

**“REALMS OF CANDOUR AND RAPTURE”: DIVINITY, IDENTITY  
AND PERSONAL SALVATION IN GRAHAM SWIFT’S WATERLAND**

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**Abstract:** *This paper aims to trace the various references to the Christian faith and other forms of spirituality in Graham Swift’s Waterland in an attempt to highlight the extent to which his narrative exposes the failure of conventional religion to provide viable solutions to the kinds of crises contemporary individuals face. The analysis will mainly focus on the evolution of a number of protagonists and their coping mechanisms in the face of grief, loss, and guilt, as well as on the significance and consequences of various forms of transgression, the lure and dangers of religious fanaticism, and above all the causes and outcomes of various (con)fusions between personal and Biblical history, with a special emphasis on terrestrial embodiments of the Madonna and the Saviour and their respective lives and martyrdoms. An important component of this approach will entail a discussion of the various alternatives to ecclesiastical institutions, traditional worship and salvation by faith featured in Swift’s novel, ranging from the potential spiritual charge of mundane locations to the redeeming powers of authentic intimacy and communion and the curative function of narration.*

**Keywords:** *communion; delusion; hubris; identity; Madonna; salvation.*