed are suffering from the breathing illness because their ghosts have disappeared: the absence of ghosts and a connection to the North Atlantic is what haunts them. Along with the levelling impact of the tidal wave which wipes out the technology of Bareneed, it is suggested that storytelling brings the community back together and reconnects the people of Bareneed with the ghosts and, by extension, the North Atlantic. One of the characters, Tommy, discovers that telling stories

to his sister is what resuscitates her when she is in hospital struggling to breathe. As he tells her stories by her bedside in hospital, she afterwards finds that she 'can breathe right normal' again (364). The stories are mythical stories that feature mermaids, a giant squid and a whale who claims to have 'confessed ta knowing [Tommy] t'rew centuries o'dust' (361). These stories consequently work to establish a deep-rooted and longstanding ancestral connection between the people of Bareneed, the nonhuman and the North Atlantic. That storytelling is what resuscitates the sufferers of the breathing illness reinforces this as it reconnects them back into the ancestral chain. Moreover, the stories Tommy tells serve to "mythologize" this connection. By using fantastical creatures such as mermaids, a giant squid and a talking whale the novel stresses ideas of the sea as wild and lawless, from which fantastical creatures emerge from the deep and serve to position the ocean as a mysterious and magical place. The novel's construction of the ocean as a magical site is an attempt to separate it from what it suggests is the more "damaging" influence of technology and late capitalism. Removing it from these flows of power and meaning fail to acknowledge how power and meaning also run through the ocean and the bodies it sustains.

The use of storytelling to establish a connection between Bareneed residents, the North Atlantic and the fish stocks holds implications for Canada's colonial history. By embedding themselves into a narrative that establishes an ancestral connection that extends back into almost legendary temporalities, the Bareneed residents are also trying to inscribe themselves into the history of Newfoundland. This is a point that Sugars (2010) elaborates on, claiming that the novel purports a geo-historical determinism. For her, the novel aligns the depleted fish stocks, the subsequent fishery closures and the moratorium to the loss of a sense of identity based in a 'form of geographical determinism in the construction of a Newfoundland *people* in which the land is imagined to be somehow in the genes' (9; emphasis in original). Sugars states that this form of geo-historical determinism is established through what she terms a 'psycho-genetic inheritance' whereby a particular Newfoundland '*geist* or spirit' (3; emphasis in original) is presented as threatened. The Bareneed inhabitants are connected through their physiology to the land and this creates a kind of *geist* that haunts them. This is demonstrated quite literally through the spirits or ghosts who represent the connection to the North Atlantic and the fishing heritage. When this is severed, the people of Bareneed suffer as a consequence. Tommy's story to his sister about the whale connects him to this creature and situates his ancestry within almost prehistoric terms connected through the 'centuries o'dust' (Harvey 2003, 361). Genetic inheritance and ancestry are the the discursive tools that fix Newfoundland identity to both land and history.

As these stories work to inscribe the people of Bareneed into the place they inhabit, they also work to elide and efface the stories and histories of the Newfoundland indigenous peoples. The novel's intertextuality is consequently one that tries to establish a claim over the human and nonhuman and

reasserts the rhetoric of mastery and control that governed earlier narratives of the oceanic imaginary. This is particularly prevalent in the novel's epilogue and the proselytizing image it ends on where Bareneed residents gather around and tell stories to their grandchildren, without interference from technology to remember, 'the time when there was an absence of spirits' (470-71). The storytelling functions as a kind of warning not to forget their heritage and connection to the place and attempts to secure a settler heritage through the perpetuation of this story over and above the stories of marginalized humans and nonhumans. I discuss above how the Gothic is often used in settler fictions to story the landscape of Canada, and a legacy that affirms a sense of place in settler identity. In drawing on folkloric and Gothic tropes, the people of Bareneed are attempting to create a 'legitimating folklore' (Sugars 2011, 65) that might justify their settlement of this space through narrativization. Moreover, the epilogue firmly situates the settler humans at the centre of the narrative – it is *their* storytelling and rejection of technology that enables the fish stocks to somehow return and for life in Bareneed to flourish. Moreover, while previously the narrative had been focalized through a multitude of characters, the narrative voice switches to a kind of omniscient third person as the epilogue is told from the perspective of one of the character's daughters 'to her grandchildren' (Harvey 2003, 469). This works to project the settler humans forward into the future and ensure their legacy is continued as 'for generations to come' this story would be told so that the residents of Bareneed 'came to recognize who they truly were and, through the turmoil of calamity, reclaimed their lives as their blessed own' (471). The sense of 'reclaiming' here again asserts the idea that the human settlers occupy a privileged and hierarchical relationship over Bareneed and the North Atlantic. The novel therefore might dwell with its ghosts, and attempt to use these to establish a more-than-human relational assemblage that extends through the ocean, but its use of storytelling and the return to a pre-technological era only serves to replicate the flows of colonial and capitalist power that saw white settler humans in hierarchical relation to the indigenous and nonhuman inhabitants of Newfoundland.

This imbalance between the European settlers and the indigenous peoples of Newfoundland haunts Harvey's novel in both explicit and implicit ways. The elision of Beothuk or Mi'qmak people or voices from the narrative works to position the Bareneed residents' stories over and above the indigienous peoples. Where the, now extinct, Beothuk people are mentioned it is in reference to a museum display that a Bareneed resident – and doctor – refers to in passing, claiming his cat, Agatha, who he would often take to the museum with him was 'fascinated' by the 'Beothuk bone displays of the indigenous Newfoundland Indians that the islanders had massacred' (109). This gloss over the 'bones' of the Beothuk people displayed in a museum reduces the Beothuk lives to one of spectacle and dehumanises them – seeing them as body parts, rather than living beings with story and presence in the very land of Bareneed. The First Nations indigenous to Newfoundland therefore become a kind of absent presence that haunt the text. Their very bones become an uncanny absent presence in the novel that function as a reminder

of the buried trauma of Bareneed's passed, but even as it is 'brought to light' it nonetheless remains a peripheral spectacle that is glossed over by Harvey in the novel.

Both *Sweetland* and *The Town That Forgot How to Breathe* offer different ways in which intertextuality and dwelling with ghosts can have different consequences. Both novels suggest that remaining with ghosts can establish relationships across human and nonhuman boundaries in ways that recognise how communities of the Northern Atlantic Littoral are connected to and through the ocean. Both texts also depict attempts to represent, and make present, lived epistemologies of communities threatened with erasure. Yet the two novels differ in their approach to this act and I argue this is down to their decision to prolong or deny their uncanny effects. Harvey's *The Town That Forgot How to Breathe* offers a projected future in its final image where the breathing illness is cured, and a kind of order is restored through the reconnection to an ancestral lineage and the rejection of technology. In this way, the text resolves the uncanny effects felt through the absence of ghosts and breathing illness – the protagonists are no longer haunted, and this is perpetuated into a known and secure future. Harvey's novel could therefore be said to dispel its ghosts, in that it dispels the sense of haunting that accompanied was felt through the ghosts' absence in the text. On the other hand, *Sweetland* retains its uncanniness in the ghostly image it ends on that fails to project itself into any kind of known or assumed future. While *Robinson Crusoe* offered an ending that saw Crusoe's wealth accumulate and an "order" restored, *Sweetland* offers an image of the discarded lives that this myth has perpetuated and therefore refuses to participate in the continuation of this narrative. Instead, the novel suggests that connectivity through, and as part of a more-than-human assemblage that acknowledges the agency of others, is a more sustainable model for the future. The text therefore refuses closure to its uncanny effects as readers are left with the haunting image of the ghosts on the cliff.

Sweetland's final image ends with a joyful 'singing' which I argue suggests an awareness of the generative potential of uncertainty that uncanny water can reveal. The lack of any fixed or determined future in the novel means that it does not reinstate the hierarchical terms that informed its 'Robinsonade' plot. This is something that is even more apparent in *The Gloaming* which both dwells with *and* dispels its ghosts: through this dual effect, it succeeds in illuminating uncanny water's generative potential. As discussed, the narrator discloses himself to have been Bee all along thereby showing that the narrative thus far is in in some way indebted to an 'absent other'. Bee acknowledges this in his remark that his sisters will not move on in their grief without some kind of intervention from him. Bee recognises that his presence, or absence, is what is preventing his family from moving on and that he has some power over whether or not they choose to hold on. This agency is borne from renegotiating the narratives the children have told one another growing up – how they saw the ocean in the transactional terms. Bee's disclosure that he is the narrator is an attempt to reconfigure that narrative into a more relational one. As he gives up his own

materiality, his presence as a ghost also disappears and he is unable to narrate how the story ends and he simply does not '*know*' (Logan 2018, 452; emphasis mine). Uncertainty therefore perpetuates within the novel's plot and into its imagined future. This uncertainty, I argue, is generative as it allows for multiple possibilities and futures and does not reinstate hierarchical values about human and nonhuman relationships. The novel consequently both dwells with its ghosts to emphasize the agency of absent others, but dispels them to assert a generative potential.

LIVING WITH GHOSTS OF UNCANNY WATER

As I discuss in subsequent chapters, this generative effect is present across many texts in the Northern Atlantic Littoral and critical to my formulation of uncanny water – the idea that if one opens oneself up to epistemological and ontological uncertainties about water, there emerges potential to reconfigure established understandings of these. By subverting pre-established narratives of the Northern Atlantic and the oceanic, these texts work towards renegotiating how the ocean, and its concomitant bodies of water, are understood. *Sweetland*, *The Gloaming* and *The Town That Forgot How to Breathe* interconnect bodies of water into more-than-human assemblages that are connected through water. The hydrocommons constructed in the novels is exemplified through storytelling and intertextuality which is used to entangle characters with one another – showing a shared materiality that extends through water. In *Sweetland* Moses is unable to cultivate the island like Crusoe, and this is demonstrated when the dovekies die, and their bodies litter the water therefore showing the network of interdependency between human/nonhuman/ ocean. In *The Town That Forgot How to Breathe*, stories connect the inhabitants to whales, fish and the North Atlantic, and in *The Gloaming* narratives of relationality are figured through the bones of a young boy that wash up on the shore. Both *Sweetland* and *The Gloaming* fail to offer conclusive endings to their narratives and, in doing so, refuse to perpetuate the hierarchical terms of preceding narratives of the oceanic that pitted "man against nature". The lack of closure means no 'defense' against the uncanny (Cixous 1976, 547), and leaves all of us to sit with the uncanny effects, forcing a reconsideration of one's own implication in the assemblages the texts create.

I began this chapter with a discussion of how uncanny water might attend to the agency of ghosts; how acknowledging absent others illuminates one's own precarious position in the more-than-human hydrocommons. To recognise that the boundaries of the body are permeable, and continuously unfolding their aqueous materiality means all bodies have the capacity to haunt, and be haunted by, others. This is more than a material haunting, however, as fictions of the Northern Atlantic Littoral demonstrate how currents of power and meaning move to and across bodies of water transcorporeally. The transference of toxic bodies makes clear the harm that processes and systems of late capitalism are inflicting upon bodies of water. These processes are replicating and consolidating the rhetoric of mastery and control that had hitherto othered the ocean and nature in the western cultural imaginary. In order to salvage the Atlantic

Ocean – and, by extension, all bodies of water – from this abstraction, a new relational ethics is required. I argue such a relational ethics can be found in fictions of the Northern Atlantic Littoral where the ghosts of uncanny water shore up (quite literally) the violence of the systems and processes of capital that discard and damage bodies of water across the hydrocommons. These ghosts emerge in uncanny moments that speak to the reader's own contingent and situated experience and allow for an awareness of one's own precarity and permeability.

These texts offer their relational effects through processes of writing and language that allow them to be haunted by preceding narratives, transforming these toward new and uncertain futures. As a result of this intertextuality, these texts offer an anachronism that mirrors the ghosts they describe. Moreover, they refute closure so as to multiply the uncanny effects and perpetuate the uncanny's affective power. In gesturing toward new and uncertain futures for the world of the text, these texts create absences, gaps and fissures in the narrative that run counter to dominance and mastery. These gaps open up the boundaries of the text and implicate the reader – breaking the 'contract between author and reader' (Cixous 1976, 547) so that the reader is then implicated in the production of meaning. To do this involves some work on both the part of reader and writer to both understand how meaning has been initially produced and ascribed to bodies of water because it is only through scrutinizing pre-existing understandings of bodies of water, that these texts are able to subvert and challenge them: such is the hauntology of bodies of water and how it forever is indebted to absent others that bestow and impart meaning upon both text and bodies. In the following chapter, I push this further – what does it mean for the text to be "fluid" and permeable? How might ideas of fluidity and permeability be imaginatively salvaged from hierarchies that hitherto othered them?

> Everyone believed, everyone knew, that mermaids were the sea-dead, singing their love back to you. If it wasn't too loud with rain or waves, you could hear them in the wind, most nights.
>
> ~ Emma Hooper, *Our Homesick Songs* (2018)

> [T]hat scaly tail and haircombing mermaid and merboy and merman stuff comes from humans. It's got nothing to do with the way we live. It's all up in the Air.
>
> ~ Helen Dunmore, *Ingo* (2005)

THREATENING FLUIDITY

Across the Northern Atlantic Littoral, stories that conflate the dangers of the ocean with female sexuality pervade. Tales of female creatures who offer the lure of sexual promise but then trick men into death by drowning are present across Northern Europe and North America, with one of the earliest examples being the sirens from Homer's *Odyssey*. Homer's sirens are depicted as simultaneously irresistible and perilous to men, who will jump into the waters, risking their lives, in order to be closer to the sirens.[57] Cousins of the siren are present across examples in the Northern Atlantic Littoral and include the mermaid, Melusine, the Celtic selkie, Irish 'moruadh' and Scandinavian 'margygr'.[58] What is common to these creatures, and their representation within the Northern Atlantic, is how they often function as harbingers of misfortune or death at sea.[59] This chapter challenges and problematizes the deep-seated connection between women, death and the ocean and asks how the ocean as "abyss" or "void" might be imaginatively reclaimed. I argue that to do so involves interrogating the practices by which both ocean and woman have been conflated and othered, and pursuing strategies through which both might be reimagined. I posit that central to the othering of both women and ocean is a fear of their unassimilable difference which I read as manifest in their fluidity.

---

[57] Circe warns Odysseus that the sirens 'spellbind any man alive' with their 'thrilling song', which will 'transfix' him and he will be doomed to join the 'heaps of corpses/ rotting away' on their island (Homer 2006, 272-273). The sirens in the *Odyssey* promise Odysseus that he will be a 'wiser man' for joining them (277), so what they offer is not necessarily depicted as sexual but the promise and lure of knowledge. This role, however, shifted throughout the centuries, as sirens lost their association with knowledge and became more associated with sexuality, eroticism and desire.

[58] In *Seduction and the Secret Power of Women: The Lure of Sirens and Mermaids* (2007), Mari Franco-Lao charts the genealogy of the sirens from Greek mythology and looks at how, in the western cultural imagination, variations emerge across Northern Europe and America. I am less interested here in the specificities of their embodiments and how these diverge, but more in their commonly held associations that connect them through danger, death and water.

[59] Peculiar to all of these creatures is a preoccupation with an "unseen" element of their embodiment that represents something more sinister and lures men toward the abyss of the ocean. Stories of mermaids that emerge across Britain, for example, describe them as 'avid for human lives, either drowning men or devouring them' (Briggs 1976, 287).

In this chapter, I read across fictions from the Northern Atlantic Littoral that draw upon folkloric stories about particular creatures including the selkie, huldra and mermaid. These creatures are all some combination of part-woman, part-aquatic creature and, in each of the locales from which these creatures emerge, stories are told and repeated in order to emphasize the danger of them, but in ways that correlate this danger with the desirability of women, and the threat of death by drowning in the surrounding waters. Storytelling has been one of the discursive strategies by which women – and the ocean – have historically been othered across the Global North. In the previous chapter, I discussed how storytelling is used in *The Town That Forgot How to Breathe* as a discursive strategy through which the people of Bareneed emplace themselves into the history and landscape of Newfoundland. Through the use of both Gothic and folkloric tropes in their stories, the residents construct narratives that legitimize their settlement in Newfoundland. I discussed how these stories attempted to 'reclaim' the space of Bareneed for their own, and argued that such 'claiming' erased the agency of both human and nonhuman others and perpetuated a legacy of mastery and control. The question that arises from my consideration of storytelling in the novel is one that consequently underpins much of this thesis, namely – how can we tell stories of the Northern Atlantic Littoral differently so as to attend to absent others? How might we draw upon an aqueous politics of location – that determines the diffuse and entangled nature of bodies of water – to configure new representations of the Northern Atlantic that do not replicate discourses of mastery and control?

Uncanny water's processes of defamiliarization and subversion are what enable it to emphasize the tenuousness of particular epistemologies and emphasize the relational potential of uncertainty. Uncanny water works from within the narrative to seek out and uncover what has been repressed or othered, and then transforms this into something more positive and affirmative. The concept of uncanny water operates akin to mimesis whereby it both replicates and subverts particular discursive practices that have historically othered bodies of water. I borrow this notion of 'mimesis' from the work of Luce Irigaray (1985a, 1985b) whose approach to fluidity, discourse and subjectivity is central to my reading of the texts in this chapter. For Irigaray, '[t]o play with mimesis is, for a woman, to try to recover the place of her exploitation by discourse, without allowing herself to be simply reduced to it' (1985b, 76). Irigaray describes mimesis as a playful practice of recovery that seeks to interrogate the discursive strategies through which women have been othered. Susan Kozel (1996) elaborates on Irigaray's mimetic strategy, defining it as a practice that 'involves women consciously stepping into the sexual stereo-types provided for them by men' and is a 'process of eroding the stereotypes from within' (116). It is a repetitious tactic through which masculinist discourse is illuminated and dismantled. I propose that uncanny water operates to similar ends in fictions of the Northern Atlantic Littoral whereby it exposes particular discourses and systems of representation that exploit and marginalize bodies of water and disrupts the

epistemologies upon which they have been founded. At its most effective – that is, where it lingers with uncertainty – uncanny water does not replicate the discourses of mastery and control that othered bodies of water: like Irigaray's mimesis, it becomes a means of recovery that does not 'reduce' bodies of water to the same conventions of mastery and control, but recasts these into more productive and relational narratives about becoming-with other bodies of water.

The process of mimesis I follow in this thesis is one that simultaneously aims to recover and recast notions of binaristic gender. As I mention in the Introduction, gender is defined in the following chapters as a relation. Following Butler (1990), I recognise how gender has been constructed through the discursive means that align it to a prediscursive sex (and which simultaneously obscure its production through discourse). And like Butler, I argue that it is through reconfiguring the relations and operations by which these discoruses produce gender that it can be reconfigured as 'a complexity whose totality is permanently deferred' and is 'never fully what it is at any given juncture in time' (22). Understanding gender in these relational terms frame it as an 'open assemblage that permits of multiple convergences and divergences without obedience to a normative telos of definitional closure' (22). Conceiving of gender as a relational term that is in play with social operations that are historically and culturally specific, facilitiates the possibility of understanding that it could potentially be composed in ever new ways.

But before this can be done, it is first necessary to interrogate the social operations and discourses that have aligned women and the ocean. In what follows, I show how uncanny water is also holding these up to scrutiny and ask whether or not the these alignments might yield new and more unknowable epistemologies and ontologies. Part of this strategy involves interrogating the very *relation* between women and the nonhuman or more-than-human – how they come to be aligned and whether that relationship might yield something new and more inkeeping with the uncertain parameters of uncanny water. As Elspeth Probyn (2016) observes, '[t]he mermaid is the perfect troubling figure of the impossibility of getting over gender in the more-than-human' (102). The mermaid, according to Probyn – and I would extend this to all the aforementioned sea creaturely figures – affords the opportunity to work through the complex relationality of both gender and the nonhuman. It is important to understand that the social operations and discourses that inform understandings of gender also run through the complex assemblages that connect humans and nonhumans. More often than not, these relations are co-extensive and co-constituted through the behaviours and subjectivities that comprise them. If, as Probyn argues, gender 'categories are given meaning and concrete life by how they are inhabited and embodied' and that 'we are always subjectively refiguring and reshifting ourselves as gendered in one way or another' (108) then it also stands to reason that as embodiments shift and change so too will our understanding of gender. What consequently emerges in these more-than-human figures of mermaids, huldra and selkies is also the possibility to see how – not just the human might extend in unknowable ways to and

through the nonhuman – but how the categories of gender that run alongside this might also reproduced and reconfigured in unknowable ways. Uncanny water uses the mimetic process to explode those categories of gender expression that equate it with bodily morphology, and contrast the solid logic of the masculine with the fluid feminine. Therefore, even as I explore the discursive strategies used to other "women" and fluidity, it is through leaning into these binaries and recasting them into the more uncertain and unknowable realm of uncanny water, that I also show how gender might be thought of in more relational terms that is removed from the dialectic of sexual dimorphism.[60]

This mimetic strategy is one that that can be witnessed, I argue in this Ph.D., in the contemporary novels from the Northern Atlantic Littoral that retell, reimagine and recast folkloric tales of mermaids, huldra and selkies. The novels I discuss retell folkloric tales of these creatures – or draw heavily upon their influence – and simultaneously suggest that these creatures are emerging in the present action of the novels. For example, Barbeau's *The Luminous Sea* draws upon material semiotic associations of the mermaid, charting the scientific "discovery" of a mysterious "mermaid" creature of the coast of Newfoundland by Vivienne, a young female scientist.[61] As the experiments on the creature become more invasive, Vivienne begins to feel a synergy with the creature and eventually hatches a plan to free her. Logan's *The Gloaming* also draws upon the associations of the mermaid and Celtic folklore of the selkie.[62] In the novel, a young girl, Mara, falls in love with Pearl, a travelling "mermaid" who Mara believes to be the embodiment of a selkie.[63] The novel explores how Mara's belief in this story – and other fairytales – have resulted in an internalized misogyny and charts how confronting her belief in the folkore allows for it to be reconfigured to demonstrate her own fluid potential. The third novel explored in this chapter is Burnside's *A Summer of Drowning*, in which a young woman, Liv Rossdale, is told stories of the Norwegian folkloric creature the huldra by her elderly male neighbour and becomes convinced that her school mate Maia is that creature embodied, suspecting she has been luring men and boys to death in the cold waters of the Malangen Sound.[64]

---

[60] The explosion of these binaries of male/female, nature/culture, human/nonhuman is partially indebted to ecofeminist thought. In particular it resonates with Val Plumwood's (1993) *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature*, which sought to dismantle these gendered binaries through positing an ethics of sameness and difference. Plumwood draws attention to what she describes as the 'master category of difference' which is more than the 'masculine identity pure and simple' but is also the 'multiple, complex cultural identity of the master formed in the context of class, race species and gender domination' (5). When I describe 'masculinist discourse' within this thesis, I am similarly using this term to describe how this intersects with racial, gendered and species hierarchies. Like Plumwood, I believe that through disrupting the binaries at the heart of these gendered divisions, a more relational and empathetic understanding can be achieved.

[61] I place "discovery" in inverted commas here to emphasize the anthropocentrism of this term. The "discovery" of nonhumans and spaces/places is a biased discursive (and often violent) strategy through which power and agency are disproportionately ascribed to the "discoverer" as the agency of the "discoveree" is erased.

[62] Other fictions from the Northern Atlantic Littoral that draw upon the folklore of the selkie include George Mackay Brown's *Beside the Ocean of Time* (1994), Amy Sackville's *Orkney* (2013) and Logan's short story 'Between Sea and Sky' (2020).

[63] I place "mermaid" in inverted commas here as Pearl acts as a mermaid as part of a travelling show but whether or not she is actually a mermaid or selkie is never fully resolved in the novel, as I discuss.

[64] The Malangen Sound is located in the north of Norway and feeds into the Norwegian Sea.

Central to all of these novels is the focus on how folkloric tales of these creatures conflate female desirability with the ocean: I read, within the intertextual references to these tales, how women and the ocean have been othered in their unassimilable difference. In the Introduction, I outline how discourses surrounding colonialism and capitalism cast the ocean as a 'feminized void' (DeLoughrey 2007, 22) across which the possibilities for regeneration and growth were facilitated, and how DeLoughrey's deployment of the term 'void' gestures toward non-representation and the mutual characterisation of woman and the ocean as absence or lack in comparison to masculine wholeness. However, 'void' also suggests the unknown and unknowable – that which is *beyond* representation – and it is through tapping into the radical potential that this unknowability affords that I suggest a new oceanic imaginary of the North Atlantic might be constructed. Central to the folkloric tales I interrogate in this chapter, is the idea that each of the creatures described harbours some element of the unrepresentable – that which is radically other and cannot be assimilated by the male protagonists. In the case of the mermaid, it is her tail that exists beneath the surface of the water; with the selkie it is that she can transform into a seal and swim to the depths of the ocean, and with the huldra, it is the "abyss" or vacancy at her back. The unrepresentable element of these creatures is therefore that which is unseen, and which is correlated with the abyss or void. I connect this unrepresentable with the fluid potential of both woman and, by extension, the ocean, that threatens to engulf or subsume the masculine by destroying his bodily precarity and discrete sense of subjectivity. However, the fictions examined in this chapter show how this very same fluidity might grant access to the possibilities of being and becoming that acknowledging oneself as a body of water might afford. Like the ghosts of the preceding chapter, following these creatures into the deep allows for a representation of how bodies might meet and converge in the more-than-human hydrocommons. To prevent undermining the radical potential of these creatures – a potential harboured in the ultimate unknowability of water's extensions across time and space – I suggest they are constructed within the parameters of uncanny water which places emphasis on uncertainty.

In these novels, I identify processes of othering woman and fluidity through discursive practices that prioritize the solid logic of the masculine and attempt to master and control the female protagonists. These practices all suggest an inherent fear of fluidity which is expressed in the novels through inciting the uncanny. Sight and vision are used to instil fear, and demarcate the fluidity of these creatures as other. The female protagonists consequently become frightened of touching or being touched by them as they conform to masculinist notions of power. However, in the moment in which fear would normally culminate – as the female protagonists touch or are touched by the creatures – the fear is transformed into a more positive moment of being and becoming, and the narratives are reinvented to produce a more positive imaginary that prioritizes fluidity and interconnection. Moreover, through the process of retelling and recasting these narratives, this imaginary is then symbolized and represented. In focussing on the sea creatures, I suggest that the very feminization of the ocean that these creatures embody can also be the

means through which the oceanic imaginary might be radically rethought and reinscribed – and in ways that do not displace the unknowability of water. This is why the process I outline hinges on the uncanny to both initially incite fear and emphasize uncertainty. This uncertainty is significant, as it is through this that the inherent unknowability of water is retained within a new and alternative oceanic imaginary for the Northern Atlantic, and mastery and control are displaced. I argue that the uncanny functions as a generative force: as characters are forced to confront their own fluidity through the process of touching and being touched by another, the negative affect of the uncanny is converted into something more positive that emphasizes entanglement and interconnection with another but without specifying exactly what this entanglement might look like.

Implicit in many of the fictions discussed in this thesis is the notion that shore folk hold a particular connection to the sea established through working alongside, and as part of, its rhythms and depths. Lived and embodied epistemologies emerge through stories and discursive practices that interconnect shore folk, Atlantic Ocean and the nonhuman into a more-than-human hydrocommons. Running alongside, and through, these local embodied practices are larger currents of power and meaning, which complement, corrupt and converge with them. As I discuss in the Introduction, these currents of power and meaning are often connected with terracentric, capitalist and colonial ideologies, which frequently elide, erase and exploit the bodies of water in and around the Northern Atlantic Littoral. This is what mimesis and uncanny water attempt to recover – the spaces and bodies that have been confined to non-representation and the abyss or void. It utilizes the figures of sea creatures through which to interrogate this abyss and complexify it. While sea creatures do appear in many of the fictions across the Northern Atlantic Littoral,[65] I focus on these three novels because of their engagement with the abyss – on the space of not-knowing – and how, I argue, they transform and reconfigure it through the proliferation of uncertainty that allows for representations more akin to the fluid and generative potential of bodies of water. This is a point Burnside elaborates on in his interview with *Granta* (2012) where he discusses how the folkloric figure of the huldra inspired *A Summer of Drowning*, he states that he felt the story touched upon 'what happens to someone who sees that gap in the fabric of the world and has to accommodate it in order to carry on' (n.p.). For Burnside, then, the story of the huldra inspired him because it was about noticing and holding onto the unseen, and onto what is absent. He states this pursuit of the unseen is central to the intersection of nature and culture that informs his work and he 'cannot help but feel that living in the wild demands that we learn to live with that nothingness' (n.p.). Burnside's comments resonate with this thesis's project of recovering absences and the hauntology of bodies of water; how dwelling with absent others might illuminate new opportunities for being in the world.

---

[65] Sea creatures appear in other fictions I consider, including *The Town That Forgot How to Breathe* and *Galore*. Retellings of the selkie story are also common in fictions from Scotland (see n. 59) and Natasha Carthew (2020) reinvents the Cornish folktale *The Mermaid and the Man of Cury* in her short story 'The Droll of the Mermaid'.

To understand how uncanny water functions as a form of mimesis across the fictions examined in this chapter, it is necessary to unpack two key facets: the discursive strategies through which fluidity is othered in the novels and the ways in which this is transformed into something more generative. This chapter is divided into four sections that interrogate how stories of these creatures are recovered, reinvented and recast within the parameters of uncanny water. I begin by outlining a fluid dynamics of uncanny water tracing, by way of Irigaray, why fluidity poses a threat to masculinist notions of power. I discuss how her mimetic strategy is a radical technique that offers woman their own alternative imaginary that does not subscribe to a masculinist paradigm. I then begin my discussion of the novels, unpicking how they embed discursive practices that other women within their narratives. I lastly look to how the novels dismantle the primacy of vision, before discussing the potential for the construction of an alternative imaginary through touch, fluidity and wateriness. It is in this final element that I also begin to move away from following the sexual dimorphism that underpins the discursive strategies that ascribe sexuate difference to gender expression and demonstrate how fluidity and wateriness allow for myriad unknowable expressions of gender.

THE FLUID DYNAMICS OF UNCANNY WATER

The Eurocentric context from which the folkloric creatures of the novels emerge originate embeds them within discourses surrounding the North Atlantic Ocean.[66] Not only are these women relegated to the realm of non-representation, but the folkloric tales designate this realm as the North Atlantic Ocean and its adjacent waterways. The act of doing so works to other both woman and ocean, connecting them via their possible threat to the masculine paradigm and his bodily integrity. In order to recuperate women and the ocean from the domain of lack or absence, the hierarchies that ascribe them to this realm must first be dismantled. Implicit within the feminization of the ocean is a phallocentric fear of women's uncontainable fluidity and her gestational and reproductive potential. Irigaray emphasizes this in *Marine Lover of Friedrich Nietzsche* (1991) when she asserts that the masculine interlocuter in her dialogue has forgotten the water from which he originates.[67] Irigaray reprimands him, arguing it is '[t]he danger of immersion in primary matter that endlessly feeds your anguish, your forgetfulness, and your death' (66). She thus relates a fear of water and the aqueous to the masculine's first maternal beginnings, his 'primary matter'. The resistance to this fluidity is connected to the ways in which the female body threatens the masculine's discrete individualism and phallocentrism. Elizabeth Grosz (1994) clarifies that anxiety

---

[66] While the huldra is from Scandinavian folklore, the way in which she is recast in Burnside's novel *A Summer of Drowning* (2011) allows her to be read as "siren like" as she lures men to the depths of the water's off the coast of Norway – an assertion supported by Julika Griem's (2015) reading of the novel, in which she argues that, in *A Summer of Drowning*, the huldra is 'no longer associated with the woods, but like a classical siren, seems to luring various men into the depths of the sea' (99).

[67] Neimanis (2017) develops a reading of Irigaray's *Marine Lover of Friedrich Nietzsche* in which she uses the fluid dynamics represented by Irigaray here to formulate her concept of posthuman gestation and an onto-logic of amniotics. I discuss these figurations more in Chapter Three.

around the female body is not simply that it represents absence or lack in contrast to masculine wholeness, but rather because the female body is considered in fluid terms:

> a leaking, uncontrollable, seeping liquid; as formless flow; as viscosity, entrapping, secreting, as lacking not so much or simply the phallus but self-containment – not a cracked or porous vessel, like a leaking ship, but a formlessness that engulfs all form, a disorder that threatens all order. (203)

The association of the female body with fluidity and liquidity thus threatens the masculine not only in her absence but as she signifies his destruction through his engulfment. Grosz's assertion that woman represents 'formlessness' and 'disorder' holds resonances with the feminized void of non-representation. Woman is perceived as that which will transform and usurp the masculine's easy identification with bounded 'self-containment' and individualism through her porous and fluid nature. The ocean's feminization therefore offers a terrifying prospect for the masculine – the potential for engulfment, destruction and death.

I propose that the fear of fluidity betrays the logic that underpins the dominant discourses of mastery and control that have so far held sway over women and the ocean. Irigaray and Grosz articulate how femininity is often described in terms that position "woman" as counter to the masculine because of her bodily materiality that is characterized in fluid terms as 'leaking' or 'seeping liquid' (Grosz 1994, 203). Woman, in her bodily processes, and in her desire and drives, is materially fluid. Grosz's and Irigaray's descriptions of the materiality of women's bodies also hold figurative power in that woman is defined in fluid terms as always in relation to the masculine's more solid logic. As Neimanis (2017) neatly summarises, '[f]or Irigaray, feminine bodies are fluid, both figuratively in their non-subsumability into a masculine paradigm and literally in their genital mucosity, placental interchanges, and amniotic flows' (78). What Neimanis observes are the ways in which Irigaray's fluid descriptions of the female body tread the line between metaphor and materiality. Women are othered in their bodily *and* psychological resistance, and material inability, to conform to the solid logic of phallocentrism that depends on 'rigid and static forms, solid truth and knowable entities' (Neimanis 2017, 79). Phallocentrism and phallogocentrism are precisely that psychic economy that depends upon the static and solid logic of the phallus as the (only) organising principle. Woman is othered because her fluidity cannot be understood within these terms. In the asymmetrical processes by which men and women enter the symbolic and language, women are only ever defined in relation to the masculine. In categorising and structuring the world through linguistic, social and/or cultural systems, however, something will always be excluded through this process. According to Whitford (1991), this categorising and structuring is, in itself, 'impossible' because it will always create 'residue' (66). This residual effect is an 'outside' that is 'non-graspable in-itself, since it is, by definition, outside the categories which allow one to posit its existence, is traditionally conceptualized as female' (66). This residual outside that constitutes the feminine subtends and complements the masculine but

represents something outside of language and the symbolic order that is more readily associated with non-differentiation.

So how is this threatening fluidity depicted in fictions of the Northern Atlantic Littoral? And how, via uncanny water and processes of mimesis, is it transformed into more generative and relational terms? I connect this fluidity, and the space of non-differentiation, back to the unseen element of the sea creature women, each of whom hold something in their embodiment that is read as fluid, and which creates a particular relation between them and the Northern Atlantic Ocean – this is the element that is often concealed in water. I read this element as connected to the uncanny as that which incites fear in the masculine protagonist since it functions to remind him of the instability of the constructedness of his discrete sense of self.[68] However, this unseen aspect simultaneously allows these women to be sufficiently othered through visual association by claiming that the unseen element is what makes them necessarily dangerous. Irigaray posits, in 'The "Mechanics" of Fluids' (1985b), that the properties of fluids 'resist adequate symbolization' (106), and so can be correlated in many ways with the residual outside associated with woman as that which is beyond the categories of being and existence. Irigaray is careful to qualify that fluidity, while putting woman outside of the symbolic, might also be the means through which alternative imaginaries might be formed.[69] Fluidity is threatening to the masculine for two critical reasons. Firstly, because it exists outside of the symbolic order, it threatens the masculine with engulfment or non-differentiation; fluidity poses a challenge to the systems by which the masculine designates his subjectivity because it is not categorizable within those terms. Secondly, it poses such a threat to the masculine: it is not verifiable within the visual – the realm through which the symbolic is established and realized. Within the Oedipus Complex and Mirror Stage, the visual demarcates the penis/ phallus as present or absent and is the means by which the feminine takes up her negative relation to the masculine. More accessible to touch than to sight, fluidity does not function within the same parameters as the phallus and therefore threatens the very systems by which the masculine has come to determine himself and other women. It posits the possibility of non-differentiation as it encroaches unseen upon the solid logic of the phallus, threatening to engulf it.

However, it is precisely because it harbours such threatening potential, that fluidity also offers the means through which an alternative oceanic imaginary might be constructed – a point which I take up in the final section of this chapter, where the mimetic strategy of the novels is brought full circle. I borrow from Irigaray's own mimetic strategy of the 'two lips' (1985b), which she offers as a means through which female subjectivity is reimagined in an equivalent framework to the centrality of the phallus. Irigaray

---

[68] I return to this later, where I connect this with ideas of anxiety about a return to the womb and the space of non-differentiation.

[69] The concern of how to create alternative imaginaries to phallocentrism is a concern that underpins Irigaray's *oeuvre*.

deploys her mimetic strategy to revise the position of the feminine as defined as lack or absence, and instead transforms this into a positive female imaginary. By focussing in on the 'lips', which symbolize both the lips of the mouth and the labia, she subverts the image of the genitalia, which in the Freudian phallic economy other woman by presenting her as the defective gender which lacks a penis. Irigaray's two lips represent a continuous indeterminacy where woman '"touches herself" all the time' thereby within herself, she is already two – but not divisible into one(s)' (24). This prioritization of touch ensures woman's presence is defined through something other than sight and vision – the sense that in tphallocentrism designates the penis as absent or missing.

Crucially, Irigaray's model of the two lips is a discursive strategy: her two lips speak. Through interrogating the language used to define and other woman, the two lips provide a means through which woman can be represented. 'When Our Lips Speak Together' is presented as an ongoing dialogue that emphasizes woman's multiplicity. Irigaray claims that

> [b]etween our lips, yours and mine, several voices, several ways of speaking resound endlessly, back and forth. One is never separable from the other. You/I: we are always several at once. And how could one dominate the other? Impose her voice, her tone, her meaning? One cannot be distinguished from the other; which does not mean that they are indistinct. (209)

The endless and continuous dialogue suggested here shows the multiplicity of woman that never allows her to be subsumed into simply 'one' – for such a subsumption would only relegate her back into the categories as defined by the masculine. But in speaking and creating a language that allows for this multiplicity to be represented, the two lips facilitate woman's symbolisation. This is a point that Diana Fuss (1989) makes when she claims '[t]he symbolization of the female imaginary is precisely what Irigaray seeks to elaborate through her conceptualization of the two lips' (67). Through her mimetic practice, Irigaray allows for woman to be recovered from the phallic economy and reinvented in her own terms.

I deploy Irigaray's mimetic strategy of the two lips to the novels to show how the discursive strategies used are transformed and reimagined to alternative ends within the novels and where uncanny water is mobilised most fruitfully. While practices of storytelling and scientific reasoning are used to other fluidity and demarcate particular types of women as dangerous or threatening, these novels refuse to verify whether these women are the creatures perpetuated in the stories. In the initial discursive strategies deployed, a sense of fear is created around unruly women, but this is used as a means through which other women might be contained and understood. However, in recreating these stories within the novels themselves, but by displacing the male protagonist at the centre of the folkloric versions, these stories do not validate the masculine subject but are used as tools for the women of the novels to acknowledge their own subjectivity. When the female characters of these novels encounter the unruly "other" they recognise

their own inherent fluidity that transcends the parameters of the masculine. While the encounter initially incites fear and the uncanny as characters meet and encounter something that should have remained "unseen", when these characters overcome this and "touch" the other, they no longer feel fear but are verified in their own fluidity.

But how does this reclamation of fluidity in these stories function to produce an alternative imaginary for the Northern Atlantic? What Irigaray reveals in her alternative imaginary is that fluid bodies are not comprehendible by the same epistemologies and ontologies of phallocentrism. These are the strategies that have worked to situate the Atlantic Ocean as 'residual outside' and have categorized it always in relation to the masculine. It is the strategy by which the ocean has become the 'feminized void' and blank space on a map that privileges the more solid logic of land-based terracentrism. In turning to stories that reproduce and reinvent discursive strategies that have hitherto othered the ocean, these fictions suggest the possibility for recovering the oceanic imaginary from masculinist discourses of power and defining it in terms that verify it as a body of water in its own right. I assert that uncanny water offers a means through which this "fluidity" might be mobilised and reimagined. However, I do not mean to conflate wateriness and fluidity – as the two are not synonymous. Rather, the two are related by virtue of the fact that water is the 'materialization of an abstract property, of fluidity', but water allows for thinking through fluidity as 'matter in more specific and situated ways' (Neimanis 2017, 80). Water, then, offers a possibility to think *abstractly* in fluid terms and to relate fluidity as a quality that runs counter to dominant masculine discourses of solidification, containment and discrete individualism, while nonetheless being a *material* quality that is inherent to all bodies of water – human, nonhuman, geographical *etc.* If water comprises bodies – masculine, feminine, nonbinary and/ or nonhuman – then all bodies must have some kind of fluid potential and the boundaries of the self must be permeable and fluctuating, rather than contained and static. What masculinist discourses of the body portray is a fear of the precarity of the body that this permeability creates; uncanny water deploys the metaphor of fluidity to consider how this precarity can be envisioned as a common condition. This discursive and systemic revisioning of bodies reimagines the precariousness of bodies as a mutual and co-constitutive element.

Crucially, these fictions also afford the opportunity to expand fluidity beyond the female by refusing to determine whether or not the women are sea creatures – this opens up the possibility to see them as beyond the gender binary that the discursive strategies proclaim and potentially move Irigaray's imaginary beyond the dialectical model that it portends. The uncertainty surrounding the creatures is vital as it accords with the uncertain and unknowable nature of bodies of water. Rather than it simply being the verification of fluidity between and across the female, it suggests a fluid potential inherent in *all* bodies; as touch is used to affirm the subjectivity of others it demonstrates the potential of all bodies to inhabit this fluidity and deconstructs the underlying premise of phallocentrism that relies on the visual to ascribe

bodily morphology to sexuate difference. Not only are the binary categories of gender exploded through the uncertainty of these sea creatures, but so too is the category of the human as the women can be read as more-than-human embodiments of their sea creaturely doubles. In moving beyond these identity categories that are perpetuated through the masculinist discursive strategies, there arises a radical opportunity to better reorient bodies toward the Northern Atlantic and the more-than-human hydrocommons. The conceptual underpinning I outline in this chapter is consequently the pivotal point of this thesis that both speaks to the absent others elided by particular discourses of power and foregrounds the final chapter where I expand on the nonhuman opportunities that engulfment and embracing the fluid other afford.

NARRATING FLUID BODIES: STORYTELLING AND SCIENCE IN THE NORTHERN ATLANTIC LITTORAL

Across fictions of the Northern Atlantic Littoral, discursive strategies are used to present female sexuality as threatening and undifferentiated. One of the key ways in which this is done is through processes of storytelling that associate female sexuality with an uncontainable fluidity that threatens in its abyssal nature. In both *The Gloaming* and *A Summer of Drowning* stories of unruly and uncontainable women are told that other women and ascribe fluidity to a space of non-differentiation. In *A Summer of Drowning*, tales of the huldra are told to the young female protagonist by Kyrre Opdahl, an elderly male neighbour. According to Scandinavian folklore, the huldra is a beautiful woodland spirit who lures men into the depths of the forest before murdering them. The novel transposes the huldra figure from the forest to the water, associating her instead with the cold waters of the Malangen Sound which feeds into the Northern Atlantic Ocean. By recasting her as a figure of the water, Burnside's huldra becomes mermaid-like. When recounting tales of the huldra to Liv, Kyrrre's description of the huldra depicts her as similar to the mermaid, who visually appears one way but represents an unseen and unknowable threat associated with female sexuality:

> [s]een from the front, she is perfectly beautiful, perfectly desirable, but if he could only look past this beautiful mask, he would see that, at her back, there is a startling vacancy, a tiny rip in the fabric of the world where everything falls into emptiness. But he doesn't see – just as he doesn't see, until it is too late, that this girl, this lover, is actually a hideous troll, with a hideously ugly face and the tail of a cow under her bright red dress. (76)

She appears beautiful, but it is an illusion, a fantasy and she is actually monstrous underneath. The 'startling vacancy' at her back is an absence and a reminder of the lack associated with the feminine. Irigaray (1985a) argues that in the process of organising and constructing the symbolic, woman comes to function 'as a hole […] in the elaboration of imaginary and symbolic processes' (71).[70] The huldra should

---

[70] Phil Pass (2014) discusses how the 'vacancy' or gap at the huldra's back relates to the Lacanian Real and he offers a reading of *A Summer of Drowning* in which he discusses how anxiety is produced in the novel through proximity to the real. However,

be read as a reminder of the space of non-differentiation – of the residual outside that might promises to destroy the masculine's discrete sense of self.

The stories of the huldra therefore function to ward off the possibility of non-differentiation that she represents and are used to construct the women in the lived reality of the novels as other in relation to the male characters. This is demonstrated in the influence Kyrre's stories have over Liv, and how they impact her following the death of two brothers, Liv's classmates Mat and Harald Sigfridsson; when they drown in the Malangen Sound, Kyrre convinces Liv that her classmate Maia might be the embodiment of the huldra and is responsible for their deaths. Liv claims that Kyrre becomes 'obsessed with Maia' (112), believing the boys to have been '*taken*' and it was the '*huldra*'s doing' (151; emphasis in original). He consequently plants in Liv's head the idea that this young woman might be the embodiment of this desirable mythical creature. Liv acknowledges the influence that these stories are having over her: she states that before talking to Kyrre, she 'didn't suspect Maia of actual mischief, not then' (15). Liv gradually becomes more suspicious of Maia. She feels a 'fear' and acknowledges this was part of her becoming more 'superstitious' which, she claims 'was Kyrre Opdahl's doing, of course' (334-35). Moreover, when discussing Kyrre's suspicions about the boy's deaths with Ryvold, a friend of her mother's, Liv is conscious that Ryvold is 'concerned about my friendship with the old man. Concerned about what nonsense Kyrre might be planting in my head, with his crazy stories' (352). There is a pervasive sense that Liv is heavily influenced by the stories Kyrre is telling – to the point where those around her are cognizant of her impressionability and concerned about the impact of this. Liv's susceptibility to these stories is significant because it is through their influence that Liv starts to believe Maia might be the huldra, and that she is wreaking havoc in the present reality. Liv becomes shaped by the discursive strategies that Kyrre is perpetuating and grows fearful of the more unruly nature that the huldra/ Maia represents.

The 'havoc' is carefully attributed to Maia's sexuality through the suggestion that she is the huldra, and her sexuality is framed in uncontainable and dangerous terms. Implicit within Kyrre's suggestion that Maia is the huldra is the idea that she is somehow 'perfectly desirable' (76) and that it is her desirability that has led these men astray. In another act of telling and emphasizing the dangerous elements of female sexuality through reiterating the story of the huldra, Ryvold underscores the idea that she is threatening because she represents a kind of uncontainability that cannot be adequately assimilated by the masculine. Ryvold provides his interpretation of the huldra to Liv, stating '[t]he huldra is an idea. It's not a person, it's not a monster. It's just a way of saying those boys were *susceptible* [...] They were too susceptible to the world around them' (251; emphasis in original). This notion of 'susceptibility' expounded by Ryvold

---

Pass overlooks how Burnside characterizes this real as decidedly feminine and so his reading neglects the asymmetry of desire and subjectivity that the huldra embodies.

suggests a naivety but also a forbidden kind of desire; he elaborates that the huldra stands for this kind of lure to something forbidden and outside of the phallocentric order. He discusses how, in folklore tales,

> the susceptible person is drawn in because he wants things that he shouldn't even be thinking about. A man goes out and he's looking for someone – he's looking for someone to love, but he doesn't want just anyone. He wants somebody special, somebody – unnatural. No ordinary woman will do for him. (350)

Thus, the idea of susceptibility becomes linked to a longing for something dangerous and forbidden, and something outside of the 'ordinary', possibly even deviant. This unnatural longing is linked to the 'mysterious creature' he sees in the huldra (350). Rather than desiring what is anticipated within the phallocentric order, he looks for something utterly unassimilable and monstrous, and this is his downfall as he is seduced by the huldra and becomes "engulfed" by her.

What Ryvold's vesion of the story really solidifies is that this 'vacancy' in the huldra correlates with the residual outside and is a desire for the void or abyss associated with woman.[71] In the symbolic, this void and lack is covered over and replaced with *objet-petit a*.[72] However, the huldra represents an unusual paradox in that she is both *objet-petit a*, and primordial Other. Whitford (1991) explains that owing to the erasure of the mother/daughter relationship in the Mirror Stage, there is no

> genealogy on the side of the woman; the generational differences are blurred; the man takes the woman as a *substitute* for his mother while the woman simply takes her mother's place. So that women (in the symbolic) are a kind of continuous present. (87; emphasis in original).

Whitford summarises how woman functions as *objet-petit a* for the masculine – that which covers over and performs the notion of wholeness inhabited prior to the Mirror Stage and entry into the symbolic: she is that which defines and subtends the masculine. The huldra represents that continuous present of woman – she is both *objet-petit a*, but looking hard enough beyond the 'beautiful mask' (Burnside 2011, 76), one will see that she is also primordial Other and threatens him with a return to wholeness. Ryvold's story emphasizes that what is unnatural about desiring the huldra is that it is an attempt to desire her beyond the 'mask' and beyond *objet-petit a*. Such a desire is unnatural because it represents this transgressive return to wholeness, which would be complete non-differentiation and a return to a space without boundary or language.

---

[71] This is a desire for the other, but also connected to a desire for the mother or primordial Other in Lacanian terms. Irigaray (1985a) too connects this 'outside' with the maternal body whose 'formlessness and amorphous extension exceeds all "beings"' and is the 'formless origin' (294). I discuss how this functions as an anxiety connected with the uncanny and a return to the womb in the following section.

[72] For Lacan, separation from the mother, or primordial Other, allows the child to enter the symbolic but this separation also establishes an idealized 'imaginary body' through which the child is now able to move separately and independently from the mother. This separation also creates object a as a substitute for the lack in the subject created via the separation. The subject substitutes various objects in *objet-petit a* in an attempt to reimagine itself as whole again - however, this wholeness is never realized.

Kyrre's and Ryvold's repeated iterations of the huldra story work to position female sexuality as a deviant force that threatens the centrality of masculine desire, and the idea of the feminine as the object of male desire, by suggesting woman is, in herself, a desiring subject. As a result, Liv represses those aspects of herself that she sees represented in the huldra – her fluidity and uncontainability. She establishes herself as 'observer' or 'spy' and watches those around her – particularly the guests who come to stay in Kyrre Opdahl's summer hytte. [73] Liv believes her position as an observer allows her to close herself off to the world and prevent 'susceptibility'. It enables her to distinguish herself as separate from those around her and prevent her from becoming part of the unruly outside residue the huldra represents. She states that 'mere watching struck me as a harmless activity, so long as the subjects had no idea they were being observed' (27). She wishes to create a distance and stand apart from the world around her, preferring to watch the world unfold rather than partake in it, thereby emphasizing what Grosz (1994) outlines as 'traditional understandings of vision' where 'the seer sees at a distance and is unimplicated in what is seen' (101). Liv believes her position as outsider and observer means she can operate as a discrete individual, removed from the world around her. She even takes this one step further by consequently refusing and rejecting all notions of heteronormative desire, sexuality and love. She reveals early on that 'the whole idea of romantic love just leaves me cold […] I couldn't help thinking that it was all a trick – that *love* was one of those things I was *supposed* to want' (Burnside 2011, 31; emphasis in original). Romantic love is, for Liv, something she feels she is pushed into wanting through the social constructions that surround her – a fact she later confirms by arguing she perceives that others 'seemed to want the things they wanted, not because they really wanted them, but because these things were the prescribed objects of desire' (50-51) and so, her reaction is to not 'want anything at all' (95). Liv has internalized any idea of female desire as dangerous and distanced herself from it. This separation, she believes, will protect her from her own susceptibility – a susceptibility that she sees as potentially leading her into the abyss of the huldra.

Similar discursive practices of storytelling work to reinforce the idea of a dangerous type of female desire and subjectivity in *The Gloaming*. The mother, Signe, tells her children a story of the selkie; the story is based upon Celtic folklore and tells the tale of a fisherman who comes across a group of young women dancing and laughing on the sand one evening. He feels 'quite bewitched' (28) by one particular woman but as he watches, he sees them all slide greyish skins over their bodies and disappear into the water as seals. The next night he returns and takes one of the skins and hides it. One of the selkies is left wandering the shore and the fisherman convinces her to marry him, which they do and have several children, but the selkie still longs for the sea, and one day her youngest son finds her skin and returns it to her. In the

---

[73] A hytte is a small Nordic cottage.

version of the story Signe tells, the selkie remains because she 'loves her husband and her wee ones too much' to leave (30) and so she 'gives up her other life and stays with them. Happily ever after' (30). One day, a friend of the daughters tells them the ending of the story her mother told them was incorrect. Rather than the selkie remaining and living 'happily ever after' (30), she 'takes her skin and puts it on, and she goes back into the sea' (29), because she 'can't be happy on land. That's not her true nature, and even if she loves her kids it's not enough' (30). These two stories present different versions of femininity and both of them position female desire and subjectivity as somehow a threat to the patriarchal order. The selkie wife is either constrained through refusing her fluidity in favour of more heteronormative and patriarchal ideas of femininity, or she is positioned as somehow deviant by refusing these and returning to the sea – remaining outside of the "happily ever after" of compulsory heteronormativity.

The story, and its oppositions, become a running motif in the novel as one of the daughters, Mara, struggles to align the ideas of female subjectivity presented in both versions of the story. Mara originally believes in the version of the narrative her mother tells and wants to emulate the figure of the selkie. She dwells on the story, thinking 'how desirable it was to be desired…To have a man want you so much he'd steal from you and lie to you every day, just to keep you. If only life could be a pretty story like that' (36). In Mara's version of the narrative, to be desired by men and remain a "kept woman" is the ultimate goal and she wants her life to mimic this 'pretty story'. Mara expresses a wish to function as the object of desire of the other – the feminine through which the masculine can define his own subjectivity. Furthermore, she expresses a desire to enact a stasis, which refuses the fluidity of the other version of the selkie narrative. By perceiving of herself only as an object of desire in relation to the masculine, Mara retreats from her own fluid and uncontainable nature. She puts her faith in her mother's fairytales in which '[e]very single tale was given a happy ending' (82), thereby aligning herself with patriarchal constructions of compulsory heteronormativity. Mara and her sister Islay re-enact these stories but '[t]hey were most interested in the part just before the end, where the princess dies. They mostly argued over who got to play the dead girl. It was clear that the dead girl was the most-desired one' (82). Islay's and Mara's interpretation of their mother's stories correlate female sexuality and desirability with death. This correlation maps onto the ways in which men substitute women for death; if women represent the space of nothingness and a return to non-differentiation because they are the 'hole' against which the masculine defines themselves and '[d]eath is a kind of "hole" in being, then 'there is at least the fantasy or illusion of mastery – for men at any rate' of 'the unthinkable' because it has been represented through woman (Whitford 1991, 104). Just as the huldra masks the possibility of death through her representation as a beautiful woman, the 'dead girl' represents the opportunity to master death through substituting it for woman. For Islay and Mara, however, there is no space for cultivating their *own* subjectivity or desire outside of functioning as a 'negative image of the subject' (Irigaray 1985b, 78) and so they perceive of their own desire only in relation to complete non-differentiation.

Scientific reasoning is the discursive practice through which women and fluidity are othered in *The Luminous Sea*. Vivienne, a young marine biologist, "discovers" a particularly unusual species of fish that is captured and contained for experimentation in the hope that this discovery will propel a team of researchers to academic fame. The novel connects women to fluidity by way of the creature and its association with the mermaid's surrounding trans-cultural mythos. The creature is described in hybrid terms that conflate human and fish. She has 'gills' which 'flutter on the exposed side of her face' and 'a finned tail' but a 'sinuous body' and a 'torso', 'head' and 'muscular shoulders' but which 'taper to long fronds' and '[b]uried within sleeves of silken kelp are bony flippers. Or hands' (28). This juxtaposition of human and fish body parts constructs an understanding of the creature as mermaid-like – and the use of female pronouns emphasize mermaid as related to woman.[74] However, the creature is treated as a specimen and subjected to language that others and controls it. The lead male scientist, Isaiah, frames the creature in relation to his desire for prestige – he imagines the 'optics' will claim 'Seasoned Scientist Toiling in Obscurity Makes the Discovery of a Lifetime' (101) stressing that his experimentation upon the creature is led by a desire to control and exploit it for his own professional benefit; he claims, '[t]his is going to establish me […] People will know my name. The animal is going to *wear* my name' (111; emphasis in original). Discourse, naming and language become the system through which Isaiah is able to control and master the creature allowing the creature little opportunity to form her own subjectivity. Here she functions very literally as that which subtends and defines the masculine. She becomes 'the self-reflection of the masculine subject in language, for its constitution as subject of discourse' (Irigaray 1985b, 129). I relate this process of naming to the colonial cartographic practices (like those that produced the Mercator Projection) that designate land, and all that which ascribes to the solid logic of the masculine, as epistemologically knowable, but all of that which is fluid, such as the ocean, as abyssal spaces of non-representation. That the creature bears Isaiah's name gives her no space in which to function outside of his language and order and so her ability to claim and salvage her own subjectivity within these terms is denied. Isaiah expects all the members of his team to submit to this same outlook; he chastises Vivienne for her 'anthropomorphizing' of the creature, preferring she refer to the creature as 'it' or 'the sample' (77). As a woman, Vivienne is consequently not allowed access to the same language and discourse used by Isaiah to relate to the creature. They both then become subsumed under the masculine and find no space in Isaiah's lab/ order through which to relate to one another since Vivienne's job consequently depends on her adhering to this – to treating the creature in a similar way to Isaiah and thereby establishing 'it' as unassimilable other.

---

[74] When Vivienne refers to the creature, she adopts female pronouns – whereas, Isaiah refers to the creature as 'it' – I follow Vivienne here and use she/her pronouns when referring to the creature in order to emphasize the parallels Barbeau draws between her and Vivienne.

The creature is contained in a small tank and experimented upon by the scientific team, which causes her to suffer. In a similar vein to what happens with Liv and Mara, the response to this containment is a kind of stasis: initially upon captivity she swims in 'angry circles around the circumference of the tank' (64) but as the experiments become more invasive and her captivity continues, she ends up simply 'lying on the bottom of the tank […] No elegantly livid circles. No thrashing. No fury' (153). While Liv and Mara enact an almost metaphorical stasis in response to the patriarchal discourses around them, the creature here is shown to be forced into this state through the scientific reasoning and anthropocentrism that has been used to justify her treatment. Isaiah notes Vivienne's empathy toward it and her concern about the creature's wellbeing. In order to prevent her from talking to an 'ethics committee' (111) and sabotaging his success with the discovery, he sexually assaults Vivienne, displaying similar levels of control and aggression against Vivienne as that which is subjected upon the creature. Isaiah's sexual violence toward Vivienne betrays his fear that the order he has constructed in his lab is precisely that: constructed. The violence enacted against the creature is also enacted against Vivienne and the two become connected via their fluid potential. The ethics committee, and Vivienne's empathy with the creature, present a threat to the structures and systems upon which he is creating his identity and self – systems that perpetuate a legacy of "man against nature" and enact violence upon bodies of water.

Across all three novels, language and discourse are used to objectify and control women; they are attempts to fit the unruly residual outside into phallocentric structures and order. The resultant effect, in denying the women of the novels access to their fluidity and disallowing them the position of fully constituted subjects, is that they become repressed and constrained. Storytelling is used in both *The Gloaming* and *A Summer of Drowning* to position female desire and its associated fluidity as something threatening and dangerous. As a consequence of being oppressed by these stories, Mara and her sister desire to be the 'dead girl' – showing how they conflate desirability with patriarchal notions of desire and a sacrifice of agency. Likewise, Liv's response to the stories of the huldra and her potential desirability is to refuse any kind of desire at all and live a life as 'intact' and separate from others as possible. In *The Luminous Sea*, scientific reasoning is shown to be the means through which fluidity ought to be contained and othered to facilitate the success of the male protagonist so the creature is contained in captivity to be observed and experimented upon, thereby denying her any kind of agency at all. As I go onto discuss in the next section, this becomes part of the mimetic strategy present in these novels, which I read as part of uncanny water. These fictions lay the foundation for the subversion of the discursive practices they embed within the fabric of the novels and demonstrate how moving beyond these discourses allows for alternative subjectivities to emerge. The following section looks to how these practices also become a source of the uncanny and how this is used as a generative force through which more positive modes of being and becoming – modes based on fluidity and wateriness – might emerge.

UNCANNY WATER AND THE UNSEEN: MATTERING FLUIDITY

I have outlined how the discursive strategies perpetuated by the male characters of the novels work to other fluidity. This results in the female protagonists refusing and repressing their desire while they grow convinced that the "other" women of the novels are embodiments of folkloric sea creatures. These women/ creatures subsequently emerge as an uncanny return of repressed desire. Surrounding these women/creatures is a concomitant fear of their fluid potential that threatens in its uncontainability and unknowability. In each of the novels discussed, this fear is articulated through a reliance on the visual to verify the subject – the domain that in the Freudian phallic economy others woman by designating the penis as absent or missing. When these creatures reveal the instability of the visual as that which verifies the subject, they simultaneously also reflect the fluidity of the female protagonists as that which is unseen. By emphasizing how the unseen fluidity of the female protagonists is revealed through a return of the repressed, the texts subvert the very Freudian fabric of the uncanny itself: I read in these novels an Irigarayan mimetic strategy that illuminates and facilitates a female imaginary predicated more upon touch than sight. Irigaray (1985b) claims her mimetic strategy is for a woman 'to resubmit herself [...] to ideas about herself, that are elaborated in/by a masculine logic, but so as to make "visible," by an effect of playful repetition, what was supposed to remain invisible' (76). I argue that the novels transform the very discourses that othered fluidity by having the sea creatures emerge and materialise within the novel's reality as lived embodiments of this same fluidity. Moreover, as vision is displaced as the primary mode of establishing subjectivity, other modes of being-in-the-world, and being-in-discourse, must be sought. I argue that, as the women of the novels recognise this familiar inherent fluidity in the sea creatures, they transform this from a sight of fear and anxiety to one that affirms their own desire and subjectivity.

The primacy of vision in all three novels works to other women, but simultaneously establishes touching and tactility as a site of fear. Vision allows for clear boundaries between subject and object, constructing a "distance" between seer and seen and so, to be "touched" by the other would be to collapse that distance. To "touch" the other also would be to enter into the space of the abyss or void that represents the primordial Other I mention above; it would mean touching the residual excess, that which is outside of language and remains 'left over by the structuration of the imaginary by the dominant social order' (Whitford 1991, 89). Touch incites the uncanny for another reason, since it signifies a return to wholeness or unity with the mother or primordial Other. In collapsing the distance between toucher and touched, it returns the subject to a more impermeable space without boundary and before language. Irigaray (1985a) has connected non-differentiation with the space of the maternal body and the womb, and so I read touching the other as representing the threat of engulfment and subsumption into the abyss of the Other.[75] This return signifies the uncanny because, as Freud (1919) posits, the womb is uncanny because

---

[75] I owe this observation to Whitford (1991) who points out how, in *Speculum of the Other Woman*, Irigaray describes the 'outside of discourse as the womb and by extension the maternal body' (67).

it represents the former 'home' and the place where 'everyone once lived' and which was 'once familiar' (151).[76] I discuss at the beginning of this chapter how the residual outside can be read as the fluidity of women and this is partially because its properties make it more accessible to touch rather than sight. However, it is also able to infiltrate and penetrate the safe boundaries of wholeness and discretion associated with phallocentrism – because it is a 'formlessness that *engulfs* all form' (Grosz 1994, 203; emphasis mine). It suggests the possibility of engulfment, dissolution and death – all of which are also associated with woman and the residual outside of non-differentiation. I link this association the uncanny to argue that, in othering fluidity and attempting to contain it within the logic of the visual, it subsequently emerges as that which has been repressed and literally seeps into the narrative, 'infiltrat[ing] the interstices of the narrative and point[ing] to gaps we need to explain' (Cixous 1976, 536). It returns as the creaturely double who threatens with the prospect of engulfment, demonstrating the fluidity that has been repressed and, in a not dissimilar fashion from the ghost, demanding action.

Liv is an observer in *A Summer of Drowning* because she believes too readily in the stories of the huldra that Kyrre Opdahl and Ryvold have told her. Implicit in the danger of the huldra is its desirability, so Liv reacts by closing herself off from the world and attempting to live a life where she desires nothing at all. As Liv attempts to assert this position, it quickly becomes apparent that Maia signifies the opposite, acting out the desire Liv has repressed in more excessive ways; it is through her desire and desirability that Maia comes to represent the huldra. Both women have been objects of desire, but while Liv has rejected and refused these, Maia appears to have pursued them; for example, they are both stated to have been romantically interested in the Sigfridsson brothers. Liv had 'always liked' Mats, but 'only from a distance' (13) but Maia's relationship with the brothers seems to have been more intimate, as Liv suggests she was actually '*with* them' (15; emphasis in original). In addition, Liv finds unsolicited photographs of both Maia and Liv when she goes snooping in the hytte that the British tourist Martin Crosbie is staying in. Shocked by these images, Liv keeps her distance from Martin but then spots him and Maia together and their relationship seems romantic in nature (397). Liv's belief that Maia is the huldra is solidified when Liv thinks she witnesses Maia luring Martin into the Malangen Sound. Liv believes she sees Martin row his boat out into the middle of the sound but just in the moment where Liv 'glanced away' it is then that 'Martin disappeared' with Maia looking on apparently '[h]appy' (451). In believing Maia is the huldra, Liv suggests it is Maia's desirability which kills these men. Maia has become the abyssal other which in all her desirability and formlessness has lured these men to drown.

Significantly, Liv only *thinks* she sees Liv lure Martin to drown in the sound. At no point in the novel is Martin's death definitively confirmed or denied – however, he does disappear from the hytte, never to

---

[76] I return to this point in Chapter Three, in which I elaborate on the productive potential of lingering in this abyss and in the space of non-differentiation.

return. The text leaves this gap in the narrative. Burnside sets up a reliance upon the visual by establishing Liv as an observer or witness, and then shows this position to be fundamentally unstable. After Liv witnesses Martin's apparent drowning from her bedroom window, she runs down to the sound and the hytte to find Maia. Hearing Liv exclaim and then run out of the house, Liv's mother follows. When both arrive at the sound, Liv and Maia seem unable to explain what has happened. Maia remains silent, while Liv tries to put into words what she saw to her concerned mother, but her mother 'seemed not to believe what [Liv] was saying' (460). At this point, Liv begins to doubt herself, she questions, '[h]ow could Martin Crosbie have been there, when he was so obviously not there now? […] [F]or the first time, I started to doubt myself. What had I seen through the binoculars? What had I imagined? Had I been dreaming? (460). Liv's ontological and epistemological foundation are disrupted by making her question what she has seen and how real it had been. With no resolution to what had happened, both Liv and her mother go home and Liv realizes that her mother 'had decided that I was seeing things – and, at that moment, the whole thing seemed ridiculous, a trick my mind had played on me, a leftover from one of Kyrre's old tales' (465). Maia – and Kyrre's stories of the huldra – have shown Liv that sight and vision are not a reliable domain upon which to construct her sense of self. They have demonstrated an unseen potential – that something exists outside of the visual – and this possibility is what makes Liv question her very sanity.

Maia represents what is unseen for Liv – what she cannot see and what she cannot access in her position as 'observer'. This is all the more apparent when Liv's mother Angelika, an artist, invites Maia to sit for a painting. Angelika has painted Liv previously but was unable to finish the painting. The likeness depicted requires a 'careful observer' to note it is the artist's own daughter as opposed to 'an abstract personification of girlhood innocence' (37). Liv is thus rendered incomplete through her mother's own inability to fully capture her likeness. Angelika offers to paint Maia/ the huldra. While Liv knows about Maia sitting for the painting, she never sees the end result as her mother hides the work from Liv. Liv imagines that the painting showed 'the cold eyes of the huldra, gazing out from the face of an ordinary girl who could have been the artist's own daughter' (281). Liv here envisions Maia/ the huldra in her stead as Angelika's own daughter. Through her imagined depiction in the painting, Maia serves to represent everything unrepresentable about Liv, thereby making visible this desire and fluidity that Liv believes she is lacking. Crucially, this painting is not seen by Liv – it remains hidden. This suggests that what Liv believes she somehow lacks is not something that is accessed through the visual alone.

The painting, and the way it reveals the relationship between Liv, Angelika and Maia also speaks to the ways in which Liv is beginning to understand there is no adequate representation for her in the symbolic world she occupies. Irigaray posits that there is no accommodation for the mother/daughter relationship

in the Oedipus Complex or Mirror Stage.[77] She suggests that for the little girl to enter into the symbolic she must give up her love for the mother when it is substituted for desire for the father. When the mother is erased in this process, the little girl is left without adequate representation of her own sex. Irigaray (1985a) explains that

> [t]his devaluation of the mother accompanies or follows on the devaluation of the little girl's own sex organ. It should be added that no language, no system of representations, will replace, or assist, this 'unconsciousness' in which is grounded the girl's conflictual relationship to her mother and to her sex/organ. (68)

There is consequently no space in discourse – or indeed in the realm of the visual upon which the phallic economy is predicated and relies upon – for the female to imagine or visualise her sexuality because there is no representation of her relationship to her mother and origin. The more Liv attempts to perpetuate and live a life that resembles and adheres to the structures of phallocentrism, the less space for a representation of a relationship to her mother. Maia offers an opportunity to access the unseen and residual outside – that which is beyond representation in Freudian readings of female subjectivity – and so comes to represent the mother/daughter relationship that has been repressed by Maia. That the painting is never even seen by Liv, and remains hidden, only further strengthens this point as it remains completely inaccessible within the visual phallocentric economy.

As the visual grows more unreliable it disturbs Liv's safe position as 'observer' and allows the uncanny of the novel begins to really take hold. It is significant that Liv does not witness the drowning of Martin – it is in the moment that she 'glanced away' that Martin disappears – and nor does she see the painting of Maia. Liv's carefully crafted and safe position as observer is consequently threatened by both of these situations where her sight will not allow for her to establish her subjectivity. Following the drowning, when her mother presses her to explain what she saw, her mother believes it to be a matter of 'delusion' (463), suggesting Liv's mental state is deteriorating and she is seeing things. This results in Liv growing increasingly unstable; she claims she became 'totally unsure of what I knew, unsure of what I had seen' (476). This unreliability of vision is accompanied by an increased fear of touch and that the fluidity of the huldra will somehow engulf her. Liv states that 'I was afraid that she would touch me. Nothing worse than that: just a touch. She would touch me and I would be touched forever' (495). Liv's fear grows as she believes Maia might be 'contagious in some way' (459) and that Maia will 'infect' her (460). Maia embodies a fluidity that cannot readily be accessed by the visual and that threatens in its uncontainability. Desiring Maia/ the huldra means to desire something dangerous. For Liv, this desire/desirability manifests as a fear of infection and contagion, as Maia becomes othered through her ability to infect her desire onto others. It is significant that prior to the stories of the huldra and witnessing the relationship

---

[77] See Introduction (n. 19) for a fuller discussion of this point.

between Maia and Martin 'blossom', she does not believe Maia to be the embodiment of the huldra because she sees Maia as 'too dark, too attentive, too *solid*' (13; emphasis in original). But, after she witnesses the supposed drowning, Liv comes to consider Maia in more fluid terms. Liv believes that Maia 'sensing a hint of the devil in her reflection […] had decided – consciously, or not so consciously – to cultivate it' (412). Once again, there is a suggestion that what Maia possesses and her desirability is inaccessible to simply the visual, requiring one to 'sense' its presence through merely a 'hint' of it. Maia therefore comes to represent a kind of tactile fluidity that is more material and tangible in essence than it is visual and it is this that Liv has rejected.

The preoccupation with unreliable vision is central to all texts discussed here and it is closely connected to the uncanny by way of revealing that which 'should have remained hidden' and the return of the repressed. This can be connected to the ways in which the mother-daughter relationship remains unsymbolized in the phallic economy and, across these texts, resurfaces as the unconscious and fluid residue that threatens the solid discretion of the masculine. This can be read both in terms of usurping his bodily discretion and through a destruction of his subjectivity as he might return to the maternal space of non-differentiation. Crucially, in *A Summer of Drowning* it is not so much that Maia makes *visible* that which was repressed, but rather she reveals it through undermining the visual itself. What Maia represents as the huldra is frightening to Liv because she has been indoctrinated to fear that which is unseen. Maia's fluidity, as that which is more accessible to touch than to sight, thereby becomes connected to the unseen and, in the Freudian androcentric construction of the uncanny, the "absent" genitals of the woman. All of this serves to align with Freudian definitions of the uncanny where he claims female genitalia function as a signifier for castration and where he connects the loss of sight to castration by way of his reading of 'Der Sandmann' (1816).[78] However, as Cisoux demonstrates in her reading of 'The Uncanny', Freud's explanation of castration is not uncanny in itself but uncanny because it gestures to his own repressed inability to arrive at a suitable definition. In attempting to make fluidity manifest as these creatures – who might then be readily assimilated back into the solid logic of the masculine via the discursive strategies outlined above – the very instability of fluidity to be contained within this logic is revealed. This is shown through the 'contagious' or 'infectious' nature of Maia: in acknowledging an element of Maia that might be more accessible to touch than sight – that might be assimilated via the body and its materiality – Liv admits that she may also hold a fluid potential that would allow for more permeable bodily boundaries. The paradoxical uncanniness of fluidity is demonstrated here whereby it shores up the coexistence of the unfamiliar within the familiar while undermining the androcentric and phallocentric constructions that facilitated its emergence.

---

[78] In his analysis of 'Der Sandman', Freud (1919) connects Nathanial's loss of sight to the uncanny, declaring that there is 'no doubt that the feeling of something uncanny is directly attached […] to the idea of being robbed of one's eyes' (6). He then goes on to correlate this with a fear of castration, which he argues is apparent through an analysis of 'dreams, fantasies and myths', particularly that of Oedipus (7).

A similar pattern of "revealing" fluidity is present in *The Gloaming* when Mara meets, and falls in love with Pearl, a woman who she believes to be the embodiment of the selkie in the version of the story "hidden" from her by her mother – the version where the selkie finds her skin and returns to the sea. The story itself contains the suggestion that fluidity is something that ought to remain hidden since when the fisherman hides the skin of his selkie wife, she is forced to conform to the role of a wife and mother within a more patriarchal order. The selkie wife is forced to sacrifice her own subjectivity here and replace it, quite literally, with desire for the father in the story. This version of femininity is the one that Mara prefers. When Mara meets Pearl, Pearl manifests as a return of the repressed since Mara believes Pearl embodies the version of the story her mother had hidden from her. Pearl works as a travelling "mermaid", performing in shows in places like Las Vegas. Her nomadic lifestyle, and her affinity with water, leads Mara to believe that Pearl is 'the sea through and through. Always changing, never staying' (391). Mara therefore ascribes to Pearl the qualities of the selkie, making her an embodiment of this hidden element of fluidity.

This causes Mara to doubt herself, believing that Pearl threatens the version of femininity that Mara has been indoctrinated to believe in. She claims Pearl does not 'understand the island' or 'why anyone would want to stay' (246). She feels that Pearl misunderstands the desire for stasis that Mara longed for as a young girl and Pearl has 'taken from Mara the only home she'd ever known – and she'd given nothing in return' (249). Pearl's encroachment into a world that was familiar and "safe" to Mara, undermines the sense of subjectivity that Mara had formed in relation to her island and the stasis she wished to enact, disturbing all that was familiar to her via this fluidity. In believing her to be a selkie, Mara comes to associate Pearl with a fear of fluidity and that this might threaten her via its unseen nature. This is exemplified by the fact that Mara has a fear of water (from when she was unable to rescue her younger brother Barra from drowning). Mara's fear of water and fear of the fluid potential expressed in the selkie story become quite literally manifest in Pearl. Mara comes to associate Pearl with a fear of being engulfed by the other. She believes Pearl is 'always dragging her to the bottom of the sea' (394). Moreover, Mara senses that her interactions with Pearl may lead to her own dissolution and death when she states that '[a]ll the stories say that selkies will make you die of love […]And it was true: Pearl did make her feel like she was dying. She felt dizzy at the thought of Pearl's desire, the abyss of her wanting' (262). In this moment, Mara not only correlates Pearl with death, but she also correlates her with desire and the 'abyss'.

In associating Pearl with water and the fear of drowning, however, Mara acknowledges that Pearl's fluidity is threatening because it suggests something unseen and more tangible. But Pearl is never fully revealed to be an actual selkie or a mermaid – in fact, she regularly refutes it, insinuating that Mara ought not to believe so much in the selkie story because it is just 'a story […] about women as other' (360). At the

same time, however, there is always a hint that Pearl may indeed be otherworldly. With every suggestion of the artifice involved in Pearl's travelling mermaid performance, also comes the hint that it might not be a performance. In describing the make-up and work involved in pulling together her appearance as a mermaid, Pearl offers the suggestion that the act itself is an illusion:

> [w]aterproof tape, steel zips, flexible plastic: it's not so glamorous when you know how the magic trick is done, is it? Perhaps it's best only the magician knows.
>
> Unless – Pearl grinned in the dark. Unless the magician only pretends it's a trick, so you won't know that the magic is real. (214)

Pearl describes the effort and materials used to create the illusion that she is a mermaid before contradicting herself to suggest that the illusion is a pretence and the 'magic is real' and, in doing so, indicates the possibility that the visual might not be reliable at all in determining whether or not this is 'real'. In refusing to fully reveal whether or not she is a mermaid or selkie, Pearl never becomes fully symbolized within the same discursive structures that other her fluidity.

The creature in *The Luminous Sea* likewise resists being categorized as definitively a mermaid, but she also evades categorisation as anything else. Contained in a water tank for analysis and observation, Vivienne and the team of scientists are required to pull the creature out onto land in order to properly analyse and observe her but she is unlike anything they have encountered before. As with the "creatures" of the other two novels, this ambiguous position emphasizes her fluidity and situates her as a potential threat to the other characters who rely on discursive strategies that prioritize the visual to demarcate between self and other. The creature resists the human attempts to observe and analyse her, and when Vivienne attempts to pull her onto land for examination, the creature 'snaps and snarls […] biting Vivienne on the hand with sharp-pointed teeth' (70). As a result, Vivienne and the team find they struggle to properly analyse the creature – to both catch it in the tank and pull it out for examination – but they also grow more wary of her, and Vivienne is 'careful to keep her hands out of the water' (72) since touching the creature might result in her attacking Vivienne.

Once more, the aspect of the creature that creates fear also becomes that which holds the key to an alternative imaginary in which a fluid subject position might be configured. The novel draws parallels between Vivienne and the creature, emphasizing their mutual oppression at the hands of the lead male scientist. In one particularly violent scene, the synergy between Vivienne and the creature is emphasized; Isaiah and Colleen, two senior scientists, attempt to take a biopsy using a special type of dart that has to be shot at the creature. Isaiah takes the shot and the fish lets out a 'noise that is almost a squeal' (80). Shortly after, the sound is replaced 'by a gurgling deep within her chest […] It is the sound of the ocean and Vivienne feels a sudden desire to be underwater […] A spasm courses through the fish. Vivienne hears herself whimper' (80). The structure of this extract emphasizes the mirroring between the creature

and Vivienne; the scene is punctuated by their squeals/ whimpers as Vivienne empathises with the creature's pain. Vivienne acknowledges the creature's fluidity as similar to her own as she literally feels a desire to be underwater when she hears the 'sound of the ocean' emanating from the creature's own body. Following the scene with the biopsy dart, Isaiah notes Vivienne's empathy toward it and her concern about the creature's wellbeing. This threatens Isaiah's authority and he sexually assaults Vivienne, displaying similar levels of control and aggression against Vivienne as that which was subjected upon the creature. Vivienne doubles the creature in her suffering at the hands of patriarchal violence.

While not necessarily a return of the repressed, the creature experiences the literal containment and violence that Vivienne also experiences in relation to Isaiah while also revealing the fluid potential that Vivienne has inherent within herself. The novel therefore brings to the fore the very thing that creates fear – fluidity and its tangible aspects – but without reinscribing it into the same symbolism that others it. Rather, what *The Luminous Sea*, *The Gloaming* and *A Summer of Drowning* reveal is that fluidity might be something more readily inherent within the protagonists that has otherwise been repressed via systems and practices that privilege the visual. By having these "creatures" emerge as embodiments of the fluid and uncontainable creatures that the stories and practices attempted to oppress, the novels deploy a kind of mimetic strategy. Yet, just at the moment where it might be revealed these women are those embodiments, the novels each suggest the possibility that this is not the case. In doing so, they begin to construct an imaginary that recasts these folkloric narratives into something that allows for the fluid potential of bodies. In the following section, I demonstrate this turn, showing how the negative affect created by the uncanniness of these creatures is transformed into something more positive and generative and that embraces the fluidity of all bodies.

TOUCHING AND TRANSFORMING FLUIDITY

Privileging touch and tactility is one way in which othering of fluidity in the novels is overcome and alternative subjectivities begin to emerge. Irigaray's proposition of the two lips is useful for my argument here for two reasons: firstly, the ways in which it challenges the hierarchy of vision by privileging touch as the means through which subjectivity is constructed, as opposed to sight; secondly, it suggests a plurality and multiplicity inherent to woman in contrast to phallic wholeness or oneness. Irigaray's (1985b) construction of a 'feminine imaginary' via the two lips (76), offers the possibility to think beyond the boundaries imposed by phallocentrism, and conceive of female subjectivity in terms that are open, plural and fluid. This reconfiguration of subjectivity is significant for my conception of fluidity here. I suggest that it is in the moment of tactile encounter – where sight and vision have become unreliable – that a model of subjectivity similar to Irigaray's conception of the two lips emerges in the novels. When characters are forced to confront their fears and "touch the other" is when the uncanniness culminates:

when an encounter with this creaturely double would otherwise lead to the destruction of the subject and engulfment, touch and tactility instead affirm both subjects.

As discussed above, moments where there is the potential for touch and tactility are initially positioned as sites of fear in the novels underpinned by the belief that these mermaid/selkie/huldra creatures are a return of the repressed fluidity of the female protagonists that threatens their autonomy and the 'safe' distance they have created between self and other. Touching implies that 'the body of the other […] will enter into the space of my own body and effect the very transformations that would disturb my claim to autonomous selfhood' (Shildrick 2005, 328). Touch and tactility disrupt the claim to autonomy and self-containment – they precipitate a moment of dissolution and non-differentiation. Liv, for example, is terrified that Maia/ the huldra will touch her. Touching becomes the moment at which the distance between subject and object, self and other, is irreversible, and the clear autonomy and individualism Liv has tried to assert will dissolve. Likewise, Mara's fear of the water can be read as an extension of her fear of Pearl's uncontainability since she is 'the sea', and in *The Luminous Sea*, Vivienne cannot touch the creature for fear she will injure or harm Vivienne's own body by biting and breaking the boundaries of the skin.

What this fear of touch or tactility suggests is a fear of transgressing boundaries: of assimilating the other into the self and it is the site at which the uncanny culminates in the novels. Following the model of the two lips, the feminine imaginary reconstitutes this transgression as inherent and implicit in female subjectivity because the two lips represent both a continuous openness and an indeterminacy of boundaries, since the lips no longer distinguish 'the passage from the inside out, from the outside in' (Irigaray 1985b, 210). This transgression moves from a site of fear to something more familiar. This shift from unassimilable other to assimilable marks a generative force that transforms the negative affect of the uncanny into something more positive. This is witnessed, for example, in *The Gloaming* when Mara confronts her fear of water and swims in the ocean at night with Pearl. Mara at first is terrified she will see her dead brother: she 'didn't dare open her eyes' and thinks to herself '[w]hat if she saw a distant gleam, hair twisting in the current? What if she saw a tiny hand reaching out to her?' (234). Rather than the selkie pulling Mara to the depths of the ocean, Mara is instead transformed by the sea in a way that affirms both Pearl's and Mara's subjectivities. Mara 'let Pearl pull her into the dark of the sea' and 'let the sea soothe her' and 'just when she ran out of breath, when her lungs began to burn, when she felt the cold trickles of panic behind her eyes – there was Pearl, pressing her lips to Mara's, breathing into her mouth' (234). As Pearl teaches Mara to breathe underwater and confront her fear of the sea, she transforms the uncanniness and fear associated with the selkie narrative and engulfment to an affirmation

of both through the transgression of one another's bodily boundaries that then allows them not to disappear to the depths but to 'surface together' (235) and live.[79]

This suggests a generative potential in fluidity that I see as qualified through uncanny water and the process of submersion. This is to do with the pause or suspension articulated when Mara lets go of the fear and inhibitions that attempted to frame her subjectivity within solid logic. It is precisely when Mara metaphorically and literally 'lets go' and allows herself to succumb to the water and to Pearl that her subjectivity is affirmed. This is highlighted in a separate scene where Mara is masturbating in the bath, fantasising about Pearl:

> [s]he slid her hands between her legs. She felt Pearl lay her down at the edge of the sea, snowflaking kisses down her neck. She put her hands alongside Pearl's, touching where she touched […] Pearl was touching her, loving her, owning her. Their bodies merged, became one. Mara was Pearl was Mara and they were both – they were both. (97)

Facilitated by the fluid and undefinable nature of the female body and her desire, the bodies of both women merge. Subject and object, self and other are broken down but in a way that affirms the presence of 'both': the boundaries between them are thus not collapsed in a moment that results in the dissolution of the subject, but both become subjects in their own right, and are confirmed through their own uncontainable nature.

The transformation of negative affect associated with "engulfment" then turns into something that recognises fluidity as an inherent property both subjectivities. This occurs in *The Luminous Sea* following Vivienne's sexual assault by Isaiah. In the aftermath, she goes home to take a bath and, whilst undressing, notes the damage to her skin. Her back is 'scraped raw' (116) and the blood dries, making her shirt stick to her flesh, so that the fabric consequently 'pulls at her torn skin' (116). She submerges herself in the water and finds herself thinking of the creature in the lab. When she visits the creature the next day, she is shocked to notice the creature in a similar state, covered in wounds and scratches from her treatment at the hands of the scientist. Vivienne then comes to recognise their mutual affinity as persecuted others, and both Vivienne and the creature are united in their bodily pain. The creature then becomes less of a threatening other who might 'lunge at her, teeth bared' (171). Vivienne acknowledges their kinship so that, when she '[r]eaches out and uncurls the delicate appendage that is folded like a fist' and holds onto

---

[79] There are some significant resonances in this section with Alexis Pauline Gumbs's *M Archive* (2018). Gumbs's experimental collection of poetic artefacts is 'written from, and with, the perspective of a researcher, a post-scientist sorting artifacts after the end of the world' (xi). Gumbs focalises this narrative voice to centralise black feminist metaphysics and challenge the capitalist, racist, patriarchal and anthropocentric nature of our current epistemologies and ontologies. Her chapter 'Archive of Ocean: Origin' centres on images of the Middle Passage, and of slaves in transit in the hull of a ship. But within this dark and traumatic imagery emerges a sense of connectivity evoked through shared breath. She writes, 'remember when we met? underwater weightless and flowering [...] remember how our breathing turned into what would support us and everything else in the thousand-mile radius of echo' (111). Co-breathing underwater functions similarly here to in *The Gloaming*, where it is a mutual act of affirming co-presence.

the creature until her own hand is 'numbed by the frigid water' (172), it solidifies their bond. Touch and tactility become a means through which both the creature and Vivienne are affirmed and allows Vivienne to shift away from understanding the creature as object in relation to her and recognise their mutual fluidity.

In acknowledging a kinship and connectedness, even one driven by suffering and oppression, Vivienne and the creature are affirmed in their own fluid subject positions. This is further stressed when Vivienne "rescues" the creature and releases her into the ocean. Vivienne steals a boat from the wharf and is shot by Isaiah with a biopsy dart, mirroring the earlier shooting of the creature. Rather than succumbing to her wounds, which seem significant as 'Vivienne presses her hand to her thigh, trying to stop the gush of blood' (235), Vivienne presses forward and steers the boat into a small cove. There she 'sits on the plank seat until her pulse echoes the tide, until her breath repeats the murmur of the breeze on the water, until her heart breathes the wind and her lungs beat with the rhythm of the sea' (236). She then 'lowers her fish into the sea. Ribbons of kelp slip between her fingers and the creature sinks below the surface […] A coppery fluke disturbs the floating constellations, scattering them like handfuls of stars' (237). Vivienne's physiology is described in relation to the ocean. Similar to the way in which Mara let the water 'soothe' her in *The Gloaming,* here water also has a calming and reinvigorating effect, transforming the pain and suffering Vivienne felt into something more positive that allows 'the ghosts of fear and loneliness, of pain and self-doubt evaporate' (237). This emotional response is what ultimately drives Vivienne to release the creature, allowing her to return to the sea and become a subject verified in her own right.

Liv's encounters with Maia in *A Summer of Drowning* are not as celebratory as those found in *The Gloaming* or *The Luminous Sea*: a fact I attribute to what David Borthwick (2009) describes as a 'malignant masculinity' (73) inherent in Burnside's work.[80] In *A Summer of Drowning,* I read this in the neglect of Maia's own subjectivity and agency. The ending sees Maia actually vanish along with Kyrre Opdahl when she takes him up on the offer of staying in his hytte and follows him into the woods (Burnside 2011, 543). Maia's disappearance with Kyrre seems to affirm the 'malignant masculinity' and phallocentrism present in Burnside's novel because she is relegated to a realm of non-presence. Her fluidity and desirability – and the threat that represents – is forced to make itself unseen. Although, while the novel does not necessarily resolve this 'malignant masculinity', there are points at which Liv recognises that her own subjectivity pushes beyond the scope of the boundaries imposed on her, and it is through processes of submersion that Liv begins to acknowledge her own fluidity.

---

[80] Julika Griem (2015) has made a similar argument about *A Summer of Drowning,* stating that 'Liv's way of "seeing things" does not simply – nor finally – set Burnside's allegedly flawed gender record straight' (103).

Liv's fear of Maia as being 'contagious' assumes that Liv harbours the potential for this same form of fluidity. This is suggested through the metaphors of overflowing, fluidity and permeability, which are frequently used in relation to Liv's perception of the world and her own embodiment. In one example, Liv describes her own embodiment in relation to the rain outside:

> I wouldn't be listening to the rain. I wouldn't be listening or paying deliberate attention to anything, but I would find myself included in that sound, inseparable from it, and from everything it touched and shaped – and then, suddenly, after three or four hours of this, when nothing had altered in any noticeable way, I had to get up and go out, no matter how wet it was. It wasn't restlessness that drew me out, it wasn't impatience with the weather, it was more a feeling of being filled to overflowing, of needing to go out and dissipate some of the charge that had gathered in my hands and behind my eyes. (106)

In this example, Liv characterizes her own embodiment as fluid: she sees herself as part of the rain; immersed in it and interconnected with all it comes into contact with. As the rain continues, she feels herself 'filled to overflowing' and acknowledges the fluid and uncontainable element of her own materiality. Liv's embodiment is therefore categorized in this scene as tactile, tangible and fluid; implicated in the systems and world around her. While the novel never fully allows Liv to embrace this fluidity, examples like the one above suggest that, were Liv able to embrace it, it could work to more generative ends if and when Liv is able to '[dissipate] some of the charge' that gathers in her hands. Ultimately then, Liv's encounters with Maia/ the huldra are what allow her to acknowledge her own fluidity and again suggest a transformative moment can occur through touch and tangibility.

What is significant in all of these moments of touch and tactility, is that they create generative potential that displaces the negative affect created via the socio-cultural associations surrounding mermaid, huldra and selkie narratives but all without displacing the uncertainty associated with uncanniness. When touch occurs in these moments, it is about confronting a fear of the other by recognising this inherent fluidity within the self. This recognition is part of uncanny water's prerogative and the way in which it amplifies the material wateriness within ourselves, illuminating our possible interconnection with others and how our own wateriness might both extend toward and draw from them. These novels refuse to resolve the question of whether these are the sea creatures suggested, while also beginning to associate these productive aspects of fluidity with the female protagonists. In this way, these novels demonstrate how this generative potential might manifest through stressing fluid interconnection, as opposed to the stasis and death suggested by the narratives and representations they transform.

Even while Maia's ending fails to affirm her as a subject in her own right in *A Summer of Drowning*, the novel's suggestion that she might be the huldra ensures that the uncertainty associated with her fluidity

is not entirely dispelled but embraced, instead, by Liv. Following the disappearance of both Kyrre and Maia, Liv begins to acknowledge this fluidity is more a part of her than she originally believed, claiming that

> I am getting used to the fact that, in my house, there are shadows in the folds of every blanket and imperceptible tremors in every glass of water or bowl of cream set out on a table – and, some days, there are tiny, almost infinitesimal loopholes of havoc in the fabric of the given world that could spill loose and catch me out wherever I am. (568)

This scene marks a moment of transformation for Liv; she seems to acknowledge a world that is almost in excess of itself and that mirrors the residual outside of the feminine. Previously she had been afraid when Maia entered Liv's home; Liv had described that she knew 'knew that someone else was in the house, and right away, the very moment I woke I felt a surge of panic. Real panic; actual terror. Someone or something was in the house and I immediately sensed danger' (276). Maia's entrance into Liv's home literally disturbs that which is "heimlich", or homely, to Liv. The incursion of her uncanny double into her home thus insights a real moment of panic in her as all that is familiar and safe to her becomes distorted. Yet, in the above scene her focus on fluidity – the cream, water and the fact that this 'havoc' might 'spill loose' – shows that Liv recognises that the fluidity she had associated with Maia and her uncanniness is actually part of her own home and already present there.

Just as there is no resolution to whether Maia is the huldra or not, *The Luminous Sea* refuses to determine whether the creature is a mermaid or not. The failure to categorize her prior to her release into the ocean suggests the failure of phallocentrism and masculinist discourses of power to fully contain or define her. When Vivienne finds an old 'Victorian-era field guide to marine life' within which is a chapter entitled 'As Yet Unverified Fantastical Creatures of the Deep' she sees a creature that 'looks like her own' but even then, the resemblance is only 'ever so slight' (124). The book itself is something of a paradox – even in its claims that these are 'unverified', it still attempts to classify them in a 'guide'. The attempts to name the creature mirror colonial cartographic practices like the Mercator Projection, which operated in the nineteenth-century along with the Atlantic slave trade. Barbeau's reference to this book, and the creature's possible appearance in it, amplifies this connection to particular discourses and systems of knowledge production that utilize naming conventions to exert power and control. The 'Victorian-era' nature of it implies its connection to these nineteenth-century epistemologies, connecting it to Darwinian and natural history discourses that sought to categorize and name particular species. However, the creature Vivienne sees in the book is still not identical to the one she has "discovered", stressing how the creature sits outside of these conventions and beyond representation. By retaining this element of the unknown, the novel augments the sense of uncanniness created through the synergy between Vivienne and the creature. It also transforms this into a more positive moment of affirmation when Vivienne decides to release it without categorising it. Vivienne's realisation comes to her in fluid terms, underscoring the mutual fluidity

she shares with the creature and stressing the possibility of this for interconnection. When she has the realisation,

> [s]he imagines she is swimming, imagines slipping beneath the waves. She can feel the shock of water on skin, the sting of salt […] She can smell brine. She can feel the skim of warm water at the surface, can touch the beginnings of the frigid depths with her toes. (178)

In another moment of submersion, Vivienne once again mirrors the creature swimming below the surface of the water and her decision to release the creature comes as a result of this, emphasizing the positive possibilities of embracing fluidity.

The novels linger with the other-worldliness of both the huldra/ Maia and the fish/ mermaid, gesturing toward the positive potential inherent in the uncanny and demonstrate how uncanny water might facilitate alternative subjectivities through stressing interconnectedness. *The Gloaming* highlights this as it begins to blur who might be the selkie between Mara and Pearl so that neither and both become other-worldly, plural and fluid. When Mara discovers the book from which her mother had read the selkie story to her, she begins to reads it to Pearl and has a moment of realisation that '[t]his story. It was everything she'd thought she wanted. She'd wanted to be the selkie, not the fisherman – and yet here she was with her sea-love' (359). Mara acknowledges that at one point she had wanted the life of stasis but following her encounter with Pearl and her submersion, she realizes 'perhaps it didn't matter. There didn't have to be a fisherman at all; two selkies could love one another just fine' (360). Both women become selkies, losing the phallocentrism and patriarchal influence of the original story and replacing it with something more fluid and open that does not displace the uncertainty in the original tale but instead reconfigures it and reconstitutes it so as to embrace and acknowledge the fluidity inherent in both women. This moment of queer desire pushes beyond the heteronormativity perpetuated in the masculinist discourses of the stories Mara grew up with and allows for Mara's desire and subjectivity to be fully affirmed and verified.

Through a transformation of uncanniness, these novels emphasize the generative and productive potential that acknowledging fluidity might afford. The dismantling of the fear and anxiety that touch and tactility initially incited precipitates a recognition of one's own fluidity and how this might allow for interconnection with others. Irigaray's model of the two lips shows how the possibility of a female imaginary enables a shift in subjectivity that destabilizes phallocentrism and facilitates fluidity in its transformative affect. In the following section, I move fluidity away from its associations with purely the feminine and consider how a posthuman reconfiguration of this might allow for all bodies of water to more broadly connect in the more-than-human hydrocommons. I consider how the narratives themselves illuminate the possibilities for new subjectivities created from this wateriness. In particular, I look at how the narratives amplify the uncertainty found here through refusing closure and representing

multiplicity. In doing so, I argue that these narratives begin to show how wateriness can be detached from the female, and its concomitant associations with engulfment and reproduction, and help lay the foundations for a new oceanic imaginary that encompasses both myriad expressions of gender and the more-than-human.

A MORE-THAN-HUMAN FLUIDITY

Irigaray's (1985b) model of the two lips offers the possibility through which a feminine imaginary might be resymbolized. Irigaray has latterly has added that the two lips 'means to open up the autological and tautological circle of systems of representation and their discourse so that women may speak (of) their sex' (272). In creating a feminine imaginary, she has allowed for a representation and discourse about female sexuality. Her mimetic strategy has borrowed from, and subsequently redeployed, the discourses of phallocentrism to resymbolize the feminine. Both the subject matter and the mimetic strategy that underpin the two lips are central for my argument: I show how Irigaray's theorisation allows for a discourse about fluidity that I read as present in these stories which are derived closely from narratives that othered it initially. In what I have outlined thus far, the three novels transform the uncanniness at the heart of folkloric tales of these female sea creatures by mirroring these tales, and redeploying the fear of fluidity at their core to more generative ends. I argue that the recasting of these narratives, so as to no longer other fluidity, can thereby allow for a reconfiguration of the oceanic imaginary of the Northern Atlantic Littoral. To do so, this section relates the fluidity described in these texts to water and the aqueous more broadly, resituating the fluidity of the novels as a more inherent quality of wateriness. In detaching fluidity from the specificity of the feminine, I suggest here that there is a possibility to represent the oceanic imaginary of the North Atlantic in terms that are also detached from the discourses of mastery and control demonstrated via these narratives of sea creatures.

In refusing to determine whether or not these women are the sea creatures of earlier folkloric tales, these novels not only deny the possibility of reinscribing these women back into narrative of control and mastery, but they also allow for a discourse and language that privileges uncertainty. This is exemplified in *The Luminous Sea* when the creature lacks any kind of name or distinction by the end – by leaving her unnamed and undefined, the uncertainty of who or what she is lingers, thereby denying any potential for mastery or control over her. Likewise, *The Gloaming* and *A Summer of Drowning* favour an open-ended approach, with only the suggestion that these creatures might be otherworldly. This uncertainty is significant because it allows for the fluidity that defines these creatures to be more broadly connected to my figuration of uncanny water. I posit that uncanny water's power lies in the way it pulls upon moments of uncanniness to emphasize water's unknown extensions between and across bodies. As water transfers in these unknowable ways, it evades easy assimilation into discourses that might assert control over it. What happens when the women of the novels "touch" these women/ creatures then verifies the fluidity

of both, but also suggests a moment of interconnection that suggests this fluidity might extend beyond them into a more collective entanglement with all bodies. I argue that if this fluidity is read as wateriness, then this interconnection shows the implication of all bodies in the more-than-human hydrocommons. There therefore opens up the potential to see these creatures as beyond the binary categories of gender and allow for various myriad unknowable expressions of gender. Moreover, there is the potential to also read these "creatures" as nonhuman sea creatures and witnessing how these generative moments of touch, tactility, exchange and merging are facilitated by and through contact with a body of water. Both these readings explode identity categories and produce an alternative imaginary that is relational and co-constituitive.

Revising fluidity as wateriness in order to reconfigure the oceanic imaginary involves revisiting the associations of these creatures. Their origins connect them to the ocean's feminization and stress its unknowability. As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, these creatures represent a conflation of woman and ocean that serves to emphasize the uncontainable fluidity of both. Plunging into the depths and abyss of the ocean represents a threat of engulfment that the masculine fears because of its uncertain and unassimilable potential. Yet these novels show that if the fluid potential is embraced through touching the "other", then what seemed unassimilable is no longer threatening but verifying and generative; fluidity is both situated and specific but allows for interconnection and becoming-with another. Reading this fluidity as wateriness shows how all bodies might be connected in the more-than-human hydrocommons and how the unknowable potential of water can be a positive and radical force that destabilizes hierarchies. In *The Luminous Sea*, Vivienne's synergy with the creature is not just underscored in fluid terms but emphasizes wateriness and connection through the ocean. When Vivienne decides to release the creature without categorising her and leaving her beyond the realm of the symbolic, it is not just fluid terms in which her realisation is described but specifically watery and oceanic – stressing the sensory 'sting of salt' and the 'smell of brine' that condition her awakening (178). In refusing to categorize the creature, Vivienne lingers in the uncertainty created and perpetuates the creature's otherness, as opposed to defining her terms that might allow for easy assimilation. Instead, the two become implicated in the more-than-human hydrocommons that embraces and verifies the wateriness of both.

This watery verification is also present in *The Gloaming* when Mara overcomes her fear of the sea and learns to breathe underwater. Rather than Mara being led to drown in the depths of the ocean by the otherworldly selkie/mermaid, Pearl saves Mara by 'breathing into her mouth' (152). Pearl literally gives over her own materiality in order for the Mara's life to continue. I discuss in the previous section briefly how the desire between the two women can be read as deconstructing the heteronormativity at the heart of the stories Mara believed in as a child. But reading Pearl as a selkie also means that, rather than

engulfing the subject in an unknown abyss, the situation is presented as a complex interchange between a nonhuman subject and fluid female subject, where both subjects thrive rather than dissolve. Configuring Pearl as nonhuman and Mara as the female human subject presents the hydrocommons as a multi-species milieu and, while it is not water that is exchanged, but air, this example provides the possibility for continuation beyond the death of the subject – it is through the fluid abyss that life is verified, rather than denied. Pearl and Mara fall into the sea and learn to breathe through the hydrocommons – literally breathing life into one another as a process of reciprocity and relationality.

It is in lingering in the nonhuman-ness of the sea creatures described that the texts also resymbolize the mermaid/selkie/huldra mythos and perpetuate the generative uncertainty associated with uncanny water. The creatures provide the opportunity for continuation beyond engulfment, thereby removing the narrative constraints that emphasized fluidity as negative affect. In *The Luminous Sea*, this is shown through Vivienne's decision to release the creature, therefore rewriting the mermaid mythos that allows both to continue as subjects in their own right. However, in *The Gloaming* and *A Summer of Drowning*, the novels retell and recast the folkloric tales of the selkie and huldra, respectively, within their own plots. This act of retelling is a discursive act that allows for the mythos of these creatures to move beyond the imaginary and offer a more collective understanding of how bodies of water are deeply entangled and with one another. Moreover, it establishes an imaginary that is removed from the symbolic and discursive acts that align with the more terracentric ontologies and epistemologies that demarcate the Atlantic Ocean as feminized void. In offering situated stories that take place in and across the waters surrounding the Northern Atlantic, these fictions offer the opportunity to imagine wateriness as connected to and extending from larger bodies of water. This displaces the space of the Northern Atlantic as an absent and residual outside that functions only to subtend land-based understandings of place and the desires of colonial and capitalist endeavours and complexifies and complicates the Northern Atlantic, making it a place that is more radically constructed to and through discourses of mattered and contingent bodies of water.

The act of offering alternative possibilities for being and becoming-in-the world that run counter to these terracentric understandings of mastery and control is demonstrated in *The Gloaming* wherein the selkie narrative is entirely modified within its own plot. Rather than the third-person narrator we have been led to believe is telling the story, it is revealed to be the ghost of 'Bee'. Toward the novel's close, Signe enacts a confessional to the sea, and it returns Bee's bones to her. After this, Bee interjects into the narrative, he states '[t]he sea had taken me, and now the sea was giving me back' (287). In the final chapter, Bee's ghost also leaves, and this means that the novel offers no sense of finality or closure as he is not there to narrate what happens to his sisters. He offers a range of possibilities: maybe Mara and Pearl get married; maybe Pearl leaves; maybe Mara stays (302-303). The myriad possibilities mean that the selkie story

woven throughout the novel does not *end* one way or another, but significantly it also means '[t]hey didn't live happily ever after, like a couple in a story. But they were happy for a while, and perhaps that's all we can ask' (303). In refusing closure or finality, the novel instead offers an endless sense of becoming and continuation. Bee's narration thus reconfigures the selkie story entirely – siding neither with one ending nor another but shifting it entirely to a narrative of joyful transformation and the myriad possibilities that meeting of bodies in the hydrocommons can provide.

This sense of transformation, continuation and generative potential is not configured in the same joyful terms in *A Summer of Drowning* but it functions more implicitly. Julika Griem (2015) warns against reading the novel as part of a 'feminist tradition of oceanic liberation' (103), where the ocean and sea function as a space that liberates women from the constraints of patriarchy. I propose that if the novel is read through a posthuman lens that places emphasis on Maia's potential creaturliness and nonhuman-ness, then it illuminates the possibilities of generation and continuation – even amidst the 'malignant masculinity' the novel at times seems to perpetuate. The novel even ends with the dissolution of both a desiring masculine subject and the huldra herself: Kyrre Opdahl follows Maia into the woods where both Kyrre and Maia disappear into thin air. While the dissolution of both Kyrre and Maia mirrors the story of the huldra, which Kyrre had recounted to Liv initially, Liv is not confined by her position as an observer at the novel's close. The dissolution of both Kyrre and Maia enables Liv to move beyond the story's abyssal ending and create something for herself. Their dissolution effects the end of that narrative, and the beginning of a new one. Liv recognises this, stating '[w]hat had happened belonged to Kyrre's world, the world of stories and fatal magic' (322). Like Bee's eventual disappearance from the narrative in *The Gloaming*, the dissolution of Kyrre's own materiality effects the end of the huldra narrative that constrained Liv. Kyrre, and Maia, have given over their own materiality – their very dissolution means that Liv can continue beyond the limitations imposed on her by the 'old stories'.

Freed from the confines of the huldra story, Liv begins to create maps, thus suggesting that the dissolution of both Maia and Kyrre has had a generative and positive effect. Liv describes maps early on in slightly negative terms, claiming that maps, 'recognise the gaps between one thing and another. They stand in mute opposition to those who think that the connections are all that matter' (63). Liv's descriptions of cartography can be attributed to her reluctance to interconnect with the world – to become and merge with others. She sees interconnection as a counterpoint to her own stasis and individualism – her safe position as an observer. However, following Kyrre's death she seems to use these maps to trace:

> [t]he unseen, adjacent space that the stories unfold in. It sounds odd, no doubt, to suggest
> that the unseen could be mapped, but that is what I am attempting to do […] revealing

what there is, seen and unseen, positive and negative, shape and shadow, the veiling and the veiled. (323)

Here, Liv's maps are about the in-between and the interconnection. The 'unseen' she tries to map is the world of the huldra – the abyssal world of the fluid feminine. Her attempt here is therefore to re-symbolize it. The inbetween spaces of the map seem permeable: they are not clearly delineated and mutable. Liv recognises the impossibility of this task, stating that they 'are so detailed that they are immediately obsolete' (323). The focus on detail here resonates with indeterminate nature of the 'unseen'. In a similar vein to the map Moses draws in *Sweetland*, Liv creates a new embodied epistemology that is aligned with her own fluidity. That it does not function as a map as a tool to navigate what is epistemologically considered present in masculinist discourses of power, suggests an alternative way of being-in and knowing the world that is predicated on uncertainty and the unseen. This practice is underscored by Liv's recognition of her own fluidity; she states '[s]ome things can only be seen in negative, some bodies only become perceptible in the interference they create' (323). Liv's reflection here gestures toward the possibility that bodies connect with each other through this 'interference'. 'Interference' suggests intrusion and encroachment, but has a spatial and material dimension since bodies interfering with one another emphasizes an incursion into the space of another. These negative spaces – the gaps in the map – are thus the unseen moments where bodies connect across time and space. The connections are not visible, but Liv acknowledges the impact that they have on her own materiality and it is this same interference that has enabled her to create, thereby exhibiting a form of interconnection where bodies meet and exchange possibilities for becoming other and resymbolizing the huldra story beyond its traditional end.

Liv's creation of maps are an intervention into the land-based epistemologies that hitherto mediated and constructed the oceanic imaginary of the Northern Atlantic Littoral. I discuss in the Introduction how colonial maps offered images of the ocean as a 'feminized void' and used this to exploit the ocean and further the interests of colonialism and capitalism. In creating these maps, Liv is symbolizing a female imaginary that is more akin to the materially interconnected and contingent nature of bodies of water. She is literally attending to absences on the map and allowing them to be made present, but critically she is not making them visible. She is instead here opening up and creating an unfolding epistemology that would mirror a more fluid economy and might offer an opportunity through which bodies of water can be "mapped" and reimagined. Furthermore, her maps are not dialectical – they are not just about offering an alternative to phallocentrism – but instead seem to map the connections across and between myriad bodies and consequently suggest an imaginary that moves fluidity beyond its attachment to the maternal and the feminine. All of this, of course, is premised on the unseen and so remains in the realm of the uncertain and unmasterable.

Liv's radical offering of new maps through which the oceanic imaginary of the Northern Atlantic might be symbolized opens up an important point that I will pick up in my final chapter, around how engulfment might afford posthuman, more-than-human and nonhuman imaginaries. In all three novels the moment of aqueous interconnection is an unfolding of the possibilities for the female protagonists beyond the confines of masculinist discursive strategies. In each novel, an encounter with another body of water – Maia, Pearl, Mara, Liv, Vivienne, the creature, the sea –enables a shift in subjectivity that is configured in more fluid and aqueous terms. Interconnection and meetings with these aqueous bodies has enabled a possibility beyond the abyss and represents a 'watery offering to unknowable futures' (Neimanis 2017, 102). Recasting these narratives so as to emphasize the generative potential that this unknowable watery subjectivity can afford is one way in which the oceanic imaginary might begin to be reconfigured. Rather than symbolisng an unknown threat, these texts show how the ocean can be represented in terms that emphasize how unknowability can lead to productive moments of interconnection and entanglement. Drawing on Irigaray's (1985b) model of the 'two lips' that opened up the 'autological and tautological circle of systems of representation and their discourse so that women may speak (of) their sex' (272), I have shown here how reconfiguring fluidity into aqueous terms allows us to speak of bodies of water in positive and productive terms that stress generative potential over negative affect.

REIMAGINING FLUIDITY

Mermaids, huldra and selkies have swum through the depths of these novels and out of the dark abyss to offer new alternative, fluid imaginaries. The novels initially frame these stories as warnings of the dangers of female sexuality and how it threatens to subsume the masculine character, resulting in his death. As Pearl asserts to Mara about the selkie story, these stories are 'about women as other. Men's fear of giving away power' (240). The novels take the stories these creatures feature in as their starting point – stories that continually positioned woman as other in relation to the masculine and denied her subjectivity in her own right. By relegating fluidity as a residual outside and an "other" in these stories, they lead to the female protagonists' belief that they must operate within the parameters of phallocentrism. Liv sees herself at a distance from others, a 'spy' who is unimplicated in the lives of others, while Mara longs to be dead and desired since the dead girl was 'the most desired one' (82), and Vivienne is constrained by scientific practices and physical and sexual violence. This stasis and constraint represses their fluidity and is upturned when the female protagonists encounter the mermaid, siren or selkie "other". Since these women have predicated their subjectivity on phallocentric discourses, encounters with these creatures initially serve to give rise to the uncanny. Maia, Pearl and the creature serve as uncanny returns of the repressed who disturb the autonomy of the female protagonists in their uncontainable fluidity. However, through touch and tangibility, the hold of the phallocentric economy begins to weaken. In touching, the female characters recognise that these creatures mirror their own

desire – uncontainable and undefinable. In this moment, the narrative shifts from one of stasis and negative affect to a more positive force that allows them to embrace this subjective position and recognise that their own uncontainable fluidity has a generative potential that connects them to the world around them. As characters embrace their own fluidity, opportunities to imagine fluidity beyond the feminine emerge. The endings of the novels articulate the possibility for creating an imaginary that draws upon fluidity to amplify wateriness and interconnection across bodies of water. The creation and generative potential in the ends of the novels thereby frees them from the bonds of the earlier narratives entirely and allows them to flourish.

While the three novels here are strong and clear examples of uncanny water and processes of mimesis, there are small moments of retellings and reconfiguration present across fictions of the Northern Atlantic Littoral, and which suggest a paradigm shift in ways of knowing and telling the Atlantic Ocean. I began this chapter with two epigraphs from Newfoundland author Emma Hopper, and Cornish author Helen Dunmore. Both these epigraphs gesture to the significance of transforming discursive practices and embodied epistemologies. In Hopper's novel, it is not just that '[e]veryone believed' but 'everyone *knew*' that mermaids are the 'sea dead' (19; emphasis mine). However, rather than drown sailors or lure them to their death, they 'sing their love back to you' (19). Hopper's reimagining of the mermaids elides the notion of an abyssal void of the ocean, into which something can go but never return, and resonates with the hauntology of water, where the creatures – like the ghosts of uncanny water – interconnect shore folk and the Atlantic Ocean into an entanglement that acknowledges the agency of absent others. Dunmore's young adult novel takes the Cornish mermaid folklore and challenges its inherent anthropocentrism by allowing the merfolk a voice to contest 'that scaly tale […] mermaid and merboy and merman stuff' (82). What this movement away from androcentric and anthropocentric understandings of these creatures enables is a broader reconsideration of the 'feminized void' of the Northern Atlantic Ocean. In interrogating this mimetic practice, I have shown how water's unknowable transits across interconnecting bodies holds the potential to radically revise and redistribute the discourses that govern the currents of politics and meaning that it carries along with it. As I move into the final chapter of this thesis, I ask what it means to linger in these currents – to be "submersed" and "engulfed". If what I have demonstrated here is the generative potential found in engulfment with another, what might it mean to embrace this fully? I look to texts where submersion is figured as death or drowning but see it as more radically configured as a rebirth that suggests, once again, a revision of the oceanic imaginary of the Northern Atlantic into something more generative.

CHAPTER THREE

ENGULFING BODIES OF WATER:
ARCHAIC MOTHER OCEAN AND POSTHUMAN GESTATION

> They built the reservoir reverently, however, and thought of it as a shrine. And since, they say, Meg's nourishment has kept the waters of the Castlegate fair. Her bones have given minerals, her melted tissues a softness of texture, her veins and their former content the rosy tint of health for which the city's water is justly famed.
>
> ~ 'Mons Meg: A Fluid Fairytale', Janice Galloway (2001)

> A man delivered from the whale's belly and lying dead in his own filth on the stones. Entrance and exit. Which should have been the end of the story but somehow was not.
>
> ~ *Galore*, Michael Crummey (2010)

OCEANIC ORIGINS & THE THREAT OF REINCORPORATION

Origin stories regularly feature the ocean or water as the primordial element from which the rest of life emerged.[81] In Galloway's short story, a young woman is sacrificed as the people of an unnamed Scottish city attempt to uncover a wellspring to provide water for the city. Her sacrifice is framed as the material origin through which the rest of the city comes into being as her body becomes part of the water and is the 'nourishment' through which the city's residents are able to live and sustain themselves. Crummey's novel charts how the birth of a man from a whale – who is latterly christened Judah – sets into motion the trans-generational story of the people of the fictional Newfoundland town of Paradise Deep. The extract in the epigraph, taken from the beginning of the novel, establishes him as a progenitor for the subsequent action of the story as his revival marks the 'beginning' of the novel. Judah also becomes an ancestral link through which the residents of Paradise Deep are descended and so, in a similar fashion to the ancestral connection forged with the North Atlantic in *The Town That Forgot How to Breathe*, the people of Paradise Deep become ostensibly linked to the North Atlantic Ocean as an originary space.[82] Judah is even nicknamed the 'sea orphan' (Crummey 2010, 1) and so, while Judah is himself framed as the progenitor and ancestor from which the people of Paradise Deep descend, the ocean is itself the space

---

[81] As Neimanis (2017) observes, it is not just the Darwinian evolution story that asserts '[l]ife began in the sea' (116), but a host of stories render the ocean within a life-giving and creationary frame that connect the ocean with the human reprosexual womb and the feminine maternal: the Hindu goddess Bindumati, the Egyptian goddess Isis, Aztec goddess of oceans and more, all affirm 'the connections between water, beginnings and life' (117) and link it explicitly to 'feminine fecundity, understood as a sacred source of creation' (117).

[82] Sugars makes these connections also (see n. 41).

that "births" Judah, and from which he parthenogenetically emerges.[83] While Judah is birthed by the ocean, another character – the Widow Devine – threatens its inhabitants with death by drowning and "engulfment" in it. She puts a curse on another resident which results in each of his children (bar one) drowning at sea. The residents believe the wording of the curse to have been *'[m]ay the sea take you and all the issue of your loins'* (99; emphasis in original). The ocean is depicted as a space that both births life and brings into being the residents of Paradise Deep, but it also threatens to reincorporate them and engulf them back into the abyss.

Origin stories in contemporary fictions of the Northern Atlantic Littoral are often replete with imagery that construct it as both site of regeneration and fecundity, and a space of engulfment and non-differentiation. Through these depictions of the ocean as an abyssal space from which life and regeneration is possible, it invariably becomes connected to the figure of the mother and the reprosexual womb. In this chapter I attend to fictions of the Northern Atlantic Littoral where the ocean is explicitly situated as 'the horror of the abyss, attributed to woman' (Irigaray 1991, 91). I identify moments in the texts that specifically associate the abyssal nature of the maternal body with the ocean and which emphasize an implicit horror in this that threatens masculinist discourses of power. To do this, I turn specifically to feminist theorists – Irigaray and Creed – who interrogate representations of woman as inciting a type of horror peculiar to the womb and the maternal body.[84] I argue that where the ocean is figured as a site of horror it is because it is situated as archaic mother and she threatens with the possibility of engulfment back into an originary and abyssal space. Creed's theorisation, in particular, of the archaic mother is helpful for understanding "engulfing" bodies of water as she demonstrates how archaic mother has been caught up in patriarchal signifying practices that aim to temper her radical potential. For Creed (1993), the archaic mother symbolizes both 'source of life and abyss' and I stress that this notion connects her intimately with the oceanic imaginary (26). Analysing a range of images from horror films including the 'toothed vagina/womb of *Jaws*' and the 'fleshy, pulsating womb of *The Thing*' she reads the presence of the archaic mother who is constructed as 'mysterious black hole that signifies female genitalia which threatens to give birth to equally horrific offspring as well as threatening to incorporate everything in its path' (27). I read similar patterns across the patriarchal practices that have insisted upon the feminization of the ocean for the continued proliferation and benefit of capitalism and colonialism, positioning the ocean as space of regeneration but also a terrifying abyss that may engulf the (masculine) sailor. I read

---

[83] There are, of course, parallels to be drawn here between Nietzsche's Zarathustra – whose parthenogenetic birth is the implicit subject of critique in Irigaray's *Marine Lover of Friedrich Nietzsche* (1991) in which she chastises him for forgetting the waters that created him.

[84] Irigaray's project is to salvage the mother-daughter relationship from the pre-Oedipal in order to produce alternative imaginaries that disrupt and challenge the hegemony of phallocentrism. I am interested here in how Irigaray is conscious of the precarity of the subject and the ways in which the maternal body might be cast as an abject threat that is always outside the symbolic. My project aims to construct an alternative imaginary for the Northern Atlantic Ocean that exists outside of structures of phallocentrism and aligns more with Irigaray's project of producing alternative feminist imaginaries that disrupt and reconfigure the phallocentric and patriarchal nature of the symbolic.

how the ocean suggests a threat of engulfment that can be read as a potential return to the womb and this is terrifying because it signals a dissolution of subjectivity and to 'return to the mother/womb, is primarily a desire for non-differentiation' (Creed 1993, 28). The negative affect triggered by the return to the abyss of the ocean reads as a desire for death and dissolution.

In fictions of the Northern Atlantic Littoral this negative affect is emphasized through the texts' more Gothic and supernatural tropes. I outlined in the Introduction how this project began with considering how these fictions were connected to and through their shared Gothic elements which revealed anxieties about belonging, identity and hegemonic accounts of history. These anxieties are often traced back to the particular colonial histories of these spaces that have seen them at once be colonized by more dominant powers, while simultaneously also having been colonizers themselves. Of course, the nuances of this are much more complex than such a description allows for since, within the very fabric of these spaces also exist heterogenous identities. However, for the purposes of this thesis, I am concerned with how this dualism manifests in a mistrust of origin stories. Rather than looking to the interior national spaces as the source of origin or identity, these fictions explicitly look to water and the Northern Atlantic Ocean. Given the colonial histories through which these spaces are implicated and connected, it is hardly surprising that they turn back to the ocean as a potential site of origins, since traversing the Atlantic was what facilitated the colonisation of North America. In looking to the ocean as a site of origin, they are also signalling an awareness of Darwinian evolutionary origin stories and notions of teleological evolution as emergent from the ocean. This is signalled in *The Town That Forgot How to Breathe* where the stories told by the Bareneed inhabitants to legitimize their settler identity are used to connect them back across (pre)history into a primordial and evolutionary chain with the North Atlantic Ocean and the cod. But even while these stories demonstrate an awareness of the ocean as a possible origin site, they also position it as a site of potential engulfment and abyss therefore demonstrating how using particular mythographies or discourses around origin can be an unstable and tentative practice.

Returning to the image of the Mercator Projection that opened this thesis, the oceans represent the blank space of *aqua nullius* across and against which terracentric epistemologies are formed. It provides the opportunity through which colonial and capitalist ideals can be achieved, but it is ultimately situated as other in relation to these. The ocean therefore threatens in its unassimilable difference to terracentrism, androcentrism and anthropocentrism. In the previous chapter, I discussed how fluidity threatens the masculine because it represents the feminine 'residual outside' – the remainder of what is left over in the construction of the symbolic. These maps come to offer such a representation, where the blank space of the oceans are the residual outside that encroaches and threatens terracentric and national understandings of both place and identity. Touching the other represents a collapse of this distance between the masculine subject and feminine other, and I connect this other to the maternal body and a potential

return to the abyssal womb and 'former home' that incites the uncanny as it threatens with non-differentiation. This chapter posits that it is within this space of non-differentiation that the seeds for recovering the oceanic imaginary of the Northern Atlantic might be found. I argue that lingering in this space of non-differentiation can facilitate a transformation of negative affect associated with dialectical understandings of sexuate difference and the ocean as reproductive space, and move this into a more posthuman, generative force that mirrors the entangled and multivalent nature of bodies of water. Once again these littoral communities become the space at which these anxieties are writ large as they gesture to the tentativeness of these representations of the ocean, while simultaneously functioning to undermine and subvert them.

If fictions of the Northern Atlantic Littoral shore up the tenuousness of teleological origin stories, why do they return to the image of mother ocean at all? What is it about returning to the depths of archaic mother ocean that allows for something different to emerge? How does uncanny water transform the negative affect associated with the space of non-differentiation into something more positive and generative, and which is aligned with the being and becoming of bodies of water? To unpack this, the first section of this chapter outlines the theoretical underpinning of this chapter which offers a posthuman recasting of archaic mother ocean. To do this, I combine readings of Creed – who offers the radical suggestion that the archaic mother is terrifying because she signifies her own point of reference – with Neimanis' figurations of an onto-logic of amniotics and posthuman gestation, which describe how the continued transcorporeal transferral of water across bodies is also a force that differentiates bodies and aids in the creation and gestation of new bodies. I consider Logan's 'Good' and Harvey's *The Town That Forgot How to Breathe* as texts in which the ocean is doubled with a "mother" figure and which exaggerate the threat of engulfment posed by the mother ocean. By mirroring/doubling the archaic mother ocean figure with a human mother, the novels show how the radical threat that archaic mother ocean poses to the symbolic order can be tempered by masculinist discourses of power. However, these fictions resist this placement into patriarchal constellations through exaggerating and emphasizing the threat of engulfment with imagery associated with the vagina dentata and cannibalism: through returning to images of black holes, negativity and the threat of engulfment, these fictions demonstrate the archaic mother ocean's resistance to phallocentrism. The second section of this chapter expands on the posthuman potential of archaic mother ocean and reads across fictions of the Northern Atlantic Littoral for moments where these engulfments are actually reconfigured from associations with negative affect to a more positive force for becoming-with, reading them as posthuman rebirths to show how characters 'give over' their own materiality for the 'proliferation' of life beyond their own (Neimanis 2017, 92).

Central to all of this is the idea that uncanny water is always already imbued in processes of recovering and reconstituting bodies of water through story and language. The movement from negative affect to

positive force for becoming-with is one of uncanny water's key prerogatives: in the examples described in this chapter, the moment of engulfment hastens more than a shift in simply the lives of the characters of the fictions but also marks shifts in genre and narrative style within the narratives. These generic and narrative shifts often signpost the movement away from the negative affect of the uncanny as they lean into the text's uncanny effects to multiply the uncertainty embedded within the uncanniness. In the final section of this chapter, I focus on how these moments are precipitated through engulfment. In showing how difference can be produced through aqueous engulfment, the text itself becomes a gestational milieu that signals the re-symbolisation of the Northern Atlantic. Through shifting generic forms and narrative styles, these texts resist easy categorisation within the often totalising structures of genre. The deployment of specifically the uncanny – a trope that is common to various genres including the Gothic and fantastic, but not in and of itself a genre – also mirrors the lack of certainty about what is produced through this gestation. The uncanny enables texts to stress their indebtedness to generic conventions without becoming subsumed by these same understandings. Narrative and generic shifts become a means through which these texts produce something more aligned with the unfolding potential of bodies of water. This is what allows these texts to speak back to origin stories and the terracentric representations that form them and signpost instead, the potential for multiple origin*s* stories that amplify the nebulous and diffuse materiality of bodies of water. These texts become connected through their reconfiguration of engulfment to signal a more positive force for becoming-different and it is precisely this (re)production in the texts that connects them and aids in the re-symbolisation of the Northern Atlantic oceanic imaginary.

A POSTHUMAN ARCHAIC (MOTHER) OCEAN

I argue that fictions of the Northern Atlantic Littoral draw upon the abyssal imagery of archaic mother ocean in order to (re)produce an alternative imaginary for the Northern Atlantic Ocean. In deploying images of the ocean that associate it with the reproductive and regenerative capacities of woman, these texts are signalling their awareness of particular discursive strategies that have historically feminized the ocean in order to further the projects of capitalism and colonialism. However, within this imagery is also the potential for mother ocean's recovery from these discourses. This section outlines the feminist and posthumanist underpinning of how mother ocean might be recovered and reinvented. This is ultimately both a feminist and posthumanist project because it is necessary to both salvage the ocean from discourses that have feminized it, while also signalling its possibility for regeneration and fecundity outside of human reproductive systems and understandings of gender expression as tied to bodily morphology. I draw upon this model throughout my subsequent readings of fictions of the Northern Atlantic Littoral to show how uncanny water transforms the negative affect associated with the abyss into a more positive force for interconnection with bodies of water.

In her reading of the archaic mother in horror films, Creed (1993) suggests that the womb can be read outside of phallocentrism and this is why it poses such a threat. Creed outlines that because the womb is not female genitalia, it is not the 'site of castration anxiety' but instead, signifies 'fullness or emptiness' and is not dependent for its definition on a 'concept of the masculine' (27-28). Creed's reading of the archaic mother is that she is not containable within the phallocentric order because she stands outside of the opposing definitions of sexual difference. Her resistance to representation is so threatening that patriarchal practices subsequently attempt to reinscribe her into Oedipal understandings so she might be contained within phallocentrism and her 'totalising power' (21) denied. To temper her radical potential, horror films will attempt to place the archaic mother into Oedipal scenarios so that the threat of non-differentiation might be staved off.[85]

Creed posits that the archaic mother 'as originating womb' can be situated '*outside* the patriarchal familial constellation' (26; emphasis in original). Creed claims there is potential to read the archaic mother as the pre-Oedipal mother of Freudian psychoanalysis/ the primordial (m)Other of Lacanian psychoanlysis who is *a priori* Being and language; because she predates entry into the symbolic, she cannot be described in relation to her lack since this is *before* visual confirmation that the (m)Other has been castrated. To read the archaic mother in relation to her womb is to read her out-with the binary of sexuate difference and affords the possibility of thinking through reproduction and regeneration beyond these categories. Creed claims that because the womb is not female genitalia, it does not represent lack in the same way; instead, 'the womb signifies "fullness" or "emptiness" but always it is its own point of reference' (27). The archaic and parthenogenetic mother does not then stand in relation to the Father or phallocentrism but signifies only itself. She is threatening because she defies the phallocentric order and represents total sexual difference as that which cannot be understood dialectically in relation to subject/ object, self and Other.

However, Creed posits another archaic mother, one which I argue aligns more fully with ideas of the ocean as originary and life-giving space. This is archaic mother as 'an ancient archaic figure who gives birth to all living things' (24). This notion of archaic mother offers a radical proposition because it situates the mother firmly before and beyond Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalytic understandings. This is the notion I take up and deploy here. The archaic mother is consequently a site of horror, not only because she represents the womb, maternal body and the possibility of being reinscribed back into this space, but because she represents total non-differentiation, and is situated externally to all patriarchal understandings of being. Creed asserts the parthenogenetic and archaic mother is symbolized in horror films as 'the blackness of extinction – death' and that fear of the archaic mother relates to her 'as a force

---

[85] This is similar to the processes of substitution whereby the threat of woman as Other is tempered through her substitution as *objet petit a* that reinscribes her back into a position where she is read only in relation to the masculine, and which subtends him as lack/ negative image or object.

that threatens to reincorporate what it once gave birth to' (28) and it is this reincorporation and 'return to the mother/womb' that symbolizes 'a desire for non-differentiation' (28). Just as the moment of touching the Other in Chapter Two represented a potential for engulfment and entry into the abyss, the archaic and parthenogenetic mother is symbolized as a black hole or site of abyss that signifies the terrifying possibility of the complete dissolution of the masculine subject and his bodily boundaries.

To temper her radical potential, horror films will attempt to place the archaic mother into Oedipal scenarios so that the threat of non-differentiation might be staved off. In the first section of this chapter, I read moments in Logan's 'Good' and Harvey's *The Town That Forgot How to Breathe* where the ocean is doubled with a "mother" figure in the text and to exaggerate the threat of engulfment posed by the (m)Other. By mirroring and doubling the archaic mother ocean figure in a human mother, the novels show how the radical threat archaic mother ocean poses the symbolic order might be tempered. They do this by placing the human mother, who doubles the ocean, into familial constellations that then can establish woman as 'lack' in relation to the Father. However, these fictions resist this placement into patriarchal constellations through exaggerating and emphasizing the threat of engulfment with imagery associated with the vagina dentata and cannibalism: through returning to images of black holes, negativity and the threat of engulfment, these fictions demonstrate the archaic mother ocean's resistance to phallocentrism.

This reading of archaic mother ocean provides the opportunity for a paradigm shift in understandings of the Northern Atlantic. Where once the ocean was situated as a site for colonial and capitalist regeneration that subtends the masculine, it becomes more radically situated outside of the phallocentric symbolic and presents the opportunity for a reimagining of the ocean as a body of water in its own right and one that does not conform to human understandings of gender expression. I advocate for this across this thesis: the notion that the ocean itself is its own body of water upon which myriad other bodies of water depend and which depends on myriad other bodies for its survival. Following Creed, who posits that the archaic mother can be read outside of the phallocentric order precisely because she represents an originary space, I read for moments in fictions of the Northern Atlantic Littoral that show how the ocean can be detached from the maternal and ideas of sexuate difference. In the second section of this chapter, I situate the ocean as archaic mother alongside Neimanis' theories of posthuman gestation and her onto-logic of amniotics. I stress that the shift precipitated by the ocean as archaic mother is a shift away from the dialectic of sexuate difference; this then affords an opportunity to read the ocean through a more posthuman lens that would follow the multivalent and entangled nature of bodies of water. I show how *The Town That Forgot How to Breathe*, 'Good', *Sweetland* and *The Gloaming* all demonstrate the ocean's potential for posthuman gestation and consequently facilitate new opportunities for representing the Atlantic Ocean outside of the domains of phallocentrism, capitalism and anthropocentrism.

The ocean as archaic mother suggests there already exists the possibility to rework ideas of regeneration and origins from the phallocentric order and recast the ocean outside of these representations. But Creed's figuration only goes so far: how this can regenerate and facilitate life outside of this order needs to be parsed through. For this, I turn to Neimanis' (2017) 'onto-logic of amniotics' and her theory of posthuman gestation that outlines a possibility for gestating that is detached from the maternal body. Her onto-logic of amniotics asserts a mode of transcorporeality of water whereby it is that which 'connects us and differentiates us; as that which we both are and which facilitates our becoming' (111). She stresses how water's finite nature on the planet suggests it is only ever taken up by bodies before being repeated differently in others. For Neimanis, embodied transits of water are an 'onto-logic' because it is not attempting to 'solve the question of "being"' but rather can 'gather or highlight something that helps us understand a common *how*, *where*, *when*, and *thanks to whom* that certain seemingly disparate beings share' (96; emphasis in original). Neimanis challenges hegemonic Western ontologies that privilege a fixed perspective on embodiment by expanding understanding of simply being to relational and multiple understanding of becoming-with. Her onto-logic of amniotics 'does not suggest that all bodies of water are the same in terms of their being, but rather that bodies of water share a way of being' (97). In this way, water asserts a commonality, it is the element and force that connects bodies in their disparity and unites them in their uniqueness.

Neimanis' utilisation of the amnion emphasizes how bodies are interconnected across 'membranes of difference' (111), highlighting how water is not just an undifferentiated element that moves between bodies seamlessly, but it is a force for becoming: water travels between situated *different* bodies but it is also the same force that *differentiates* them, and which creates the conditions through which they *become different*. This is why the amnion is such a powerful metaphor within Neimanis' figuration – it is the realm through, and across which, difference is facilitated. The amniotics of the human reprosexual womb is the point at which difference is gestated, the place where *human* life begins, but Neimanis is careful to stress that water's repetitions beyond the human reprosexual womb demonstrate that gestation can be detached from simply the feminine maternal and show how water acts as 'milieu for the gestation of life' (97). Water's transcorporeal movements emphasize how it is continuously becoming-different, and allow for gestationality to be more broadly conceived of as the 'giving over of one's own materiality for this proliferation of further life, different to one's own' (92). Water gestates life, conditioning its possibility, and its becoming, through its repeated transcorporeal permutations. This kind of amniotics highlights how bodies are materially indebted to one another, how that materiality is carried within bodies, and how it is passed on to form new and distinct bodies. These differentiations and repetitions of water are always unknowable – their origins receding and evolutions unmappable – but crucially show how myriad bodies

are implicated. Posthuman gestation and the onto-logic of amniotics are about multiplicity and continuous becoming.

All of this compounds in uncanny water as the narrative strategy through which archaic m/other ocean is recast. In the final section of this chapter, I chart how the earlier strategies of producing fear and anxiety around non-differentiation are specifically uncanny in nature and relate this to the uncertainty of bodies of water. Where engulfment might precipitate fear and the abyss, it actually can be used to productive ends in language and text as well as materially; I suggest that the fictions of the Northern Atlantic follow patterns of metafictional self-awareness that precede a moment of engulfment in the narrative, where characters are subsumed or return to the abyss of archaic mother ocean. In doing so, these texts demonstrate how engulfment might follow the onto-logic of amniotics and gestate something different to what came before: it is a *differentiating* force that enables something new and *different* to emerge. This process of differentiating is what allows the texts themselves to mirror and perform the strategies of posthuman gestation and, in turn, produce something different to what has gone before, thereby offering new understandings and representations of the Northern Atlantic that no longer succumb to mastery and control, but are generative and unfolding in nature. In this way, this final chapter gestures backward – and forward – to the absent others I discussed in Chapter One and emphasizes uncanny water's cyclicality and resistance to teleological narratives of progress that are anthropocentric, capitalist and phallocentric in nature.

ENGULFED BY ARCHAIC MOTHER OCEAN

Fictions of the Northern Atlantic Littoral regularly establish the Northern Atlantic Ocean in terms that emphasize its generative and originary capacities but do so within a framework that belies a fear of its abyssal nature. A sense of uncanniness is created through situating it as a potential site of engulfment where non-differentiation might occur. To assuage the danger and threat the ocean poses as archaic mother, these fictions reinscribe her into Oedipal scenarios and familial constellations by doubling her with human mothers in the text. The resultant effect is that the threat of the maternal body – archaic and otherwise – is amplified and fear is constructed around these bodies. I read this doubling in both Harvey's *The Town That Forgot How to Breathe* and Logan's 'Good' where the ocean is seen as a site of origins and abyss. In both texts, archaic mother ocean is doubled in the form of another mother and her desire to devour becomes embodied in her monstrous children. Yet within both, I read an emergent opportunity to situate archaic mother ocean outside of the phallocentric order and facilitate the possibility for something other to arise.

In *The Town That Forgot How to Breathe*, the North Atlantic is figured as site of origin for the people of Bareneed but moreover, it is also space from which ghostly ancestors and figures emerge. In Chapter

One, I discussed how the ghost of a young girl, Jessica, suggests the North Atlantic Ocean as a point of origin for the people of Bareneed. She claims that there is a hole' in the ocean 'where everything came from, where they [people] came from once. Where water came from too' (Harvey 2003, 365). I argue Jessica is suggesting a mutual elemental connection through the hydrocommons, but she is also establishing the ocean as a common point of origin – as the sole origin from which even water and life seem to spring. The ocean as parthenogenetic and archaic mother becomes clearer in *The Town That Forgot How to Breathe* through the suggestion that it is not only the point of origin but that it might reincorporate Bareneed and all its inhabitants back into its abyss. As the inhabitants of Bareneed suffer from a breathing disease brought on by a supposed disconnect from their fishing heritage, a tidal wave is building momentum offshore that threatens to engulf them all. Throughout the novel, many characters (including Jessica) claim the same hole in the bottom of the ocean is being cracked open by spirits who are angry at the way in which telecommunications have cut them off from their descendants, and it is the momentum from this creating the tidal wave that will reincorporate everyone back into this sole place of origin. Jessica claims 'when enough of them [the ghosts] gather, they can crack open the hole in the bottom to stop the ones on land who can no longer see themselves' (365). Tommy, an ex-fisherman, finds himself drawing pictures that detailed 'the crack in the ocean bed' (449) where the spirits go to return. The devouring power of the ocean as parthenogenetic archaic mother is consequently established in *The Town That Forgot How to Breathe* through the dual suggestion of it as both site of origin and threat of engulfment.

This threat of engulfment is especially present through the dynamic presented by Claudia and the ghost of her daughter Jessica. When first introduced to Claudia, we learn that her husband drowned their daughter following the closure of the fishery. Grieving her daughter, Claudia dehydrates herself – refusing to drink any water so that she can become closer to her daughter in death. She hopes to 'perish of dehydration' (408) and Jessica encourages this, telling her mother, '[y]ou should die' (234). Jessica states '[i]t has to be soon. I know it does. That's why you can see me. A part of your body's dead already. A hole that must be filled. I can fit in there. It's easier to get in. But more of your body needs to be dead for us to be the same' (234). Jessica identifies a part of her mother that represents the abyss and encourages her to dehydrate herself so they can be united in death. Jessica's suggestion that there is a 'hole' in Claudia is a reminder of how woman remains symbolized only in relation to the masculine, and Jessica's desire to collapse the distance between the two of them functions to erase the genealogy between mother and daughter and leave both without adequate symbolisation. Yet, simultaneously, as Jessica and Claudia become collapsed into one, they also suggest a morbid inversion of the process of birth and gesture to Jessica's almost "return" to the abyssal 'hole' of Claudia's being. I read this "return" to the maternal body as a process of engulfment that mirrors the engulfing threat of archaic mother ocean. Claudia therefore comes to represent a kind of double of archaic mother ocean but one that aligns her with notions of lack and absence rather than directly correlated with a return to the womb. This doubling

is affirmed when Claudia makes an 'exact miniature creation of Bareneed that she had fashioned from pottery clay dug, sifted and mixed in her own backyard' (345) which she then carries to the cliff edge before she tips it into the 'featureless black water that loomed in reverse, flat and depthless, like an unmarked chasm' (346). The chasm-like ocean here signifies the abyssal qualities of the archaic mother and Claudia mirrors the threat of engulfment by plunging the miniature model into its space.

The threat that Claudia poses as "double" of archaic mother ocean is, however, offset through reinscribing her into patriarchal constellations. Creed (1993) argues that, because reincorporation by the archaic mother is so threatening, patriarchal signifying practices will reinsert her into Oedipal scenarios so as to other her and diminish her totalising power. She gives the example of the female-fetishist which she derives from the Freudian idea of a 'female' castration anxiety. She asserts that in order to stave off castration anxiety formed through the loss of the objects of love in her children, she will produce more children or form a means to delay separation from them by dressing them up or tying them to her more forcefully (22). For that reason, she states that female fetishism can be interpreted as an attempt by the female subject to continue to, in Lacanian configurations, have the phallus and to take up a positive place in relation to the symbolic (22). The child then functions as woman's attempt to assert a more coherent subject position associated with the masculine, rather than occupy a place in the negative. In many ways, Claudia's desire to continue to invoke the ghost of Jessica through her dehydration represents her (monstrous) attempt to have the phallus because it goes against the expected nature of the symbolic.[86]

Claudia's desires pose a threat to the masculine subject and to patriarchal constructions of the symbolic and so the text functions to negate this through the transformation of the pre-Oedipal scenario into an Oedipal one by way of the appearance of the ghost of Claudia's husband. His appearance represents the intervention of the Father and an attempt to wrestle the phallus (embodied in Jessica) back from Claudia and restore order. This would then allow both Claudia and, by extension, archaic mother ocean, to be resymbolized as feminine lack and absence again. In one scene, he appears before Claudia with a fish in either hand, and uses them to mirror the act of reproduction. He holds the fish high and squeezes them and

---

[86] I am conscious here of a slippage between Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis. This arises from Creed's reading, and would suggest a kind of direct correlation between Freud's assertion that female fetishism is a 'doubling of a penis symbol' in an attempt to 'stave off castration' (Creed 1993, 22) and her understanding that this is an attempt to 'have the phallus' (22). While this reads a little essentialist – in that it is based on an understanding of the phallus as directly related to the penis as an aspect of male anatomy – I read Creed as noting here the slippage (see n.20 and n.21), whereby Lacan never fully accounts for his own choice of the phallus as master signifier and, in following directly from Freud, almost overlays the phallus onto male anatomy. This reading never allows for alternative imaginaries beyond the dialectic of sexual difference to emerge and so it is that which this thesis ultimately challenges. The threat of Claudia arises precisely because she operates outside of a phallocentric and patriarchal ideology and it is this that the novel later goes on to challenge. Because I am reading this within the parameters of uncanny water, I suggest it is by first establishing the conditions from which the threat emerges that the text is then able to subvert them latterly.

> [f]rom one shot a flow of fluorescent amber eggs, from the other a jet stream of milky-white sperm. The rivers collided in mid-air to shape a diminutive person, a child. Jessica with rounded eyes and lips that pulsed open then shut, pulsed open, as if sucking for air. (391)

This scene reconstructs Claudia in terms of sexual difference with the suggestion that the fish represent Claudia and her husband and the creation of Jessica. The totalising power of the archaic mother therefore becomes negated through the shift in focus from the maternal body as a site of creation to the act of reproduction placed in relation to the masculine. This effective erasure of the maternal body establishes the role of the Father in the construction of Being: as her husband steps in, supplants Claudia and allows for Jessica to come into Being. In this scene Jessica also becomes associated/doubled with fish as she mirrors a fish on dry land 'sucking for air' with a gaping mouth and bulbous eyes. Through equating Jessica and the fish, both become the mutually interchangeable offspring of archaic mother ocean/Claudia. The absence of fish in the ocean – that which triggered the moratorium and the breathing illness plaguing Bareneed – is now positioned as a lack of fecundity and fertility that might be resolved by intervention from the masculine.

His appearance is an intervention of the Father who mobilises the position of masculine power and virility, and positions the ocean within clear terms of sexual difference. Resolving the absence of fish in the ocean can be achieved through sexual reproduction as he comes to represent not only the symbolic phallus, but the virile masculine penis. In the above scene, this virility is underscored in relation to Claudia. However, he is also simultaneously placed in relation to the ocean's lack of fecundity. He makes an incision in his stomach from which

> [n]o blood appeared, only a clear fluid trickling free, staining his already soaked trousers. As the fluid ebbed, there was a flash of silver and the tapered head of a fish poked loose […] The fish head wiggled and pried itself loose, its body halfway out as it snapped back and forth, rested, snapped back and forth to further deliver itself […] More fish swam out of Reg, spilling liberally until the kitchen floor was a thick mass of writhing scales. (392)

While the scene reads as an almost male birth scenario, I read the fish 'swimming' from Reg as suggestive of ejaculation as the fish 'liberally' stream from Reg. The lack of blood, that would normally be associated with childbirth, is replaced with a 'clear fluid' more akin to semen and even the fish poking out from his stomach is phallic in nature. The sheer volume and continuous stream of fish produced by Reg seems to suggest that the resolution to the absence of fish and the ocean's lack of fecundity can be solved through the intervention of a virile masculine power. This serves to undermine the totalising power of archaic mother ocean who is no longer a reference only to herself but reconstructed in relation to the masculine.

The Town That Forgot How to Breathe displaces the threat of engulfment by archaic mother ocean by way of reconfiguring her within Oedipal scenarios and the Mirror Stage. I describe above how Reg's intervention functions to supplant the maternal body and reinstate both mother and daughter as object who can then subtend the masculine in her lack. In usurping the maternal body, the threat of non-differentiation and the dangerous potential of the womb is alleviated. In other words, the above scenes re-locate the maternal body in terms of sexuate difference so as to negate the radical power of the womb that stands outside of the phallocentric order. As I outlined in Chapter One, the breathing illness and tidal wave are connected in *The Town That Forgot How to Breathe* to the absence of fish, and a lack of connection to fishing heritage brought on by the moratorium and closure of the fisheries. This scenario is suggested to be an especially emasculating one as the men are denied access to the ocean and its bounty. Separated from the ocean, the men of the novel are depicted as depressed, out of work and listless. One character is described as just constantly 'seated in the parlour' and, when his sister visits, 'a frightening violence eclips[es] his eyes whenever he dragged his stare away from the television to regard her' (16). In her account of the closure of the fisheries, Donna Lee Davis (1993) argues that the moratorium caused a significant upheaval of traditional gender roles in Newfoundland. Prior to the moratorium, men typically were absent at sea for large periods of time and women dominated the land-based roles in processing and managing the household (473). Following the moratorium, men were at home more frequently and this had a resultant emasculating effect bolstered by the belief that '[b]eing landbound is feminine, staying in the house is being feminine, not fishing is being effeminate if not exactly feminine' (473). The solution to this emasculating separation in *The Town That Forgot How to Breathe* is to negate it through a show of virility as demonstrated through Claudia's husband's symbolic ejaculation. This in turn denies archaic mother ocean any sense of power or radical potential since she becomes subsumed under the terms of sexual difference. In the following sections, I read possible scope for moving beyond this depiction of archaic mother ocean in *The Town*, but the example shows how patriarchal systems of power can undermine archaic mother ocean's power.

A similar pattern of doubling archaic mother ocean occurs in Logan's story 'Good'. The story is set in a dystopian Scottish coastal town where a salmon farm is repurposed to grow human babies and body parts in mermaids' purses.[87] The story's main protagonist, Sabrina, works on the farm 'harvesting' the babies (124). Sabrina is a new mother whose baby Jamie is sickly but doctors have been unable to diagnose what is wrong with him; when Sabrina arrives home from work, Jamie screams incessantly. One day, Sabrina brings home a baby grown on the farm from the mermaids' purses and the baby's apparent perfection offers a disturbing contrast to Jamie. The story ends with Sabrina at the edge of the ocean with Jamie in her arms following a realisation that 'it's not what's inside of Jamie that is wrong. It's what

---

[87] Mermaids' purses are the egg cases that contain the embryos of some sharks, skates and rays.

Jamie was inside of. It was her. She was never meant to be a mother. All she can give him now is a better start; another mother' (127). The ending of the story implies that Sabrina might return Jamie to the ocean as a surrogate mother, drowning him in the process. As the mother who produced the seemingly perfect shark baby, the ocean presents a morbid alternative to Sabrina.

Logan's story is replete with images of reincorporation, cannibalism and suggestions of infanticide, all of which compound to relate fear and horror to the figure of the mother – archaic and otherwise. The story plays upon the doubling of Jamie and the mermaid's purse baby, and also of Sabrina and the ocean, to emphasize the uncanniness attributed to the human womb and the threat of reincorporation (death) by the archaic mother. It is partially explained how the mermaids' purses came to produce babies when 'some ragamuffin beachcomber, split open a mermaid's purse with his toy penknife, then ran home squawking when a cluster of human teeth tumbled out onto the sand' (124). The teeth were '[p]erfect' and 'ready to be transplanted into any raw gum' (124). The image of human teeth spilling from a shark's mermaid's purse reverses the expected nature of events and plays upon the images of sharks as man-eating creatures. That they would then be transplanted into a human suggests the ocean as an originary and reproductive space that produces body parts for human use. However, this process is one of exchange as it is stressed that

> we know you don't get something from nothing; the teeth didn't just appear did they? Remnants of shipwrecked sailors, maybe, or people murdered and dumped at sea, or natural deaths whose families were too destitute to buy a burial plot. What mattered is, some teeth went in, and some teeth came back out – and they were perfect, better than the ones our own bodies grow. The same for kidneys, lungs, ovaries. (124-125)

Reproduction and the production of humans is outsourced to the ocean and figured in terms of transactional exchange that stresses the fear of engulfment: bodies must be reincorporated in order for new body parts to be produced. The resultant effect is that the ocean threatens the subject's bodily precarity as disassembled parts are engulfed.

By threatening her own child with engulfment in the ocean at the end of the story, Sabrina aligns herself with the ocean; she stands at the edge of the ocean and the 'net-cage' of the farm, while at her feet 'an empty mermaid's purse is open, waiting' (128). Just as the process with the teeth, Sabrina seems willing to offer the ocean Jamie in return for the 'perfect' shark-baby. Sabrina's comparison with the ocean as threatening in their mutual reproductive power is also underscored by Sabrina's ability to produce monstrous offspring. Sabrina believes '[s]omething in her baby is broken' (123) as he cries to the point where he 'will scream himself unconscious' (22). To placate his cries, Sabrina has been feeding him organ parts from the farm. One night when she returns home from work, she feeds him a kidney and falls asleep dreaming of

the kidney grafting itself into Jamie's tiny insides, the purplish mass of it absorbing the red-raw damage in him. Of course it was the kidney all along. How silly none of the doctors figured that out. Of course a mother knows what's best for her child. (123)

By feeding Jamie human body parts, she is partaking in a cannibalistic act that is portrayed as an act of motherly love. The image of the kidney grafting onto his own 'red raw' insides confounds the boundaries of inside and outside and reads as abject. This becomes further exaggerated when she explains all the attempts she has made to soothe him with various different organs: 'the eye didn't work. The spleen and the liver and the snipped length of intestine didn't work' (123). This has been a consistent practice in which Sabrina has been engaged, and which is ultimately futile as the kidney also does not work.

Inverting the anthropogenic understanding of the sharks as human-eaters, Jamie's inadvertent cannibalism functions as an extension of Sabrina's and stresses her own capacity as devouring mother. It is important to note that Jamie's father is conspicuously absent from the story – in fact, there are no male characters beyond the two babies. This once again draws a parallel between Sabrina and the ocean by implying both are capable of parthenogenetic birth. Creed (1993) suggests that in horror depictions of parthenogenetic births, where 'monstrous' offspring are produced, that they come to represent the mother's illegitimate desire (47). Sabrina's desire then seems to be to mirror the ocean both in its parthenogenetic ability and in its capacity to engulf and devour. This is supported through the fact that Sabrina extols the virtues of the farm and its parthenogenetic capacities, believing it to be 'nothing short of a miracle' (126). As devouring and monstrous child, Jamie is the agent of Sabrina's desires. I read these here as a desire for Sabrina to move beyond the phallocentric restrictions of the symbolic. Without a "Father" figure present, Sabrina does not necessarily represent "lack" or absence – she has no masculine figure to subtend – but instead she comes to represent the monstrous potential for castration; in other words, Sabrina is a terrifying figure 'not because she is castrated but because she castrates' (Creed 1993, 22). Jamie – as the cannibalistic offspring of Sabrina – then comes to represent Sabrina's desire to castrate and the images of teeth and sharks emphasize this. Just as with Jessica and Claudia, Jamie comes to represent, for Sabrina, an expression of taking up a more positive place in the symbolic and this threatens the phallocentric order. But, unlike Jessica and Claudia, there is no Father figure to reinscribe Jamie and Sabrina back into patriarchal constellations and so the abjection and horror of the text are never assuaged.

Logan's story has radical potential because it resists assimilating the archaic mother back within phallocentric misformulation of a symbolic order tied to embodiment (genitalia) rather than to the law (Other). The symbolism of the *vagina dentata* and the phantasmagoric images of archaic mother ocean combine to place emphasis on both mother-as-castrator and devourer. As Creed (1993) observes, '[t]he idea that woman's genitals terrify because they castrate challenges the Freudian and Lacanian view and

its association of the symbolic order with the masculine' (110).[88] She stresses how the Freudian castration complex depends on the belief that 'woman terrifies because her genitals appear castrated' (110). She outlines a similar idea in Lacanian psychoanalysis where she reads that woman is seen to be 'castrated' so she may 'represent "lack" in relation to the symbolic order while man inherits the right to represent this order' (110). Re-symbolizing woman as castrator terrifies because it moves the symbolic away from the association with the masculine. Unlike *The Town That Forgot How to Breathe* where Claudia's husband's intervention means he becomes the "Father" (literally and metaphorically) and so the imaginary phallus of Claudia, embodied in Jessica, is symbolically castrated, 'Good' uses the image of the *vagina dentata* to demonstrate woman's potential to castrate and to disrupt phallocentric cultural complacency. 'Good' consequently refuses to reinscribe the maternal in relation to the negative and thereby amplifies fear and refuses protection against the totalising power of engulfment. Yet, as I discuss in the subsequent sections of this chapter, if this fear is left untethered, it might have a power through which the oceanic imaginary can be reconfigured. Rather than simply reinstating a phallocentric order, these texts might hold the possibility for something other to emerge – an impetus, I argue, inherent to uncanny water.

Both 'Good' and *The Town That Forgot How to Breathe* offer the image of archaic mother ocean as site of origins and abyss and both stories deploy a "double" of this figure through their depictions of human mothers. While *The Town That Forgot How to Breathe* shows how the doubling can be used as a strategy to undermine the archaic mother's radical potential as it stands on its own outside of sexual difference, 'Good' refuses to offer closure via the same patriarchal constellations. Both texts nonetheless show an awareness of archaic mother ocean's potential to symbolize something in and of herself and to exist beyond the symbolic order's prioritization of the masculine. For example, *The Town That Forgot How to Breathe*'s references to an absence of fish as triggering the breathing illness categorizes the ocean in terms related to the womb's fullness or emptiness. Although the novel ultimately attempts to resolve this by placing emphasis on sexual difference, the potential for the ocean to be situated beyond sexual difference is implied. By contrast, the emphasis 'Good' places on the *vagina dentata* and the castrating and devouring power of archaic mother ocean, while revealing a fear that is inherently patriarchal, can be read as amplifying and extending the radical potential of the archaic mother who might be situated outside of patriarchal signifying practices. Reading across the figures of sharks, fish and the nonhuman, I ask whether underlying the images of sexual difference is actually the potential to detach the oceanic imaginary from the binarism of sexual difference and read them in a non-binaristic, more-than-human frame. In the following section, I deploy uncanny water to reconfigure some of the images of abjection and reproduction generated in fictions of the Northern Atlantic. I turn to posthuman understandings of

---

[88] I am wary here, as above, of the conflation Creed makes between Lacanian and Freudian views and the direct relation she makes between the symbolic phallus and male anatomy; likewise, the feminine "absence" with her genitalia.

gestation as outlined by Neimanis to argue that myriad bodies are mutually implicated in the gestation of a new oceanic imaginary for the Northern Atlantic.

REBIRTH: RE-SYMBOLIZING ARCHAIC MOTHER OCEAN

Amidst the images of archaic mother ocean in the fictions outlined above is the suggestion that attaching her to Oedipal scenarios and understandings of sexuate difference will temper her radical potential. The patriarchal signifying practices described in *The Town That forgot How to Breathe*, for example, show how the "horror" of archaic mother ocean might be negated through situating her as "other" in relation to the masculine. This understanding of archaic mother ocean suggests the only way she might be signified is via phallocentrism, which locates her in the domain of lack. Yet underneath the privileging of sexuate difference that runs across some of these fictions is also the idea that archaic mother ocean can act as a reference point in and of herself. While the fear generated by this suggests the threat of non-differentiation, if she is detached from ideas of the symbolic associated with sexuate difference, this threat of engulfment can be reoriented toward more-than-human possibilities that no longer see it as subsumption of the self, but as a point of transcorporeal interconnection that interconnects and implicates bodies into the more-than-human hydrocommons. In this section, I argue for the potential of uncanny water to do just this – to transform the fear generated from the possibility of engulfment into a more positive becoming-with of bodies of water. In doing so, I suggest the possibility for re-symbolizing and reimagining the oceanic imaginary.

I read the archaic mother through the lens of Neimanis' figurations of posthuman gestation and an onto-logic of amniotics. My reading of the archaic mother ocean recognises that, even while she has been understood in terms of sexuate difference, she still holds the possibility of being reconfigured and understood in new ways; she has the potential to gestate the unknown becomings of other bodies of water – to facilitate the *not yet*. An onto-logic of amniotics suggests that even as bodies meet and are transformed in the hydrocommons, they carry with them what came before; this means they can retain within them the dialectic of sexuate difference gestated them initially, but also show that what comes next is not yet actualized and, as such, sexuate difference might be 'composing itself in ever new ways' (Neimanis 2017, 94). Bodies require multiple bodies to facilitate their becoming and this makes it both simultaneously impossible to trace a definitive "origin" of our being – since that very being is indebted to myriad bodies before it – and predict any future unfoldings of our own materiality. Understood through the lens of posthuman gestation and an onto-logic of amniotics, archaic mother ocean might be understood as an "origin", but this origin is one that is beyond definition and shows how material understandings of her might be carried forward into unknown new bodies and new becomings.

I refrain here from simply detaching archaic mother ocean from understandings of her as feminine maternal: if the being and becoming of bodies depends on constantly gathering up and bequeathing materiality, then they are always carrying with them the materiality of the past. Instead, I follow Neimanis who, 'rather than arguing against the association of the feminine with water's gestationality', wishes to 'expand our understanding of gestationality into posthuman waters' to 'see how maternal bodies are just one actualization of a more expansive gestationality as a capacity that all bodies share' (118). I suggest uncanny water offers the possibility to amplify this posthuman gestationality and onto-logic of amniotics because its representations are always both familiar and unfamiliar. In fictions of the Northern Atlantic Littoral, this is demonstrated through archaic mother ocean's representations as threatening devourer but also how the engulfment she posits might actually be an opportunity to gestate something different from what has gone before; held in the suspense and the uncertainty of the *not yet* that the uncanny incites, new becomings can emerge.

In my discussion of *The Town That Forgot How to Breathe* and 'Good', I showed how the texts established fear of the archaic mother by implying she is parthenogenetic. Instead of reading the gestation of children in both novels as parthenogenetic, I argue they can be read as instances of posthuman gestation. In 'Good', for example, the babies are not created in the mermaids' purses in isolation on the farms – sharks are involved in the initial process. The beginning of the story establishes this but asserts '[t]he sharks are long gone' (119), implying that the mermaids' purses are now used independently of the sharks, but that the sharks were the very initial progenitors of the purses. The narrative's free indirect discourse suggests this when Sabrina describes how she 'never knew there were sharks in the water' (119) and the sharks 'made the parts' of bodies found of the Scottish coast (125). The text functions to incite the uncanny around the children, establishing them as eerily familiar to human children. This is reinforced through the doubling of Jamie with one of the shark babies. The shark baby is presented as perfect in comparison to Jamie; when Sabrina cuts open the mermaid's pod he is in, she thinks he is 'flawless, more perfect than a real baby could ever be' (120). His seeming perfection reads as unnerving; Sabrina's colleague Teresa suggests 'it's unnatural, raising these shark-babies as if they're human babies' (124). Sabrina initially dismisses Teresa's belief but when she takes the shark-baby home she begins to change her mind when the baby's seeming perfection becomes more disturbing. Sabrina feeds the baby a bottle of milk and thinks 'perhaps this is what it was meant to be like' (126) as he takes the bottle and 'smiles and grasps her thumb' (126) but then something in his perfection unnerves her. Even though he is 'feeding fine' she feels '[s]omething is wrong' and she 'thinks she understands now why Teresa says the things that she says' (127). While the uncanny works to incite anxiety around these children as 'unnatural', it is an anxiety that suggests they are uncanny because they are *nonhuman*.

In highlighting the nonhuman nature of these children, the story alludes to the fact they have been gestated by some combination of human/shark/ocean. This is shown through the story told of how the babies and body parts came to be, which is framed as a kind of exchange and gestation since 'some teeth went in, and some teeth came back out – and they were perfect' (124). This process of exchange then escalates to human bodies like the 'shipwrecked sailors' and 'people murdered and dumped at sea' (124). The implication is that the bodies are somehow gestated in combination with the shark in the watery milieu of the ocean before being reproduced as new parts. This more-than-human combination of bodies of water therefore shows how multiple bodies can gestate difference. That new bodies are produced through the shared materiality of the human/shark/ocean milieu suggests how posthuman gestation can be 'the meeting of two bodies of difference in order to proliferate further life' (Neimanis 2017, 92). What occurs in 'Good' is a meeting of multiple bodies to produce further life different to one's own.

Posthuman gestation shifts the ocean from archaic mother ocean as site of non-differentiation and engulfment to gestational milieu that differentiates and facilitates other bodies of water. The narrative's distrust of origins signals that the ocean is not the *sole site* of origin, but one body of water amidst multiple who have contributed to the gestation and birth of these children. In the context of the Northern Atlantic Littoral, we see once again the sense that origins are unstable and tentative – always under threat by the waters that surround them. This is signalled through the uncertainty about the process of gestation of these babies; the narrative's free indirect discourse describes how Sabrina 'never knew there were sharks in the water' (119) and she questions 'who made the sharks that made the parts? Who put them there in the waters around the Scottish coast?' (125). No clear resolution is offered with Sabrina merely thinking 'best not to ask' (125) – or, in other words, best not to cause an issue by asking. Not only is it unclear how the sharks 'made the parts' but the origin of the sharks themselves is unknown. Underpinning the uncertainty is the suggestion that a chain of bodies were involved in the process – that something came before the sharks. Uncanny water is triggered through this receding and uncertain origin point. It becomes clear myriad bodies are involved in the production of these babies. The uncertainty about the chain of bodies involved means the process does not read as teleological or evolutionary but murky and disjointed. This is stressed through the fact that when the teeth were first discovered there was 'no real system for finding them' (124). Uncanny water functions here to suggest an onto-logic of amniotics where bodies are produced via an uncertain process of indebtedness wherein myriad bodies gather up and bequeath their materiality to others in order to facilitate the creation of new life, while still refusing to determine with any certainty how these pathways of water might further gestate.

The Town That Forgot How to Breathe functions differently in its expression of posthuman gestation – not least of all because, as I demonstrate above, archaic mother ocean becomes subsumed into a more Oedipal scenario that complicates detaching her from expressions of sexuate difference. The novel

connects the people of Bareneed to the ocean by way of their fishing heritage and the novel posits the idea of a fish/ocean/human interconnection to establish that the people of Bareneed have an attachment to this particular place. I draw upon Sugars' (2010) argument that people and cod are positioned into a kind of continuum that works along evolutionary lines. She states that the novel 'posts a phylogenetic continuity between humans and fish which establishes a continuum along three lines: geographical, historical, and genetic' (19). Specifically, she describes how the novel constantly draws comparisons between ancestors, people and cod; for example, through the fact that the ghosts are often accompanied by the smell of fish or hold dead codfish in their mouths, and those who are struck down by the breathing illness find themselves 'effectively turning into fish' as they 'gasp for air like fish suffocating on land' (20). Sugars gives the example of the sculpin birthing the doll's head to show how the novel suggests an evolutionary heritage that begins in the sea; she suggests that the sculpin vomiting the doll's head simulates a 'human birth scene' that echoes 'a primordial human birth' (20-21). The people of Bareneed are therefore placed into an entaglement with the fish, suggesting a genetic evolution from the fish itself. The novel never purports a particularly teleological evolution across this continuum but rather brings them together in a more contingent entanglement demonstrated via the messy and visceral sculpin/doll's head. Consequently, the novel connects humans and fish into a more posthuman form of gestation whereby the people of Bareneed are shown to be somehow already more-than-human by way of their nonhuman ancestors. The fish/human/ocean connection is therefore one where multiple bodies of water are somehow implicated in the evolution and proliferation of new bodies.

The focus on interconnection through the ocean becomes even more pronounced through the sacrifice of Miss Laracy at the novel's culmination. As the tidal wave grows in momentum, the military step in to assist the residents of Bareneed. However, Miss Laracy decides she does not want to be "rescued", refusing to board the helicopter provided and claiming, '[y]er world's narry fit fer me' (461). Instead, she clutches on to a photo album containing pictures of her dead husband, before dropping it and throwing 'open her arms, holding them wide in a gesture of embracing welcome' (466) while the 'wall of black water surged' into her, 'not knocking her over, but simply causing her to vanish' (466). This scene depicts a moment of engulfment whereby Miss Laracy quite literally 'vanishes' and is engulfed by archaic mother ocean. However, read through the lens of an onto-logic of amniotics, the scene has slightly different nuances. Miss Laracy has thus far been the "link" through which past and present generations of Bareneed inhabitants are connected: she is responsible for identifying the bodies of the 'ancestors' who wash up on the shores of Bareneed and is one of the only people (aside from Tommy Quilty) who is able to commune with the spirits.[89] I suggest that this moment of engulfment allows Miss Laracy to sacrifice

---

[89] The novel establishes Miss Laracy's significance in this respect early on: the opening chapters describe her as being able to commune with the dead (until the spirits began to disappear), '[s]he had spoken with them of infants and of generations passed on' (10). She is depicted as an interlocuter who is able to connect the world of spirits with the living.

her own materiality in order for the future of Bareneed to continue. This is demonstrated when Tommy watches 'the colours that had been clinging to Miss Laracy [...] now glowed and spread through the sea, leaking like pigment' (466). While Tommy observes Miss Laracy's aura spreading through the water, it can also signal a visual spread of her materiality which then becomes the means through which Bareneed's future is secured. The suggestion of this is in her almost prophetic final words, that she is no longer fit for this world, and the fact that the novel's epilogue, following the tidal wave, describes how the next generations of Bareneed inhabitants gather around and tell stories about 'when there was an absence of spirits' (470-471). I argue that it is Miss Laracy's materiality that has been 'given over' in order to reconnect the inhabitants of Bareneed to their spirit ancestors and unite them again with their fishing heritage.

In 'Good' and *The Town That Forgot How to Breathe*, archaic mother ocean is reconfigured to be part of a more expansive and inclusive understanding of gestation and bodies of water more broadly. Rather than being ascribed to simply the maternal – or reinserted into more patriarchal models of the family – these fictions stress how myriad bodies, including the nonhuman, might be involved in the creation of new bodies and the proliferation of life beyond one's own. In this way, the uncanny fear and abjection attached to engulfment and mother ocean become a positive and generative force. Posthuman gestation and the onto-logic of amniotics consequently form part of uncanny water's expressions to recast engulfment as a process of regeneration and becoming that affords for myriad diverse expressions of sexuate difference – both human and nonhuman. Examples like the engulfment experienced by Miss Laracy are present throughout the fictions of the Northern Atlantic Littoral. As I will discuss, these physical descriptions of engulfment-as-regeneration, or rebirth, are not just critical for the characters and plot, but they also form a critical part of how the oceanic imaginary is re-symbolized and reproduced for the contemporary moment and adjacent climate crises.

One such example of this can be found in Crummey's *Sweetland*; like *The Town That Forgot How to Breathe*, *Sweetland* depicts the ocean as a site of both origin and potential engulfment. In Chapter One, I discussed how the island of Sweetland undergoes a spectralization, disappearing on a map while Moses watches, before being replaced by 'nothing but blue water' (316). Similar to the ways in which the people of Bareneed are placed into a long-standing heritage and connectivity with place, so too are the islanders of Sweetland – especially its eponymous protagonist whose ancestors founded the island. Just as Miss Laracy's engulfment is framed as a sacrifice of her own materiality so that the other people of Bareneed may continue on, Moses also "sacrifices" himself in order for his fellow islanders and family members to move on and live lives beyond the island of Sweetland. As I discuss in Chapter One, the Government Resettlement Scheme offered to the islanders of Sweetland requires everyone agree to it. Moses holds out against the relocation package for a long time, thereby preventing others from taking up the package

and moving on. Moses eventually concedes and agrees to accept the money, but rather than taking up the package and leaving the island, he fakes his death in order to remain there. Paul Chafe (2017) argues that Moses' reluctance to accept the package stems from a drive to etch himself onto the island, and his staunch belief that his identity is bound up with the isolation and solitude of the place. He claims that 'Moses mistakes Sweetland's physical isolation as central to his and his neighbours' identities and clings wrongly to the place when he needs to move with his people' (20). Moses attempts to carve out an isolated life for himself, which is why *Sweetland* reads as a Robinsonade narrative that presents one man's battle for survival on an isolated island.

As I argued in Chapter One, Crummey offers a critique of economic individualism that is revealed in the novel's second half wherein Moses is incapable of surviving without the help of his community. The final scene, where Moses joins the anonymous ghost figures on the hill and feels joyful at sharing in the community, reads as Moses' eventual awareness that he cannot survive without others. It has been through the community's erasure that Moses learns community is what is needed for him, and the island, to survive. Chafe observes that, when Moses relinquishes his 'attempt at an impossible, singular narrative' he is then able to 'join and listen to the calamitous and contradictory voices that ever speak, ever complicate, and ever create community' (34). Chafe's comments reflect the idea that, in sacrificing his attempt to inscribe himself into place, he actually becomes part of the community of bodies that comprise that space. Such an action mirrors the momentum of posthuman gestation and an onto-logic of amniotics whereby Moses' surrendering of his own individualism allows him to recognise how he is part of a more evolving and entangled community. This movement is also inherently material since it is in his death and the giving over of his own materiality, that the community congregates and looks forward into the future.

What *Sweetland*, *The Town That Forgot How to Breathe* and 'Good' speak to is the way in which the dissolution of the individual comes to form part of the more-than-human hydrocommons via processes of posthuman gestation that stress an onto-logic of amniotics. Posthuman gestation can be read in fictions of the Northern Atlantic Littoral as demonstrative of uncanny water's affective process. It shows a movement away from the non-differentiation suggested by engulfment into the more-than-human hydrocommons where myriad bodies affirm and gestate other bodies of water. In many ways, this is also the process that unites the chapters of this thesis and brings it full circle: the onto-logic of amniotics that engulfment requires shows how bodies become part of the more-than-human hydrocommons and, in turn, 'absent others' to whom other bodies of water are indebted to. The depictions of engulfment and transformation via this process stress a movement away from the individual into more inclusive and entangled milieus. Engulfment as dissolution of the "individual" is also exemplified in *A Summer of Drowning*, where Liv's desire to live a life 'intact' is disrupted through her aqueous encounter with the huldra. Following this interaction, Liv begins drawing her maps to chart the invisible interconnections

between others – her mapping of the absent in-between spaces, and her focus on how bodies become 'perceptible in the interference they create' (Burnside 2011, 323), stresses an onto-logic of amniotics through its focus on indebtedness to absent others. And nowhere is the 'giving over of one's own materiality for the proliferation of life beyond one's own' (Neimanis 2017, 92) clearer than in *The Gloaming*'s final scenes in which the return of Bee's bones allows his family to move on. These texts use engulfment to consequently forge a gestational space through which the lives of others can be facilitated.

What is significant about uncanny water and this process of engulfment is that it marks a vital shift in how bodies of water are represented. My focus on fictions of the Northern Atlantic Littoral attempts to destabilize understandings of the Atlantic based on its representation as a 'feminized void', archaic mother or a space that might be subject to mastery and control. Engulfment as a process of uncanny water dissolves the idea of the individual and demonstrates how multiple bodies can be implicated in the resymbolisation of this space. Not only then does it 'explode' the 'category of the ontological' (Neimanis 2017, 96) through a focus on plurality and transcorporeality but, as I stress, such a focus enables more care and consideration as to how bodies inflect and permeate one another – vital in the current climate emergency. The following section thinks how these depictions are almost always accompanied by a shift in narrative style. These changes are critical for rethinking how the symbolisation of the Northern Atlantic might become more inclusive and diverse, and how the Northern Atlantic can be removed from representations that emphasize mastery and control. The very shifts themselves point to instability and uncertainty and so gesture toward the unfolding and unknowable nature of bodies of water.

GENERIC GESTATION: (RE)PRODUCING THE NORTHERN ATLANTIC LITTORAL

I have discussed so far how the Atlantic Ocean is figured as a site of origins and often conflated with the archaic mother in fictions of the Northern Atlantic Littoral. Through this association, the texts generate their uncanniness which is then transformed, via posthuman gestation, into a more plural and transcorporeal understanding of bodies of water. Central to this idea is a reliance upon narrative strategies and techniques to produce uncanniness – techniques and strategies, I argue, that are related to particular styles and genres such as the Gothic and magical realism. In reconfiguring this uncanniness, however, they shift understandings associated with these genres into something new and unfolding that mirrors the fluid dynamics of bodies of water. I argue that this shift is often precipitated by engulfment into the ocean and these generic and stylistic shifts are what unify the fictions of the Northern Atlantic Littoral and are part of uncanny water's generative impetus. This is not to say that uncanny water is in itself a genre, but rather a figuration through which the uncertainty and interconnectedness of water's transits are amplified and, as I continue to emphasize, a means through which the Northern Atlantic might be recovered from depictions of it as knowable and controllable. The shifts betray a distrust of origins,

showing them to be multiple and diffuse, as opposed to linear and teleological. In this way, these texts mirror the unfolding nature of bodies of water.

The narrative and generic shifts I identify are part of the ways uncanny water evades easy definition, while also allowing the fictions to move away from the often totalising structures of genre that can often be grounded in terracentric and national ideologies. In this section, I look at how engulfment functions to instigate these shifts and how, in facilitating them, these texts challenge formal and generic categories to offer alternative symbolisations of the Northern Atlantic that are more befitting of the transcorporeal entanglement between bodies of water. While the momentum and prerogative for these changes lies within the uncanny itself, I demonstrate how these fictions borrow tropes from various genres and styles including the Gothic and magical realism to create a kind of hybrid form. As texts which emerge from geographically and politically peripheral spaces, they are uniquely situated to articulate the permeable and mutable nature of terrestrial boundaries and their hybrid nature speaks to this transgressive position. Crucially, as texts which use the generative force of uncanny water to illuminate the instability of generic definitions, they also demonstrate their own form of posthuman gestation and an onto-logic of amniotics; through blending various tropes and styles, they (re)produce the oceanic imaginary of the Northern Atlantic while remaining attentive to the common '*how*, *where*, *when*, and *thanks to whom*' to which seemingly disparate forms and styles are indebted (Neimanis 2017, 96; emphasis in original). This creates a level of self-awareness that renders the texts highly metafictional and represents the Atlantic Ocean as a body of water in its own right.

I have demonstrated that common to fictions of the Northern Atlantic Littoral are tropes including ghosts, magical creatures and the folkloric. As I discussed in the Introduction, these elements are also common to magical realism and this "genre" is helpful for defining the fictions of the Northern Atlantic Littoral and for illuminating their transgressive position – both politically and geographically. Magical realism's contesting of hegemonic historical narratives through the inclusion of superstition and the folkloric make it an apt form for destabilizing dominant narratives of the Northern Atlantic. The inclusion of the folkloric and superstition means magical realism 'contests the notion of history as a linear and logical phenomenon' (Andrews 1999, 4). The tension it creates between simultaneously incorporating realism and magic allows for the suggestion of an existence of narratives alongside the dominant ones. The use of superstition and the folkloric can also be ascribed to the Gothic and both are often deployed in ways that illuminate Gothic concerns – such as the conflation of old and new, and their exploration of the human psyche. The Gothic's attachment to particular national modes might seem restrictive but, placed in combination with magical realism, the fictions of the Northern Atlantic Littoral emphasize indebtedness to particular understandings of the Northern Atlantic while offering new and alternative fictional representations of this body of water. What fuses these generic styles within the fictions of the

Northern Atlantic Littoral is engulfment through which any totalising understandings of these genres are washed away. That which emerges in the aftermath is a reconfigured text that holds remnants of these conventions but is differentiated by and becomes different through them, thereby stressing uncanny water's capacity to produce something different. This is the mimetic process through which uncanny water hones in on the tropes embedded in these genres, while simultaneously replicating and reinventing them.

Incorporating these shifts mean the fictions of the Northern Atlantic Littoral are metafictional. They demonstrate a self-reflexivity and awareness that acknowledges their situatedness and their involvement in the production of alternative discourses and imaginaries for the Northern Atlantic. The self-reflexivity of this metafiction might lead one to conclude that fictions of the Northern Atlantic Littoral are postmodern; however, I assert that it is because of uncanny water they should be read as *posthuman*. This is because uncanny water is concerned with amplifying the unknowable *material* transits of water across situated and contingent bodies. Uncanny water recognises how matter creates, and grants meaning to, the material world. This is a critical posthuman imperative because it displaces binaries between human/nonhuman and the anthropocentrism at the heart of this dualism. Brandon Jones (2018) describes the process through which matter comes to matter as a 'posthuman performativity' (245) whereby 'agency, historicity and intentionality – the keys to meaning-making – are understood not as attributes of human culture and subjectivity but as transcorporeal enactments that extend across and through human and nonhuman bodies' (245). Uncanny water augments the currents of meaning that run alongside and within water's transits. In relation to genre, this means amplifying how genre is politicised, and frequently defined within terracentric and national frameworks. Jones recognises how matter's meaning making capacities are performative 'because it suggests that discrete entities and the meanings attached to them *emerge within*, rather than precede, the relations that constitute them' (245; emphasis in original). Uncanny water understands how engulfment *produces* new meaning and new representations of bodies of water. The metafictional elements of the Northern Atlantic Littoral facilitate a self-awareness of how materiality creates meaning, and their own participation in representing water's transits – specifically in relation to the Atlantic Ocean. In this section, I look at how these texts deploy generic and narrative shifts to highlight their metafictionality. These texts mirror the action of posthuman gestation and an onto-logic of amniotics, suggesting how bodies of water differentiate others and extend in unknowable ways in the more-than-human hydrocommons.

The metafictionality of these texts works in tandem with uncanny water to shore up the limitations of particular terrestrial epistemologies and ontologies. In producing a particular self-awareness, these texts are able to demonstrate how representations of the Atlantic Ocean are always produced through particular networks of power and meaning. In speaking directly to the artifice and constructedness of the

texts, they exhibit an awareness both of how power and meaning are able to craft and control representations of bodies of water and their own participation in the resymbolizing and reconfiguring of those representations. In challenging particular understandings of genre, they are able to show how genre and form are often mediated through anthropocentric and nationalist lenses; for example, Crummey's *Sweetland*, incorporates a distinct generic shift that betrays the text's metafictionality and allows the novel to challenge conceptions of Atlantic Canadian literature – and the communities it represents – as associated with a 'kind of rock-bound, elemental, simplistic realism' (Wylie 2008, 9). Herb Wylie's observation suggests that Atlantic Canadian literature is often perceived to be inherently realist, presenting an image of Atlantic Canadians as "salt-of-the-earth" people living simple lives and working the land.[90] The focus in *Sweetland*'s first half, 'The King's Seat', adheres to these conventions and is written in a realist style that 'focusses on the verisimilitude of detail, concentrates on the norms of human experience (events and emotions that are familiar to the population as a whole), and tries to convey a broad picture of human nature through a snapshot view of a single community' (Andrews 1999, 10). The first half centres around the quotidian and the experience of Moses and his fellow islanders. Through brief insights into how various Sweetlanders live and work – from Duke who runs the local barbershop, which is just a 'one-room shed' (Crummey 2014, 20) to Queenie Coffin who never leaves her house and is a 'voracious reader of paint-by-number romances' (30) – the novel presents the daily lives of Sweetlanders set against the backdrop of the relocation package and the realist descriptions read as a portrayal of a community in decline, set against the broader spectre of capitalism and climate change.

Crummey's novel offers a shift in the second half that moves away from realism into a much more Gothic and magical realist style. Crummey's decision to interrupt the realist narrative speaks to the limitations of realism and how attempts to capture "human nature" are, in essence, attempts to make something unknowable and transient, knowable and representable. Magical realism pushes against realism to emphasize realism's limitations demonstrating how depictions of communities or people are always mediated through particular power dynamics, indeed it is 'magic realism's most basic concern' to reveal 'the nature and limits of the knowable' (Zamora 1995, 498). Narrative strategies that display a conscious attempt to upturn the assumptions of realism are also those that challenge and subvert prevailing epistemologies and ontologies. This strategy is what makes it possible to read *Sweetland* through the lens of uncanny water: uncanny water functions through, and in tandem with, the formal qualities of magical realism to expose the limits of terrestrial epistemologies to adequately convey the ontological experience

---

[90] This misconception is related to those books that have received wider international acclaim, such as MacLeod's *No Great Mischief*, L.M Montgomery's *Anne of Green Gables* (1908) and David Adam Richards' *Mercy Among the Children* (2000), to name but a few. All of these are written firmly in a realist vein and give particular depictions of Atlantic Canada associated with the 'elemental realism'. There are broader issues here related to genre and cultural capital here, which are beyond the scope of this thesis to address; however, it is pertinent to note that there is a narrative style that has come to be associated with this geographic space: many of the writers I discuss here push against the limitations of this.

of bodies of water in the Northern Atlantic Littoral. The incursion of the supernatural in the second half of *Sweetland* is consequently a means through which negative affect is transformed into a more positive becoming-with in order to stress the limitations of these particular terrestrial epistemologies. Moses fakes his own death in order to remain on the island alone and at this point a number of strange occurrences begin to take place that seem to have no rational explanation. Chess pieces move independently on the board in Duke's barber shop (222), a 'rabbit's decapitated head' (225) appears in Moses' kitchen basin, strange and haunting music guides Moses back to shore after he finds himself adrift at sea (220), and the light at Queenie Coffin's house mysteriously turns on by itself. All of these occurrences are depicted as supernatural in nature since they happen when Moses is alone on the island. The strangeness of these situations transforms the reassuring realism of the first half into something uncanny as Moses feels the island of his home turn quite literally unhomely.[91] The uncanniness of the second half culminates in the moment of engulfment where Sweetland-the-island and Sweetland-the-man are engulfed figuratively and literally by the 'blue water' of the Atlantic. Ultimately, this is used to displace and transform the reassurances of realism in the first half, which are more aligned with terrestrial ontologies, into a more positive force of becoming-with in the more-than-human hydrocommons.

Significantly, these two halves are divided by another moment of engulfment with the drowning of Moses' nephew, Jesse. Following a meeting when Moses is supposed to concede to the relocation package – but he does not attend – Jesse goes out in search of his uncle to demand answers as to why the sudden change of heart. Jesse's body is then found at the shoreline 'being tossed against the rocks, lifeless in the ocean currents' (154). Moses jumps into the water to retrieve Jesse's body but realizes it will be a struggle to pull both Jesse and himself up the narrow ladder back onto land. Moses decides to wait with Jesse in the water while his fellow islander, Barry, calls for a boat to recover them. Barry's last words to Moses before departing are 'I expects you'll be dead before I gets back' (157) and it is at this point the first half ends, with Moses replying 'I don't doubt but I will be' (157). This bleak scene holds a foreboding quality that has led Paul Chafe (2017) to argue for the possibility that, at this point, Moses dies. Chafe's reading certainly has credence given what follows in the novel's second half and the supernatural occurrences; he claims that if this point marks the moment of Moses' death, then the second half of the novel 'is an exercise in magical realism, as the ghost of Moses moves through the landscape remembering and reconsidering his life' (25). Chafe's evidence in support of this assertion is that the second half has an especially 'oneiric quality' (25) to it with Moses 'often waking at odd hours or in the middle of dreams, casting into doubt the events preceding each waking' (25). He points out that often Moses is awoken by the cold or wet which is actually 'the result of him being beaten by the ocean as he dies on the ladder'

---

[91] An earlier version of this argument was published in my article 'Altering Subjectivities: Place and the Posthuman in Michael Crummey's *Sweetland*' in *Studies in Canadian Literature*.

(22). Moses' death at the end of the first half would suggest that the subsequent magical realist and more gothic elements of the second half are the resultant effect of this engulfment.

This generic shift is what facilitates the text's metafictionality and demonstrates Crummey's capacity to write back against the realism of the novel's first half. I discussed in Chapter One how Moses makes some futile attempts in the novel's second half to work the land on his own and how this means the novel reads as a critique of the Robinsonade that celebrates "man against nature" and the thriving of economic individualism. Such a narrative is focussed on teleological progression that emphasizes a particular triumph or outcome. I posit the switch in style serves to further emphasize the myth of this ideology, but also shore up how the realism of the first half – and as a means to depict the lives of Atlantic Canadians more broadly – is no longer a viable or *realistic* depiction when confronted with the challenges of late capitalism and climate change. The teleology of progress and its linearity is not a sustainable idea.[92] Something different is then produced through the narrative, something uncanny that might more accurately portray the decline of these communities. The supernatural and gothic hauntings which Moses experiences can then be read as spectres and shadows of the island life as it was before when it was, quite literally, full of life – when there were rabbits to hunt, when Queenie Coffin occupied her home, and when Duke's barbershop was still in operation. This depiction of island life appears quite bleak as Moses futilely struggles on, but it demonstrates how engulfment often precedes a generic shift that is differentiated by the process and becomes different through this. The uncertainty about Moses' death amplifies the uncertainty that engulfment facilitates – the unknowable how, where and when bodies of water might extend beyond the self.

As the uncanniness of the second half builds through the increasing incursion of supernatural tropes, it culminates in the final moment of engulfment when Sweetland disappears from the map. The literal disappearance from the page emphasizes how perpetuating the myth of economic individualism and man against nature can only result in self-erasure, shoring up the futility of Moses struggling on alone on the island. The affective power of uncanny water is illuminated in this scene as Moses' "final" death represents the futility of his self-imposed isolation before he re-joins his community who look out over the ocean. The two engulfments of the novel therefore signify the momentum of uncanny water and how this process is a constant becoming-with that functions to always bequeath and generate something new and other in its unfolding. What might be produced following this final engulfment is unclear but the refusal to fix itself to one generic style suggests that the experience of Atlantic Canadians is not adequately captured by realism or purely the more Gothic or magical elements of the text and suggests a more hybrid and evolving approach that resonates with the becoming-with of bodies of water.

---

[92] The urgency of the climate emergency shows how human teleological progression is only resulting in further destruction and impending disaster.

Another text where the metafictional elements function to mirror an onto-logic of amniotics and produce a new representation of the Northern Atlantic Littoral is *The Gloaming*. This is signalled both through the revelation that Bee is the narrator of the story – a point, as I argued in Chapter One, which amplifies the relationality between bodies of water – but also through the metaphor of the guest house the family run which is forever in a state of disrepair, unfinished, needing continual upkeep and never seems to have any guests. The house functions as a metaphor for the novel's own production, its 'dilapidated state' (17) and isolated location on the island reading as Gothic, and Signe and her daughters often find themselves referring to 'ghosts' rather than 'guests' in the house. The haunted and ruined state of the house that requires constant attention is the focal point of the story that draws the action to it. In Gothic fiction, the haunted house often represents the uncanny for its female protagonists as the house foregrounds the tensions created in this domestic space between 'protective haven and hostile space threatening her existence' (Ng 2015, 2). The haunted house becomes the space where this uncanniness is writ large. Andrew Hock Soon Ng points out that 'the Gothic has consistently recognized a quality invested in domestic space that has the power to unnerve, fragment, and even destroy its inhabitant unless something is done to arrest it and restore order and normalcy back to the house' (1). Ng describes how the house and domestic space holds power over particular characters and is often the space through which a character's psyche is disrupted via the incursion of the supernatural. The house has to be returned to a haven in order for the Gothic tropes of the text to be placated.

In *The Gloaming* the house represents such an uncanny space for the protagonist Mara, and her family. Returning to the house with Pearl after months travelling the world, Mara notices 'the house – the whole island – was a ramshackle pit of junk that was turning them all to stone' (255). Her comment refers to the literal turning to stone that islanders experience when they are coming to the end of their life and when they climb the nearby cliff and transform into statues. I discussed in Chapter Two how Mara initially desires stasis as it signifies for her a bounded individualism that allows her to emulate the 'dead girl' of the fairytales she loves. However, as Mara's worldview changes after meeting Pearl, and the thought of returning to a stasis works in opposition to the fluid becoming-with of bodies of water and so the house becomes a site of negative affect, made unhomely and uncanny in comparison to the life she has built with Pearl travelling the world as a mermaid. The negative affect created by the house is also noticed by Pearl who remarks to Mara, 'I don't think we should stay here much longer. It's not good for you. There's magic here and it's dark as tar' (260). Even while it is Mara's family home, the house is implied to be a potentially dangerous place for Mara, countering her fluidity and becoming a space that seems to be hastening her death.

However, once again, it is a moment of engulfment that transforms the negative affect associated with the uncanniness of the house. When Bee's bones are discovered on the shoreline this signifies Bee giving up his own materiality in order for his family to move on from their grief. Yet Bee's revelation also points to the constructedness of the narrative; this becomes even more apparent when he offers the myriad possible endings for Pearl and Mara and how he simply does not 'know' (303) how their story ends. When Bee reveals himself to be the narrator, another engulfment also occurs via a storm that destroys the family home. It 'raged like fire through the house' (300) before also turning itself to the cliff where it pulls the whole cliff 'into the sea' (301). The house and the cliff of statues both become completely destroyed and all are engulfed. The destruction of the house and cliff signify the end of one particular type of narrative and the end of the stasis they both implied and enabled. Significantly, it is at this point that Bee also 'leaves' and stops narrating the story; he states '[w]hat happened to Mara and to Pearl and to Islay? I'm sorry to tell you that I don't know, because when the storm left, I did too' (302). Bee's narration ends at this final moment of engulfment – when house and cliff are gone. What emerges in his place are the myriad possible other endings, which he describes about Pearl, Mara and Islay. Even while *The Gloaming* uses the storm to arrest the negative affect of the tale and return "normalcy" to the house and the islanders, it simultaneously produces something new and different. The plot and narrative-style of *The Gloaming* shift away from the stasis associated with the haunted house and cliff and mirror the unfolding potential of bodies of water that produces myriad possibilities whilst remaining cognizant of its indebtedness to Gothic tropes.

Gothic concerns like the haunted house also feature across Logan's short story collection *Things We Say in the Dark*: Logan invokes metafictionality to transform the fear associated with these into something more generative. The collection itself is themed around 'women's fears' and is divided into three sections: 'The House', 'The Child' and 'The Past'.[93] Interspersed amidst the stories is the account of an author living remotely in Iceland and writing a collection of short stories based on the same subject matter; the metafictionality of the interjections reflects the author figure's own experience of writing *Things We Say in the Dark*.[94] The purportedly authorial voice describes how the process meant she 'lost' herself a little in writing these fears and describes it as moving 'into the dark' (4). The practice itself mirrors the process of engulfment, whereby the author must plunge into writing and "lose herself", in order to confront these fears and reconfigure them. The metafictional elements parallel the actual stories, including 'Good' where the fear surrounding the archaic mother is transformed into something more generative and

---

[93] The book was described in a review article for *The Guardian* as focussing on 'fears with a particular resonance for women: unnatural children, lurking predators, inadequacy as a mother, and threats both within and without the home – and indeed the body' (Feay 2019, n.p.).

[94] Logan spent a month-long residency in Iceland where she wrote the collection and documented her time there in a blog post for *Books from Scotland*. The distance between the narrating-I and author seems conspicuously close here for this reason. https://booksfromscotland.com/2017/11/solitude-swimming-sheep-kirsty-logan/ [Last accessed 26 February 2022]

posthuman. While not necessarily a watery engulfment, Logan's metafictionality reads as a self-consciousness that understands how representing these "fears" differently might displace their negative affect. This pattern, I argue, is strikingly similar to uncanny water's and, read alongside 'Good', shows Logan's own reconfiguration of the oceanic imaginary of the Northern Atlantic.

The interjection of a narrative voice gestures toward the text's constructedness and its potential to produce something new also occur in *The Town That Forgot How to Breathe*. I mentioned in Chapter One how the final 'Epilogue' switches narrative voice to one of the character's daughters who is telling the story 'to her grandchildren' (469). I argue that the text uses this final image to dwell with the ancestral ghosts and establish a continuity that affords the settlers of Bareneed a privileged relationship to place. Prior to this moment, the negative affect of the uncanny accompanied the Gothic tropes of the text where the lack of ghosts has caused the breathing illness. Yet, following engulfment by the tidal wave, to be haunted becomes a positive force that re-joins the people of Bareneed to their community and into a more-than-human relation. This is paralleled in the act of storytelling which becomes the means through which people of Bareneed continue to keep their legacy alive: to continue to reconfigure and pass on stories of Bareneed – to be haunted by these stories – is what sustains them. Therefore, even as they enact something that places them into a privileged relationship with space, they show a kind of posthuman gestation and onto-logic of amniotics that (re)produces stories of Bareneed through generations while remaining conscious of what interconnected them initially.

This pattern of metafictional self-awareness preceded by a moment of engulfment is present across almost all the fictions of the Northern Atlantic Littoral I have discussed. It is via acknowledgment of the constructedness of the oceanic imaginary that these texts demonstrate their conscious participation in the (re)production of new representations of the Northern Atlantic. They show how fictive tropes can amplify and perpetuate the unfolding potential of bodies of water but how this is based on uncertain and unstable origins and how they themselves reconfigure and reproduce these to better reflect the unknowable nature of water's extensions. This self-awareness is also a radical ethical turn that recognises how bodies of water are implicated in the becoming of other bodies of water and so the metafictionality of these texts signals a recognition of this and seeks to replicate it in the texts. This constant emphasis that uncanny water places on uncertainty shows how engulfment and metafictionality, while central to the fictions of the Northern Atlantic Littoral, are not *definitive* of the Northern Atlantic Littoral. It is more that uncanny water unifies these texts through showing how attempts to define and contain bodies of water is near impossible. What these texts do is move representations of the Northern Atlantic away from discourses predicated on a sense of mastery and control – on phallocentric ideas that othered the ocean – and instead offers a possible posthuman representation of the ocean and the myriad bodies for whom it acts as milieu and who act as milieu for it. The fictions of the Northern Atlantic Littoral speak

to and from peripheral positions that allow them to highlight interconnectivity with this body of water but they are a model and a framework for the potential uncanny water holds – they show what is possible if one looks beyond the teleological and the expected to mirror the unknowable currents of water.

THE CYCLICALITY OF POSTHUMAN ENGULFMENT

I began this chapter with an interrogation of the Atlantic Ocean as archaic mother reading across fictions of the Northern Atlantic Littoral where she is figured as a site of possible engulfment that produces non-differentiation. I stressed, with reference to *The Town That Forgot How to Breathe*, how reading the ocean as archaic mother can allow for it to be assimilated into patriarchal scenarios that construct the ocean as a site of difference and symbolize it as "other". I demonstrated that within understandings of the ocean as archaic mother are the seeds for her to be read out-with the representation of her as "other", which can be found through acknowledging the womb as always its own point of reference. Logan's short story 'Good' enables the parthenogenetic potential of the archaic mother to extend without encumbrance. This allows for archaic mother ocean to be detached from phallocentrism and reinscribed into something more posthuman, while not undermining her potential to reproduce or simply detaching her from the feminine.[95] Through Neimanis' figurations of posthuman gestation and onto-logic of amniotics, in which she describes how bodies of water hold the potential to gestate other bodies of water across membranes of difference, I transform understandings of the ocean of archaic mother. I read posthuman gestation in texts that have previously betrayed a fear of the archaic mother to show how within them are the possibility for change and difference that read more akin to the unfolding potential of bodies of water. Rather than engulfment signalling non-differentiation, it then reads as a moment of interconnection and the gestation of further life. Not only is this present in texts that have a fear of the archaic mother, but across almost all the fictions of the Northern Atlantic Littoral where engulfment becomes a moment of rebirth and regeneration for others.

Underpinning all of these ideas of engulfment and rebirth is the fear located with non-differentiation, which links explicitly to the uncanny, is transformed through posthuman gestation and an onto-logic of amniotics. This idea of uncanny water as amplifying posthuman gestation and an onto-logic of amniotics has run throughout this thesis; I have shown how ghosts gesture toward those absent others to whom being is indebted, and how mermaids and sea monsters allow an understanding of the fluid potential of all bodies – irrespective of sexuate difference, gender expression or species. However, it is only through engulfment, and through embracing the uncertainty that bodies of water hold, that any of these possibilities for being and becoming can be facilitated. This transformation does not refute the

---

[95] I follow Neimanis (2017) in being cautious here to not efface sexual difference entirely here; the ocean's feminization highlights important questions about which bodies come to matter and how bodies might be othered. However, I wish to move it away from the human feminine maternal and into something more posthuman so as to step away from ideas of gestation as 'a single instance in an actualized female womb' (84) and see it as something plural, continuous and posthuman.

unknowability or uncertainty that was inherent in the uncanniness created. Rather, it becomes positively amplified and reconfigured as the watery materiality of bodies extends unto others in unknowable and uncertain ways via posthuman gestation. Engulfment signals the point at which unknowability coalesces and the uncanniness of the text peaks, but it also signifies the moment at which bodies of water are submerged in water: through this submersion bodies can know their own wateriness and be verified by it – by the limitations embodiment places on existence in water. The uncanniness of the text illuminates this but shores up that bodies cannot know the wateriness of others nor how a body's wateriness contributes to their materiality. This is the onto-logic of amniotics through which new bodies are gestated via this continual unfolding materiality, facilitated by engulfment and submersion in water. This is witnessed in *The Town That Forgot How to Breahte* when Miss Laracy gives over her materiality in the tidal wave but she cannot and will not know how this materiality is passed on via her expanding aura; it is shown in 'Good' where Sabrina cannot pinpoint how the sharks gestated the babies and organs in the water. It is also apparent in *Sweetland* where Moses' symbolic engulfment by blue water allows him to join the community on the hill. Giving over one's own materiality following this submersion and engulfment in the amniotic space of the ocean allows for the lives of others to flourish in these texts.

All of the texts discuss feature engulfment within the Northern Atlantic and it is through this, I have argued, that they contribute toward the resymbolisation of literatures from this space. These texts blend genres and hybrid forms to mimic and amplify the posthuman gestation and onto-logic of amniotics they describe. At the moment of engulfment or submersion, the narrative style often switches and shifts the negative affect generated by the uncanny into a more positive becoming-with. To do this, the text will often break with the conventions that governed it previously and upturn tropes like the Gothic "haunted house" of *The Gloaming*, or the realist first half of *Sweetland*. Through reconfiguring the expectations that accompany the use of specific generic tropes or techniques, these texts demonstrate how engulfment might precipitate the ability to produce something different and consequently mirror the unfolding potential of bodies of water. The texts subsequently demonstrate a metafictionality as they blend genres and shift styles, subverting expectations and gesturing toward their own potential to produce something different to what has preceded it. This self-reflexivity is demonstrated in almost all the texts of the Northern Atlantic Littoral and extends from characters producing texts like maps or from narrator interjections that explicitly point to the constructedness of the narrative. However this metafictionality manifests, it becomes the means through which the positive affect associated with the unfolding potential of bodies of water is illuminated and it is this that unifies the texts and shifts representations of the Northern Atlantic as bound up with narratives of mastery and control.

Inherent in the contemporary fictions of the Northern Atlantic Littoral is a distrust of origins, which arises through their deployment of uncanny water. Origins signal both a clear beginning and a potential

teleology, which these texts, through their representations of the unfolding potential of bodies of water, show to be obscure and indefinable. In the production of new and emergent fictional representations of the Northern Atlantic, these texts obfuscate generic expectations and demonstrate how tropes associated with negative affect of the uncanny might be transformed through engulfment. Rather than outrightly dismissing origins, it is through the reconfiguration of tropes that they show indebtedness to what has gone before but without replicating the terms under which it was constructed – terms that often betray a phallocentric, anthropocentric or capitalist ideology. This is why the archaic mother ocean proves such fertile ground for demonstrating the potential of uncanny water to illuminate posthuman gestation and an onto-logic of amniotics, because in shifting the focus away from a fear of engulfment and reincorporation, she is reconfigured but without losing her reproductive potential. As I come to the end of this thesis, the question of origins arises because it asks us to consider what next. What this discussion of engulfment, as figured through the lens of uncanny water, has shown is that what comes next is unmappable, unknowable and uncertain. Instead of considering the "what next" it is perhaps better to linger in the "not yet"; and to consider that the only certainty is that bodies of water owe their existence to the materiality of others and will pass that materiality on to multiple others after them. In relation to the Northern Atlantic, it then becomes a case of recognising that this body of water is constantly changing, and it is therefore imperative that representations adapt and become-with this space so that it can be symbolized both as a milieu for the becoming and being of other bodies of water *and* body of water in its own right, which carries with it millions of years of currents of history and meaning.

> The ocean – this is its hem, plumped meniscus like the eye's iris or the jellyfish's mantle – is poised, hushed. It occurs to me that what I'm standing in, what I'm wading through is nothing less than the entire Atlantic, with the North Sea thrown into the bargain, and the Med through the cervix of the Gibraltar Strait and I'm shrinking […] And now gradually the ocean begins to eject me with a subtle series of persuasions, as if forcing me back over crumbling bridges, Now leading to Now leading to Now, and I am not a 'we' anymore, but a 'you'.
>
> ~ Jen Hadfield, 'I Da Welk Ebb' (2020)

I began this thesis with an image of the Mercator Projection – Gerardus Mercator's Enlightenment project aimed at making the vast space of the oceans navigable so as to "discover" new lands and expand the wealth of the Dutch Empire. Central to my discussion around the Mercator Projection – and similar discursive Enlightenment strategies – has been its cultural erasure of the oceans, which are cast as blank spaces upon which land is mapped and made present. Having worked through some of the varying techniques by which uncanny water might make epistemologically present the lived, entangled realities of bodies of water that surround the Northern Atlantic Ocean, what new cartographic practices have emerged? And how are these cartographies attuned to a posthuman onto-logic of amniotics that acknowledges its indebtedness to other bodies, whilst simultaneously unfolding and differentiating into other bodies of water? Hadfield offers a useful means of "wading in" to these questions: Hadfield's narrator charts the experience of moving into the ocean off the coast of Shetland to go rockpooling. Hadfield's story is a poignant metaphor of the operations of the more-than-human hydrocommons – as the narrator walks into the coastal waters, she is stepping into the Atlantic Ocean and the various seas that feed it. As she does this, she 'shrinks' [sic] into the ocean's water and tidal currents, becoming a part of a watery assemblage. This entanglement is signified by changing pronouns that move from 'I' to 'we', and the accompanying shift from an individual body of water to part of a collective hydrocommons. Hadfield's narrator signals the present temporal trajectory of this "becoming" with other bodies of water through the phrase 'Now leading to Now leading to Now', which emphasizes the continuous and unfolding nature of water's processes and currents. Hadfield illuminates how water's present repetitions both encompass and distinguish bodies of water. Crucially, she also describes a moment of feeling out of place – the "leaning in" to the unknown I described in the Introduction – as the narrator 'shrinks' into the hydrocommons and relinquishes her individual subjectivity to become part of the Atlantic's currents.

The convergence of the different seas that feed the Atlantic Ocean, as described by the narrator, demonstrate how water's continuous currents make the geographical mapping and naming of these seas arbitrary and abstracted from their ontological reality. She disrupts these distinctions showing how, within the Atlantic, there is a kind of complex unity that both distinguishes and merges bodies of water so that even while the Atlantic is fed by myriad seas – and bodies – they are nonetheless cycling through, across, within, and as part of the ocean. My aim in describing or "mapping" the spaces and fictions of the Northern Atlantic Littoral has been to similar ends as Hadfield's narrator; I have shown how, within the complex 'abyss' of the ocean, there are multiple currents of meaning that – like the different waters, rivers, rains and seas that feed into the Atlantic – are implicated in processes of exchange, transferral and renewal. I have stressed how the fictions from these spaces have shared tropes, which I argue converge under the concept of uncanny water that deterratorialise, in the very sense of de-*terra*-torialising, land-based assumptions about the Atlantic Ocean. Using their littoral position, these fictions shore up the realities of shore folk life and gesture to the importance of living-with and attending to the ocean and its currents. In the current climate emergency, such an impetus is important if we are to live better and well with our planet's oceans.

Centralizing the oceans in the cultural imagination is a relational imperative and part of the hauntology of water I outlined in Chapter One. I demonstrated how a hauntology of water makes visible the ghosts and absences elided in nationalist, anthropocentric and terracentric discourses of power. My hauntology of water is indebted to Derrida and I am signalling uncanny water's commitment to a relational ethics of care. Learning to live with ghosts, as Derrida reminds us, is always an attempt to fulfil a relational debt. It is about living and orienting oneself toward an imagined future and being conscious of how present actions condition and determine that. In fictions of the Northern Atlantic Littoral, I argue that uncanny water does this through the text's own haunted nature. In each of the chapters of this thesis, I refer to some element of intertextuality or metafictionality that showcases how these fictions are reconfiguring discourses of power surrounding bodies of water, and recasting them so as to offer more positive imaginaries for the future. Intertextuality is a self-reflexive practice that requires the mutual involvement of author, reader and text to produce meaning. I discussed in the Introduction how metafiction requires the reader to acknowledge 'the inevitable textuality of our knowledge of the past' (Hutcheon,1989, 8), but I would also say this is about how discursive strategies – such as cartographic practices – have been used to erase and marginalize bodies of water, including the Atlantic Ocean, throughout history. Discourse and history have a lived reality. If reader, author and text are all implicated in the production of meaning, then this can work to produce new and alternative representations of the Atlantic Ocean that are embedded in a relational ethics of care.

I argue that uncanny water does this through its intertextual and metafictional disrupting of discourses of mastery and control. Throughout this thesis, I have focussed on the uncanny as a means through which uncertainty is produced as a counterpoint to mastery and control. I use uncertainty through which to disrupt and challenge particular epistemologies that are invariably androcentric, phallocentric, anthropocentric and terracentric in nature. In Chapter One, I argued that following both human and nonhuman ghosts might illuminate where and how we need to attend to absent others in the more-than-human hydrocommons and discussed how the systems and processes of capitalism, which are terracentric and anthropocentric in nature, have created losses that reverberate upon the littoral, registering materially on bodies of water. I showed how the subversion of particular narratives via intertextual strategies including storytelling such as *The Town That Forgot How to Breathe* and *The Gloaming* – or through explicit reference to *Robinson Crusoe*, as in the case of *Sweetland* – emphasize the significance of relationality and how fiction can be used to highlight our indebtedness to absent others in the more-than-human hydrocommons. The ghosts in these texts anachronistically appear and gesture toward something unresolvable from the past but also point forward toward uncertain futures; whether that is via the plastic's ever-presence in 'Flotsam, Jetsam, Lagan, Derelict' that points to the anthropocentrism of the human, or the discovery of the bones of Bee in *The Gloaming*, who then narrates an uncertain future for Mara and Pearl. The ghosts of these fictions reveal how bodies of water are related in uncertain and unknowable ways. Moreover, by mirroring the anachronism of the ghosts depicted, the intertextuality of these fictions mirror and reinforce unknowability, and, as these fictions refute closure, they allow the uncertain affect of the uncanny to proliferate.

In Chapter Two I developed this relationship between uncertainty and intertextuality, via a discussion of folkloric narratives of womanly sea creatures. In the fictions of the Northern Atlantic Littoral, fear of these creatures is reconfigured via mimesis – the intertextual and metafictional practice that challenges these discourses through processes of repetition and reconfiguration. In the fictions I examined in this chapter – *A Summer of Drowning, The Luminous Sea* and *The Gloaming* – folktales of womanly sea creatures correlate women and fluidity, relegating women to the abyssal space of non-differentiation and denying them the status as fully constituted subjects. Female characters in the novel are imagined to be embodiments of particular sea creatures such as huldra, mermaids and selkies and so trigger the uncanniness and anxiety produced in the folktales – particularly when other female characters initially encounter them. However, I argue this anxiety is upturned through a recognition of the fluidity of both female characters – verified through touch, rather than sight – and this is used to establish the relational significance of fluidity for constructions of subjectivity. The mimesis used in these stories reveals the structural hierarchies at the heart of these folk tales and works from within to undo them, reconfiguring them into more generative narratives of aqueous interconnection. In cultivating a narrative that prioritizes fluidity over stasis, the fictions I examined in detail in this chapter all work to generative ends. The

endings of the novels all point to more positive imagined futures that are attentive to the unseen fluid connections between bodies of water. In cultivating affirmative and positive imagined futures based on relationality, these novels are also refusing replicate the rhetoric of mastery and control that governed these earlier tales, replacing them instead with an optimistic uncertainty.

This uncertainty is at the heart of uncanny water and what ensures that, even as they refer to earlier narratives, they do not reinforce their underlying particular power structures and dynamics. Uncanny water is concerned with the uncanny's power to hone-in what is hidden or repressed in fiction so that it can be scrutinized and dismantled. To deploy uncanny water to these ends involves plunging into the depths of the abyss and illuminating the unseen structures of power that have held sway over bodies of water. My final chapter represented the culmination of this through its examination of the feminized abyss of the ocean. I discussed how the ocean has been cast a space of non-differentiation in the western cultural imagination – an understanding bolstered by masculine discourses of power that have utilized the ocean as a transport surface across which the history of capitalism and colonialism could be inscribed. Transforming the ocean from a site of non-differentiation requires understanding how it is related to abyssal and reproductive qualities. Through the lens of Creed, Irigaray, and Neimanis I demonstrated how fictions of the Northern Atlantic Littoral can be read as detaching the ocean from the binarism of sexuate difference and recast it to form a more posthuman understanding. This process is twofold manifesting both within the present action of the texts, as characters give over their own materiality for the proliferation of the lives of others, but also within the texts' metafictional bents. As these texts are involved in this act of recovering and revisiting discursive strategies, they are also reproducing them, enacting an onto-logic of amniotics as they textually 'gather' earlier narratives and piece these together to demonstrate a 'common *how, where, when*, and *thanks to whom*' they are indebted (Neimanis 2017, 96; emphasis in original). Fictions of the Northern Atlantic Littoral use uncanny water to reveal how they are united in their indebtedness to particular discursive practices and strategies embedded within epistemologies of the Northern Atlantic, but they all produce new and unique iterations of these.

This textual onto-logic of amniotics I have posited here is a cartographic practice produced through an attentiveness to representations of absent others in the Northern Atlantic Littoral. It is, as such, an ethical and relational cartography that reveals the interconnections between bodies of water and complexifies the abyssal space of the ocean. My own cartography consequently aligns with that of Braidotti (2019), in that it is a 'theoretically-based and politically informed account of the present that aims at tracking the production of knowledge and subjectivity' in order 'to expose power both as entrapment (*potestas*) and as empowerment (*potentia*)' (33; emphasis in original). Braidotti's cartographic approach is an informed tracing of the present moment that works to 'expose' and reveal how power is differentially used as

restrictive and confining, or as affirmative and mobilising.[96] Cartographies question 'what kind of knowing subjects are we in the process of becoming and what discourses underscore the process' (32)? This notion of cartography is what uncanny water has aimed to achieve in its focus on the Northern Atlantic Littoral. As a concept that is embedded in an aqueous politics of location, it participates in a cartography that considers how systems of knowledge produce subjects, and asks what kind of knowledge systems and discourses are implicated in the production of subjects across and around the Northern Atlantic Littoral.

Braidotti's cartographic system provides an important counterpoint to Enlightenment models such as the Mercator Projection. Their difference is exemplified in the aims of these cartographies: while Mercator's has its basis in the acquisition of knowledge and power, the aim of Braidotti's cartography is 'to bring forth alternative figurations or *conceptual personae* for the kind of knowing subjects currently constructed' (34; emphasis in original). The latter is the kind of cartography uncanny water emerges out of and participates in. As a figuration, uncanny water focusses on exposing the structures that have hitherto exploited and marginalized bodies of water, and how these structures might be subverted to produce affirmative and generative subject-relations. Uncanny water reveals how subjectivity is produced through intra-actions between and across assemblages of human and nonhuman bodies. This cartography is consequently both new-materialist and posthuman in nature, de-centering the exceptionalism of the human as subjectivity emerges as a 'co-operative trans-species effort […] that takes place transversally' (33). As a figuration that draws upon and engages with new materialist and feminist posthumanisms, uncanny water is about amplifying these transcorporeal relations.

Uncanny water arises from tracing knowledge systems, and argues for a deconstruction of restrictive or confining models of subjectivity – and the negative affect associated with this – into a more positive and generative model. Throughout this thesis, I have emphasized this movement from negative affect to positive as one of the impetuses of uncanny water. This is achieved through the interrogation of how the subject is formed in relation to discourse and how this might be reconfigured to represent the entangled and interconnected nature of bodies of water. As such, I have drawn at times from theorists and methodologies who, while not immediately aligned with the posthuman project, have, ostensibly, "paved the way" for the deconstruction of (human) subjectivity. This is evidenced throughout the thesis in my references to psychoanalysis as the basis for uncanny water and its iterations, but also through which to demonstrate the privileging of particular models of subjectivity predicated on phallocentrism and male discourses of power – for example, in my discussions of fluidity and the space of the abyss in Chapters

---

[96] Braidotti (2019) refers to the power of *potestas* as 'the repressive structures of dominant subject-formations' and the power of *potentia* as the 'affirmative and transformative visions of the subject as nomadic process' (36) so *potestas* signals a restrictive power while *potentia* is a differentiating and generative force (the nomadic subject is the subject in flux who is always in the process of becoming).

Two and Three. In these chapters, I drew upon Lacanian and Freudian understandings of the subject and claimed that the primacy of the visual in these constructions excludes and others women. At the heart of these understandings – particularly in the case of Lacan – is the notion that thought and identity is constructed via exterior and external markers. This is exemplified in his notion that '[d]esire is a desire for the other' which, as Jonathan Boulter (2020) argues, means the subject 'is essentially defined as a subject by processes exterior to itself' and that 'its knowledge of the world, as such, comes from outside itself' (47). This focus on external forces consequently denies 'any naïve idea of self-determination or autonomy' (47) and so subjectivity, according to Lacan, is constructed by external forces, demonstrating how his psychoanalysis betrays a nascent sense of relationality.

Ultimately, however, I remain critical of Lacanian understandings of subjectivity because they are constructed in the negative through processes of recognising the difference between self and other. My critique of Lacan has been supported primarily through readings of Irigaray and Creed, in Chapters Two and Three, who offer feminist challenges to both Lacan and Freud. Irigaray, in particular, has provided useful strategies through which this negativity might be transformed into a more generative understanding of subjectivity as relationally comprised. Through mimesis, Irigaray recovers women from the space of non-differentiation by focussing on the material and discursive powers of fluidity, which affirms subjects by focussing on mutual constitution and the verification of difference. Irigaray's focus on the material semiotic power of fluidity is what enables her to be read through a feminist posthumanist and new-materialist lens that focusses on the intra-actions between bodies and how subjectivity arises in conjunction with, and in response to, particular knowledge systems. Reading Irigaray alongside Neimanis – who also advocates for a posthuman interpretation of Irigaray – and Creed has allowed me to show how fluidity and the abyss can instead be productive metaphors that reject the dualism of sexuate difference. Using Neimanis' theory of posthuman gestation and an onto-logic of amniotics, I have shown how fictions of the Northern Atlantic Littoral amplify the fluid potential in all bodies. When encounters with the other might have triggered a negative e/affect, they are instead transformed into generative moments of becoming-with an "other". This is, in many ways, why the cartography of this thesis – and posthuman cartographies more broadly – are also a practice of amplifying an onto-logic of amniotics that track the indebtedness to theories that have preceded it, retaining enough of that 'residual outside' to gestate and produce alternatives that reflect the relational nature of bodies of water.

I have shown that uncanny water is a material semiotic project that is concerned with both the fictional representation of bodies of water and the affective ontological reality this speaks to. While the uncanny as a literary theory is at the core of uncanny water's prerogative, embedded within the uncanny's literary representations is an affective power. The uncanny is frightening because it emerges in uncertain and unknowable ways but always as a result of the transgression of boundaries – self/other,

past/present/future, life/death – that signals the mutability of these very boundaries. It is what makes the uncanny such a poignant literary tool through which bodies of water might be imagined, as it allows for the dissolution of binaries and the potential for relationality. Uncanny water makes visible water's own transgressive potential that seeps across and into other bodies, interconnecting them and producing new bodies in its wake. Water's transcorporeal transits demonstrate that bodies are not discrete and impermeable, but are relationally comprised through water's facilitative, differentiating and interconnective capacities. In accounts of the subject that are predicated on the safe distance between subject and object, the notion of water's transcorporeal transits represent an existential threat. I have demonstrated how, in fictions of the Northern Atlantic Littoral, encounters with an aqueous other – ghost, sea monster, archaic mother ocean, the very ocean itself – are initially constructed within these threatening terms. However, via the relational potential of bodies of water and posthumanism, these encounters are rendered positive and affirmative instead.

Uncanny water's ability to perform this transformation is predicated on the fictive conditions for the uncanny to arise, underscoring the tension between metaphor and materiality that the uncanny straddles. I have discussed throughout this thesis how fictions of the Northern Atlantic Littoral draw upon – and play with – a range of generic conventions and tropes. I began this project ascribing the uncanniness of these texts to the Gothic, but this thesis has shown that the Gothic genre is limiting in scope for these littoral fictions. Genres such as the Gothic and magical realism are useful tools for questioning hegemonic understandings of the past and the authority of discourse. Elements of these genres are deployed in fictions across the Northern Atlantic Littoral. Figures of ghosts, hauntings, madness and death are all necessarily Gothic tropes that frequently gesture to an anxiety about boundaries, borders and subjectivity. A focus on the folkloric, on alternative accounts of history, and the profusion of magical or supernatural elements in the fictions are all particularly magical realist tendencies. What I argue unifies the fictions of the Northern Atlantic Littoral is that they regularly combine these genres and classifications to gesture – implicitly and explicitly – to the constructedness of the very knowledge systems that have produced them; for example, *Sweetland*'s explicit shift to the Gothic/magical realism in its second half subverts the structures and conditions of the realist first half, demonstrating the futility of Moses' attempts to remain on the island alone, and the importance of community, and also the un-reality and artifice of a 'rock-bound, elemental, simplistic realism' (Wylie 2011, 9) that does not adequately convey the pressures of island life on Sweetland. In a similar vein, *The Gloaming*'s evocation of the trope of the haunted house – a motif that frequently represents the psyche of the female protagonist in Gothic fiction – is undermined when the house is completely destroyed in the novel's final scenes. Rather than this signifying the complete destruction of Mara's own subjectivity, however, it signifies new beginnings for Mara since, in its place, an uncertain and generative future is posited through her relationship with Pearl. Both these scenes in *Sweetland* and *The Gloaming* read as uncanny as spaces are made explicitly un-homely – but rather

than these being negative moments, they establish a critical shift in characters' subjectivities and point toward the importance of more relational ways of being. The use of intertextual references throughout the novels – such as the library book of *As Yet Unverified Fantastical Creatures* in *The Luminous Sea*, the maps in *Sweetland* and *A Summer of Drowning,* and the fairytales of *The Gloaming* – all gesture to the constructedness of their own narrative but, crucially the idea that any discourse or narrative is mutable and changeable. As these texts play with genre and intertextuality, they demonstrate the mutability of textual boundaries and open up the possibility for new imaginaries to emerge.

These processes of transformation and reconfiguration are critical to uncanny water. I have shown how they amplify the uncertain, unfolding ontologies of bodies of water. Central to my formation has been that these fictions bring this unknowability to the shores of the Northern Atlantic Littoral, before recasting them outward again toward the ocean. Many of the novels I have examined in this thesis end by gesturing out toward the space of the Northern Atlantic Ocean in a way that implicitly highlights the entanglement of bodies of water. *Sweetland* ends with an optimistic 'singing' as Moses and the ghostly islanders stare out over the ocean, 'Flotsam, Jetsam, Lagan, Derelict' and 'Cables' both end looking out over the Cornish coast to the sea, *The Luminous Sea* ends in the space of the ocean as Vivienne releases the creature to the depths, and 'Good' ends with Sabrina at the ocean's edge, looking out over the mermaids' purses. The end of these texts consequently cast out to sea, rather than inward to land and suggest an implicit rejection of terracentricity. They refocus the ocean in the narrative as it becomes the final resounding image. I argue that as they do this, they also signal to a cyclicality and interconnection with the ocean and absent others. This is exemplified by the interconnection with ghostly others shown in Wood's stories and *The Town That Forgot How to Breathe*, while *The Luminous Sea* offers possible hope of regeneration for the creature and Vivienne – outside of patriarchal structures – and Logan's story literally offers an image of reproduction and regeneration through the final lingering image of the pods. This cyclicality, I argue, mirrors the ontology of bodies of water that are imbued in cycles of recycling and regeneration, and connects these texts via their final impetus to move toward the Atlantic Ocean. That the texts end on the space of the shore, looking out to the ocean reinforces the littoral as a site at which bodies converge in the more-than-human hydrocommons and emphasizes how currents of meaning continue to unfold and shift across the ocean and bodies of water.

In this project, I have oscillated between the pull of the shore and the depths of the ocean. I began with a discussion of the appearance of ghosts on the shore as a symbol of how bodies are interconnected to and through the hydrocommons, I moved through the waters with my discussion of fluidity and shown how sea creatures such as mermaids, huldra and selkies might allow us to think differently about our own watery potential, and I ended plunging into the depths with a discussion of representations of the abyss of archaic mother ocean, and how being "out of one's depth" might allow for new imaginaries to emerge

– if only we are willing to linger in the uncertainty produced. I have demonstrated how these readings hinge on the concept of uncanny water as they emerge in fictions of the Northern Atlantic Littoral. But on what other shores might we find these material representations of bodies of water? In the Introduction I discussed how I read uncanny water as a phenomenon of the Global North – particularly in its application to, and emergence from, fictions of the Northern Atlantic Littoral. However, I also discussed the scope to develop uncanny water and consider it in relation to fictions from other shores. As I come to the end of the thesis, it seems prudent to consider – in light of the cartographies developed – whether and how there is potential to do so.

There is a temptation to be drawn to the cartographic image which Hadfield presents, to consider how the Atlantic Ocean itself feeds – and is fed by – myriad oceans and seas so that there is not really a discernible Atlantic Ocean at all, but one unified ocean that encompasses all the waterways of the planet. In this particular imaginary, littoral fictions could speak to one another in rather disparate ways so that a fiction from the shores of a space that borders one ocean, might speak to fictions that border another sea entirely. There is certainly scope for this but, as I stress in the Introduction, my purpose in focussing specifically on the Northern Atlantic Littoral is so as to prevent detaching too much from the material conditions that inform the texts I am reading – or, in other words, the discursive histories and narratives to which these fictions are indebted. Littoral fictions therefore must be embedded within local material conditions and connected via shared histories or mythographies. It is usually the case that these shared histories are manifest in particular waterways that have connected people via migratory and trade patterns. Littoral fictions might then be found by tracing similarities in their approach to these shared histories and mythographies.

Few scholars have yet to offer a substantial tracing of these connections through a sustained comparative analysis of the mutual interests and characteristics of littoral fictions. More attention is required to continue to refocus the significance of comparative littoral fictions for producing alternative imaginaries. Fiona Polack's (2002) thesis *Littoral Fictions: Writing Tasmania and Newfoundland* considers the similarities between late twentieth-century fictions from these Tasmania and Newfoundland and considers how the islands themselves are produced through narrative. However, Polack's discussion is focussed on the islands themselves, as opposed to their relationship to the ocean. Meg Samuelson (2013; 2017) is producing work that more readily centralizes the ocean in its analyses of littoral fictions. Her primary area of focus is the African Indian Littoral and she conceptualizes a notion of 'coastal form' (2017) through analyses of Indian and African authors. Coastal form is that which 'muddles the inside-outside binary that delineates nations and continents' (17) and focusses on the shore as an 'idiom of in-betweenness and liminality even as it seems to materialize in these states' (17). Samuelson's costal form consequently mirrors my project of uncanny water in that it focusses on the littoral as a space through which new

imaginaries might be produced that diverge from nationalist or terracentric frameworks by considering the permeability of the shore as a capacious tool for unpacking the 'world-making potential' (23) of fiction.

Uncanny water is a valuable figuration for unpacking littoral relations in the Global North – its framework affords a psychoanalytic understanding of how fictions can replicate the material conditions of bodies of water and draws attention to the absent others to whom bodies of water are materially and discursively indebted. As a concept, it is perhaps not able to be completely detached from its tether to Anglo-American shores. This is of course, not a negative thing, and nor is it limiting, as it speaks to the local conditions from which it has been conceived and works with the discourses available to unpick and recast situated and contingent understandings of the Northern Atlantic Ocean. However, Samuelson's 'coastal form', with its emphasis on the permeability of boundaries that the littoral represents, suggests that within uncanny water might lie the seeds for its own reconfiguration and reinvention. Like the very discursive strategies of the Atlantic Ocean it aims to dismantle, uncanny water holds within it the possibility to unfold into new figurations and imaginaries. The mimetic strategies it participates in, the focus on metafictionality as a tool through which new worlds and imaginaries might be produced that dismantle human exceptionalism, and its emphasis on the affective power of uncertainty all may be carefully applied to littoral fictions to aid in the creation of new cartographies that remain attuned to the unfolding potential of bodies of water.

In *A Summer of Drowning*, Liv ends the novel mapping the '[t]he unseen, adjacent space that the stories unfold in' and this seems like a pertinent note upon which to draw the threads of uncanny water together. My cartography of uncanny water is similar to Liv's – it has been about mapping the unseen by way of the metaphorical and creative potential held in the uncanny. I have followed the unseen origins and dispersals of bodies of water in fictions from the Northern Atlantic Littoral and shown how these creatively recover and reinvent the discourses surrounding the Atlantic Ocean so as to refocus the ocean in our cultural imagination. What I have offered here, in my readings of its emergence in the Northern Atlantic Littoral, is one cartography amongst many and, as it stretches out across time, space and bodies, it will gather up more discourses and (hi)stories along the way, all the while carrying with it the trace of where it came from and unfolding with unknown end. Following uncanny water is a project in leaning-in to the uncertainty it produces and lingering, just long enough, in that 'unseen adjacent space that the stories unfold in' in order to generate new worlds and new imaginaries for bodies of water.

WORKS CITED

Alaimo, Stacy, and Susan J. Hekman. 2008. *Material Feminisms.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Alaimo, Stacy. 2010. *Bodily Natures: Science, Environment, and the Material Self.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Alaimo, Stacy. 2012. 'States of Suspension: Trans-Corporeality at Sea.' *Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment* 19(3): 476–93.

American National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). 2021. 'How Much of the Ocean Have We Explored?' Accessed 23 February 2022. https://oceanservice.noaa.gov/facts/exploration.html.

Andrews, Jennifer. 2014. 'Rethinking the Relevance of Magic Realism for English-Canadian Literature: Reading Ann-Marie MacDonald's *Fall On Your Knees.*' *Studies in Canadian Literature* 24 (1): 1–19.

Barbeau, Melissa. 2018. *The Luminous Sea.* St John's, NL: Breakwater Books.

Burnside, John. 2011. *A Summer of Drowning.* London: Vintage.

Burnside, John. 2012. Interview by Rachel Allen. *Granta.* Accessed 23 February 2022. http://www.granta.com/New-Writing/Interview-John-Burnside.

Bisset, Alan, ed. 2001. *Damage Land: New Scottish Gothic Fiction.* Edinburgh: Polygon.

Blum, Hester. 2010. 'The Prospect of Oceanic Studies.' *PMLA* 125 (3): 670–77.

Botting, Fred. 1996. *Gothic.* London: New Critical Idiom.

Borthwick, D. 2009. 'The Sustainable Male: Masculine Ecology in the Poetry of John Burnside.' In *Masculinity and the Other: Historical Perspectives*, edited by Heather Ellis and Jessica Meyer, 63-85. Newcastle Upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

Boulter, Jonathan. 2020. 'Postmodernism.' In *After the Human: Culture, Theory and Criticism in the 21st Century*, edited by Sherryl Vint, 44–57. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Braidotti, Rosi. 2011. *Nomadic Theory: The Portable Rosi Braidotti.* New York: Columbia University Press.

Braidotti, Rosi. 2017. 'Four Theses on Posthuman Feminism'. In *Anthropocene Feminism*, edited by Richard Gruisin, 21–48. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Braidotti, Rosi. 2019. 'A Theoretical Framework for the Critical Posthumanities.' *Theory, Culture & Society* 36 (6): 31–61.

Briggs, Katherine Mary. *A Dictionary of Fairies : Hobgoblins, Brownies, Bogies, and Other Supernatural Creatures.* London: Allen Lane.

Brinklow, Laurie. 2016. 'A Man and His Island: The Island Mirror in Michael Crummey's *Sweetland.*' *Island Studies Journal* 11 (1): 133–44.

Brown, George Mackay. 1994. *Beside the Ocean of Time.* London: John Murray Press.

Buse, Peter and Andrew Stott. 1999. *Ghosts: Deconstruction, Psychoanalysis, History.* New York: St. Martin's Press.

Butler, Judith. 1990. *Gender Trouble.* New York: Routledge.

Campbell, Alexandra. 2019. 'Atlantic Exchanges: The Poetics of Dispersal and Disposal in Scottish and Caribbean Seas.' *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*, 55 (2): 195-208.

Carthew, Natasha. 2020. 'The Droll of the Mermaid.' In *Hag: Forgotten Folk Takes Retold*, 389-431. London: Little, Brown Book Group.

Chafe, Paul. 2017. 'Entitlement, Anxieties of Possession, and (Re)Working Place in Michael Crummey's Sweetland.' *Newfoundland and Labrador Studies* 32 (1): 7-41.

Charman, Caitlin. 2020. '"Newfoundland's *Robinson Crusoe*?": Michael Crummey's *Sweetland* and the Failure of Ocean Management'. In *Negotiating Waters: Seas, Oceans, and Passageways in the Colonial and Postcolonial Anglophone World*, edited by André Doderman and Nancy Pedri, 41–58. Malaga: Vernon Press.

Chen, Cecilia. 2013. '"Mapping Waters": Thinking With Watery Places.' In *Thinking with Water*, edited by Cecilia Chen, Janine MacLeod and Astrida Neimanis, 274–98. Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press.

Cixous, Hélène. 1976. 'Fiction and its Phantoms: A Reading of Freud's "Das Unheimliche" ("The Uncanny").' *New Literary History* 7: 525–48.

Cohen, Margaret. 2010. 'Literary Studies on the Terraqueous Globe.' *PMLA* 125 (3): 657–62.

Cracknell, Linda. 2020. 'Lunar Cycling.' In *Antlers of Water*, edited by Kathleen Jamie, 81–94. Edinburgh: Canongate.

Creed, Barbara. 2012 [1993]. *The Monstrous-Feminine*. London: Taylor and Francis.

Crummey, Michael. 2010. *Galore*. London: Corsair.

Crummey, Michael. 2014. *Sweetland*. London: Corsair.

Darwin, Gregory. 2015. 'On Mermaids, Meroveus, and Mélusine: Reading the Irish Seal Woman and Mélusine as Origin Legend.' *Folklore* 126 (2): 123–41.

Davis, Donna Lee. 1986. 'Occupational Community and Fishermen's Wives in a Newfoundland Fishing Village.' *Anthropological Quarterly* 59 (3): 129–42

D'Haen, Theodore. 1995. 'Magical Realism and Postmodernism: Decentering Privileged Centers.' In *Magical Realism: Theory, History, Community*, edited by Lois Parkinson Zamora and Wendy B. Faris, 191–208. Durham: Duke University Press.

DeLoughrey, Elizabeth. 2007. *Routes and Roots: Navigating Caribbean and Pacific Island Literatures*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.

DeLoughrey, Elizabeth. 2010. 'Heavy Waters: Waste and Atlantic Modernity.' *PMLA* 125 (3): 703–12.

DeLoughrey, Elizabeth. 2017. 'Submarine Futures of the Anthropocene.' *Comparative Literature* 69 (1): 32–44.

Derrida, Jaques. 1994. *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work Of Mourning, and the New International*. New York: Routledge.

Dickens, Charles. 1981 [1824]. *David Copperfield.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Durix, Jean-Pierre. 1998. *Mimesis, Genres and Post-Colonial Discourse: Deconstructing Magic Realism.* London: Macmillan.

Feay, Suzi. 2019. '*Things We Say In The Dark* By Kirsty Logan Review – An Atmosphere Of Dread'. Accessed 26 February 2022. *Guardian.* https://www.theguardian.com/books/2019/nov/07/things-we-sayin-the-dark-kirsty-logan-review.

Franco-Lao, Mari. 2007. *Seduction and the Secret Power of Women: The Lure of Sirens and Mermaids.* Rochester: Park Street Press.

Freud, Sigmund. 2003 [1919]. *The Uncanny.* Translated by D. Mclintock. London: Penguin Books.

Fotheringham, Scott. 2007. *The Rest is Silence.* Fredericton: Goose Lane Editions.

Foucault, Michel. 1984. 'Of Other Spaces, Heterotopias.' Translated by Jay Miskowiec. *Architecture, Mouvement, Continuité* 5: 46–49.

Fuss, Diana J. 1989. '"Essentially Speaking": Luce Irigaray's Language of Essence.' *Hypatia* 3 (3): 62–80.

Gabriels, Katleen, and Charlotte J.S De Backer. 2016. 'Virtual Gossip: How Gossip Regulates Moral Life in Virtual Worlds.' *Computers in Human Behavior* 63: 683–93.

Gaelic College. Accessed 23 February 2022. https://gaeliccollege.edu/.

Galloway, Janice. 2004. 'Mons Meg: A Fluid Fairytale.' In *Damage Land: New Scottish Gothic Fiction,* 207–10. Edinburgh: Polygon.

Gillis, John R. 2012. *The Human Shore: Seacoasts in History.* Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press.

Gilroy, Paul. 1993. *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness.* London: Verso.

Griem, Julika. 2015. 'John Burnside's Seascapes'. In *The Beach in Anglophone Literature and Culture*, edited by Ursula Kluwick and Virginia Richter, 87-106. Farnham: Ashgate Publishing Limited.

Grosz, Elizabeth. 1994. *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Gumb, Alexis Pauline. 2018. *M Archive: After the End of the World.* Durham: Duke University Press.

Hadfield, Jen. 2020. 'I Da Welk Ebb'. In *Antlers of Water*, edited by Kathleen Jamie, 133–42. Edinburgh: Canongate.

Handcock, Gordon. 2000. 'English Migration'. *Newfoundland and Labrador Heritage Website.* Accessed 23 February 2022. https://www.heritage.nf.ca/articles/society/migration.php.

Haraway, Donna J. 2016a. 'A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century.' In *Manifestly Haraway*, edited by Donna Haraway*,* 6-90. First published in 1985 *in Socialist Review,* 80: 65–108, 1985.

Haraway, Donna J. 2016b. *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene.* Durham: Duke University Press.

Harvey, Kenneth J. 2003. *The Town That Forgot How to Breathe.* London: Vintage.

Henriksen, Line. 2016. 'In the Company of Ghosts - Hauntology, Ethics, Digital Monsters'. PhD Diss., Linköping University.

Higgins, Jenny. 2009. 'Scottish in NL'. *Newfoundland and Labrador Heritage Website.* Accessed 23 February 2022. https://www.heritage.nf.ca/articles/society/scottish.php.

Hogg, James. 2012 [1824]. *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner.* London: Penguin.

Hogle, Jerrold E, ed. 2002. *Cambridge Companion to Gothic Fiction.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Hopper, Emma. 2018. *Our Homesick Songs.* London: Penguin.

Homer. 2006. The *Odyssey.* Translated by Emily Wilson. London; New York: W.W Norton & Company, Inc.

Hutcheon, Linda. 1988. *A Poetics of Postmodernism History, Theory, Fiction.* New York: Routledge.

Hutcheon, Linda. 1989. 'Historiographic Metafiction Parody and the Intertextuality of History'. In *Intertextuality and Contemporary American Fiction,* edited by Patrick O'Donnell and Robert Con Davis, 3-32. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Irigaray, Luce. 1985a. *Speculum of the Other Woman.* Translated by Gillian C. Gill. New York: Cornell University Press.

Irigaray, Luce. 1985b. *This Sex Which Is Not One.* Translated by Gillian C. Gill. New York: Cornell University Press.

Irigaray, Luce. 1991. *Marine Lover of Friedrich Nietzsche.* Translated by Gillian C. Gill. New York: Cornell University Press.

Iverson, Noel, and D. Ralph Matthews. 1968. *Communities in Decline: An Examination of Household Resettlement in Newfoundland.* St John's: Institute of Social and Economic Research, Memorial University of Newfoundland.

Johnson, D. Griffing. 1854. *Colton's Illustrated & Embellished Steel Plate Map of the World on Mercator's Projection: Compiled from the Latest & Most Authentic Sources Exhibiting the Reecent Arctic and Antarctic Discoveries & Explorations.* New York: J.H. Colton. Map. Accessed 23 February 2022. https://www.loc.gov/item/2009579466/.

Jones, Brendan. 2018. 'Mattering.' In *Posthuman Glossary,* edited by Rosi Braidotti and Maria Hlavajova, 245–47. London: Bloomsbury.

Kelly, Ursula. 1993. *Marketing Place: Cultural Politics, Regionalism, and Reading.* Halifax: Fernwood.

Kheel, Marti. 1993. 'From Heroic to Holistic Ethics: The Ecofeminist Challenge'. In *Ecofeminism: Women, Animals, Nature,* edited Greta Gaard, 243-271. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Klein, Bernhard and Gesa Mackenthun, eds. 2004. *Sea Changes: Historicizing the Ocean.* London; New York: Routledge.

Kluwick, Ursula, and Virginia Richter. 2015. *The Beach in Anglophone Literatures and Cultures: Reading Littoral Space.* Farnham: Ashgate Publishing Limited.

Kozel, Susan. 1996. 'The Diabolical Strategy of Mimesis: Luce Irigaray's Reading of Maurice Merleau-Ponty.' *Hypatia* 11 (3): 114–29.

Lacan, Jaques. 2005. *Ecrits: A Selection.* Translated by Alan Sheridan. London; New York: Routledge.

Le Couteur, Peter. 2015. 'Slipping Off the Sealskin: Gender, Species, and Fictive Kinship in Selkie Folktales'. *Gender Forum: An Internet Journal for Gender Studies* 55: 55-82.

Litowitz, Douglas E. 1995. 'Derrida on Law and Justice: Borrowing (Illicitly?) From Plato and Kant.' *The Canadian Journal of Law and Jurisprudence* 8: 325-346.

Logan, Kirsty. 2017. 'Solitude, Swimming and Sheep'. *Books From Scotland.* Accessed 26 February 2022. https://booksfromscotland.com/2017/11/solitude-swimming-sheep-kirsty-logan/.

Logan, Kirsty. 2018. *The Gloaming.* London: Penguin.

Logan, Kirsty. 2020. *Things We Say in the Dark.* London: Penguin.

MacDonald, Ann-Marie. 1997 [1996]. *Fall On Your Knees.* 1996. London: Vintage.

MacLeod, Alistair. 2001 [1999]. *No Great Mischief.* London: Vintage.

MacLeod, Janine. 2013. 'Water and the Material Imagination: Reading the Sea of Memory against the Flows of Capital'. In *Thinking with Water*, edited by Cecilia Chen, Janine MacLeod and Astrida Neimanis, 40-60. Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press.

Mackenthun, Gesa. 2004. *Fictions of the Black Atlantic in American Foundational Literature.* London; New York: Routledge.

Martin, Melanie. 2007. 'Resettlement.' *Newfoundland and Labrador Heritage Website.* Accessed on 23 February 2022. https://www.heritage.nf.ca/articles/politics/resettlement.php.

Maul, George A, and Iver W Duedall. 2021. 'Demography of Coastal Populations'. In *Encyclopedia of Coastal Science*, 692-700. *Encyclopedia of Earth Sciences Series.* Cham: Springer International Publishing.

Medical University of Vienna. 2018. 'Microplastics Detected in Humans for the First Time'. Medical University of Vienna. Accessed 23 February 2022. https://www.meduniwien.ac.at/web/en/about-us/news/detailsite/2018/news-october2018/microplastics-detected-in-humans-for-the-first-time/

Merchant, Brian. 2017. 'Op-Ed: Were the Raw Materials in your iPhone Mined by Children in Inhumane Conditions?'. *LA Times.* Accessed 23 February 2022. https://www.latimes.com/opinion/oped/la-oe-merchant-iphone-supplychain-20170723-story.html

Monmonier, Mark. 2004. *Rhumb Lines and Map Wars: A Social History of the Mercator Projection.* Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press.

Montgomery, Lucy Maud. 2008 [1908]. *Anne of Green Gables.* London: Wordsworth Editions.

Morris, Michael. 2014. 'From Island Nation to Atlantic Archipelago: Re-assessing Scotland, Britain and Atlantic Slavery. In: *Open Democracy.*

Morrissey, Donna. 2005. *Sylvanus Now*. London: Hodder & Stoughton.

Neimanis, Astrida. 2013. 'Feminist Subjectivity, Watered'. *Feminist Review*, 103(1): 23–41.

Neimanis, Astrida. 2017. *Bodies of Water: Posthuman Feminist Phenomenology*. London: Bloomsbury.

Ng, Andrew Hock Soon. 2015. *Women and Domestic Space in Contemporary Gothic Narratives*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

O'Connor, David. 2006. *Encyclopedia of the Global Economy: A Guide For Students And Researchers: Volume 1*. New Delhi: Academic Foundation.

Pass, Phill. 2014. 'Desire as "Havoc" in the Fabric of the Given World: Subjectivity and Text in John Burnside's *A Summer of Drowning*.' *Forum for Modern Language Studies* 50, no. 3: 321-31.

Passey, Joan. 2020. 'Corpses, Coasts, and Carriages: Gothic Cornwall, 1840-1913'. PhD Diss., University of Exeter.

Pearson, Michael N. 2006. 'Littoral Society: The Concept and the Problems.' *Journal of World History*, 17(4): 353-373.

Plumwood, Val. 1993. *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature*. London; New York: Routledge.

Polack, Fiona. 2002. 'Littoral Fictions: Writing Tasmania and Newfoundland.' PhD Diss., University of Tasmania.

Polić, Vanja. 2018. 'The Hauntings of Canada in Michael Crummey's *Sweetland*'. *London Journal of Canadian Studies* 33(6): 77–93.

Pratt, Mary Louise. 1992. *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*. London: Routledge.

Price, Rachel. 2017. 'Afterword: The Last Universal Commons.' *Comparative Literature* 1; 69 (1): 45–53.

Probyn, Elspeth. 2016. *Eating the Ocean*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Rae, Caroline. 2018. 'Altering Subjectivities: Place and the Posthuman in Michael Crummey's *Sweetland*.' *Studies in Canadian Literature* 43 (2): 79–98.

Rae, Caroline. 2022. 'Uncanny Waters'. *Feminist Review* 130. Forthcoming.

Richards, David Adam. 2000. *Mercy Among the Children*. London: Vintage.

Sackville, Amy. 2013. *Orkney*. London: Granta.

Samuelson, Meg. 2013. 'Narrative Cartographies, "Beautiful Things" and Littoral States in Abdulrazak Gurnah's *By the Sea*.' *English Studies in Africa* 56 (1): 78-90.

Samuelson, Meg. 2017. 'Coastal Form: Amphibian Positions, Wider Worlds, and Planetary Horizons on the African Indian Ocean Littoral'. *Comparative Literature* 69 (1): 16–24.

Shakespeare, William. 1984 [1599]. *Henry V*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Siemerling, Winfried. 2015. The Black Atlantic Reconsidered: Black Canadian Writing, Cultural History, and the Presence of the Past. Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press.

Slemon, Stephen. 1988. 'Magical Realism as Postcolonial Discourse.' *Canadian Literature* 116: 9-24.

Snyder, John Parr. 1993. *Flattening the Earth: Two Thousand Years of Map Projections*. Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press.

Spooner, Catherine, and Emma McEvoy, eds. 2007. *Routledge Companion to the Gothic*. London; New York: Routledge.

Starosielski, Nicole. 2014. *The Undersea Network*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Stevenson, Robert Louis. 2002 [1886]. *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde and Other Tales of Terror*. London: Penguin.

Sugars, Cynthia. 2010. 'Genetic Phantoms: Geography, History and Ancestral Inheritance in Kenneth Harvey's *The Town That Forgot How to Breathe* and Michael Crummey's *Galore*.' *Newfoundland Studies* 25 (1): 7-36.

Sugars, Cynthia. 2011. 'Phantom Nation: English-Canadian Literature and the Desire for Ghosts.' *Zeitschrift für Kanada-Studien* 31 (2): 58-77.

Sugars, Cynthia. 2014. *Canadian Gothic: Literature, History, and the Spectre of Self-Invention*. Cardiff: University of Wales Press.

TeleGeoraphy. 'Submarine Cable Map.' Accessed 23 February 2022. https://www.submarinecablemap.com/

Vodden, Kelly. 2010. 'Heroes, Hope, and Resource Development in Canada's Periphery: Lessons from Newfoundland and Labrador.' In *The Next Rural Economies: Constructing Rural Place in Global Economies*, edited by Greg Halseth *et al.*, 223-38. Wallingford: CABI.

Watt, Ian. 1957. *The Rise of the Novel: Studies in Defoe, Richardson and Fielding*. London: Pimlico.

Whitford, Margaret. 1991. *Luce Irigaray: Philosophy in the Feminine*. London; New York: Routledge.

Wood, Lucy. 2018. *The Sing of the Shore*. London: Fourth Estate.

Wyile, Herb. 2011. *Anne of Tim Hortons: Globalization and the Reshaping of Atlantic-Canadian Literature*. Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press.

Yaeger, Patricia. 2010. *Editor's Column: Sea Trash, Dark Pools, and the Tragedy of the Commons*. *PMLA* 125(3): 523–45.

Zamora, Lois Parkinson. 1995. 'Magical Romance/Magical Realism: Ghosts in U.S. and Latin American Fiction.' In *Magical Realism: Theory, History, Community*, edited by Lois Parkinson Zamora and Wendy B. Faris, 497–550. Durham: Duke University Press.