

The Mapping of the Self

A Jungian Analysis of Atwood's *Surfacing*

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ABSTRACT

Surfacing (1972) is one of Margaret Atwood's most successful works. Accordingly, the novel has been studied from diverse points of view, among which the feminist and ecocritical approaches are currently the most common. The present research aims to provide a different perspective of analysis regarding *Surfacing*: that of C. G. Jung's analytical psychology.

Through the application of this theoretical framework, the main thesis that has been reached is that the story presented in Atwood's *Surfacing* may be interpreted as a process of individuation. The protagonist suffers from an internal division that needs to be fixed; the whole novel deals with her journey to wholeness. In order to demonstrate such claim, the plot of *Surfacing* has been analyzed and compared with the concept of individuation presented by C. G. Jung. This way, it has been possible to identify the coincidences and dissimilarities between the two.

The findings resulting from this procedure include two main ideas. First, the protagonist's process of individuation is composed of a number of stages. The first one corresponds to the reason that motivates such a process. During the next stages, her journey is led by a series of archetypal symbols, some related to Canadian landscape and others corresponding to Jungian concepts. Both types of archetypes play complementary roles in the development of the protagonist's journey towards wholeness: the Jungian archetypes represent certain aspects of the protagonist's unconscious that she needs to assimilate in order to overcome her past traumatic experiences, and the Canadian wilderness provides a means of linking one stage with the next – that is, in *Surfacing* nature acts as a tool of self-exploration, helping the main character to advance in her healing process.

The Jungian approach proves to be adequate for the analysis of *Surfacing* due to the fact that it can provide explanations for the events that occur inside the protagonist's mind, which constitute, indeed, the main plot of the novel. Although previous studies have also made use of Jung's ideas, they are usually applied to one particular feature of this work; thus, there are no complete Jungian analyses of this novel by Atwood. In conclusion, this project sheds new light on *Surfacing*'s critical history in the sense that it offers a psychoanalytical reading of the whole plot of this fictional work.

Key words: Atwood; Individuation; Jung; Surfacing; Wilderness.

1. INTRODUCTION

This essay is the result of a combination between a personal preference and an academic requirement. Canadian literature has been my favorite field of study since I was first lectured on it on the third year of my English Studies degree. In fact, it was in this subject where I was also introduced to Margaret Atwood's work and technique for the first time. Such lessons stimulated my interest in this author, resulting in an admiration that has eventually led me to the writing of this paper. This early interest for Canadian texts and authors was reinforced in the first semester of the present academic year, which included a subject on Canadian literature. It dealt with some of the most prominent writers of such domain: Gwendolyn MacEwen, Leonard Cohen, Shyam Selvadurai, and Ruth Ozeki, along with Margaret Atwood and her controversial novel *The Edible Woman*.

However, the reasons that have motivated me to study a novel by Margaret Atwood do not only have an academic nature. Atwood is my author of choice for this project due, also, to my personal affinity for her. Her almost spiritual connection to Canadian nature –a topic which will be thoroughly discussed later – as well as her unconventional yet easy-to-read way of writing about complex matters are elements that make me feel intrigued by her work. The fact that I have decided to focus on her novel *Surfacing* in particular as the object of study of this final project is that I was looking for a Canadian work that could be somehow related to psychology, which –together with Canadian literature – is a topic of great interest to me. The sum of these two requirements led me to this work; a novel whose main plot is developed in a mental, abstract setting: the protagonist's mind, rather than in a physical location.

Given this fact, it was reasonable to choose a psychological methodology for my analysis and commentary of the novel. However, the task of finding the appropriate one was not easy. The chosen theoretical framework should be able to explain the events that take place in the protagonist's mind as part of her constant seek for wholeness, as well as the mental process she undergoes to achieve such an aim. These elements merge together in the analytical psychology of Carl Gustav Jung. His work's main goal "was to help men and women to know themselves, so that by self-knowledge and thoughtful self-use they could lead full, rich, and happy lives" (Freeman xii), in order to form the basis from which a person can aim to reach the *individuation* or wholeness. This is made through an introspection journey that would reconcile the conscious and the unconscious sides of the person, becoming, thus, an individual. I consider that the Jungian approach is an adequate theoretical framework for Atwood's novel *Surfacing*, for it provides a series of ideas and concepts that prove to be able

to address the mental or psychological scope of the novel. What I hope to defend in my final project is the result of such analysis, which may be summarized into this main point: the plot of the novel *Surfacing* by Margaret Atwood can be translated into Jungian terms as a *process of individuation*. The protagonist, affected by past traumatic experiences, immerses herself into an introspection trip; an exploration of her own unconscious with the purpose of overcoming her traumas and being able to feel complete again.

The novel *Surfacing* has been studied from different angles throughout the years. The majority of these analyses are developed from a feminist perspective; though, the novel has also been increasingly considered from an ecocritical perspective lately. Among the feminist studies of the novel, it appears that the majority of the papers are focused on gender issues, such as the difference in gender roles and identity (Özdemir 2003) or the extent in which male chauvinism appears in the novel (Kumar 2014); nevertheless, there are other feminist points of view that develop similar theories to mine –that is, that conceive the novel as a quest or a journey – yet different in methodology and goals, for such quest is given specific features due to the fact that it is undergone by a woman (Christ 1976). The ecocritical research regarding *Surfacing* tends to analyze it along with other Atwood's novels, for Canadian nature is present in virtually all of them (Bandyopadhyay 2011). Apart from the previously mentioned approaches, there are less common ones, like those developed around the theme of Canadian nationality and identity (Kapusinski 2007) and its relation with the Americans (Templin 2011). There are also other studies that prioritize different elements of *Surfacing*, such as the mythic content (Thomas 1988) or the usage and meaning of the language in the novel (Clark 1983 and Ewell 1981). In spite of the previously presented variety of points of view in which Atwood's *Surfacing* has been analyzed, there are no complete Jungian studies about the novel. The interpretation I present here is therefore original, consisting of a symbolic reading of the exploration of the self through the application of C. G. Jung's analytical psychology.

Due to the complexity of the Jungian approach, this paper is structured into three main sections preceded by this introduction and followed by the concluding chapter and the bibliography consulted. The first section deals both with the author and the novel: Margaret Atwood is presented as a writer, with particular emphasis on her relation with Canadian wilderness and its influence on her work; regarding the novel, this paper includes a brief summary of the plot in order to guide the reader in the analysis, and a review of *Surfacing*'s relevance as a literary work, as well as the critical reception it has had throughout the years. The second section introduces the theoretical framework of this study; that is, it presents Jungian analytical psychology. After a general commentary on Jung's work and main points,

the specific Jungian concepts or ideas that that will be utilized in the commentary of *Surfacing* are explained. Finally, the third section includes the actual analysis of the novel, in which the information presented in the preceding chapters is applied. It is developed in a chronological order, in accordance to the novel. I have decided to separate the analysis of the text from the theoretical content in order to facilitate a better comprehension of the paper.

The most remarkable works on which I have supported my research on Jungian analytical psychology include *Man and his Symbols* and *Modern Man in Search of a Soul*. Both were written by C. G. Jung himself (though partially in the case of the former), and have provided me with reliable and clear primary sources for the development of my paper. *Modern Man in Search of a Soul* is actually considered one of the most important books in the field of psychology. This book has proven greatly useful regarding the theme of individuation; likewise, *Man and his Symbols* has also been of tremendous help to me due to its simple language and because it includes a wider variety of characteristic elements of Jungian theory, such as the anima and animus, or the relevance of dreams.

Concerning the life and work of Margaret Atwood I have resorted mainly to two books. One of them is *The Red Shoes: Margaret Atwood Starting Out* by Rosemary Sullivan. It is a combination of biography and narrative commentary on Margaret Atwood's life, which results into one of the most complete portraits of the author I have encountered. The other one is Atwood's *Negotiating with the Dead: A Writer on Writing*. Even though this book is focused on the concept of 'writer', it also includes autobiographical information about the early life of the author that was key in the development of the second chapter of my essay. Ironically, in spite of its title this book brought me closer to the conception of Margaret Atwood as a person, instead of just as a writer.

I would like to finish this essay expressing my gratitude to the people that have directly or indirectly enable this project to exist. Thanks, in the first place, to those teachers that have helped me along the whole degree with their knowledge, teachings and wise advice. They have known how to educate me while showing interest in what they teach, thus motivating me to become involved in topics I would not have had the opportunity to learn about otherwise. Secondly, thanks to the work of M^a Luz González Rodríguez, who has been my tutor during the development of this project and has sacrificed many hours to guide me, understand my ideas, and prevent me from feeling unable to cope with less than a tenth part of the work she probably does. And finally, thanks to my family for being able to bring me back to reality after long, seclusive writing days.

I. SOME NOTES ON THE AUTHOR AND THE NOVEL

2. THE AUTHOR: MARGARET ATWOOD AS A NOVELIST

Margaret Eleanor Atwood was born in Ottawa, Canada, on 18 November 1939. At the early age of five years, she started to evince an interest in writing (Howells 14). This would later develop into a fervent determination to write that, at that time, Canada's society was not to foster: "People had other things on their minds, and even if they hadn't, they wouldn't have been thinking about writers" (Atwood, *Negotiating* 6).

Nevertheless, at sixteen she was resolved to become a writer. Up until that age, Atwood's reading had covered a wide range of literary genres "everything from Jane Austen to True Romance magazines to pulp science fiction to *Moby-Dick*" (Atwood, *Negotiating* 13). However, Atwood does not ascribe her upcoming motivation to write to this avid reading. The decision was made almost coincidentally, as she explains in her non-fiction work *Negotiating with the Dead: A Writer on Writing*: "It simply happened, suddenly, in 1956 [...] I wrote a poem in my head and then I wrote it down, and after that writing was the only thing I wanted to do" (14).

To pursue her aspiration Atwood received university education. In 1957 she enrolled in the English Language and Literature degree at Victoria College in the University of Toronto, followed by a master's degree in English Literature at Radcliffe College in Harvard University (Howells 13-14). On this basis, Atwood has developed a prolific writing career. Nowadays, this author is regarded as an icon of Canadian literature, as well as one of the main figures in universal literature.

While Margaret Atwood is best known for her novels, it is important to take into consideration that she has not restricted her work into a sole field; Atwood is also a successful poet, essayist, literary critic, and is a widely recognized a feminist and environmental activist. These last characteristics derive directly from her writing's predominant themes: as Laura Braza explains "Atwood's primary concern seems to be about gender roles in society" (134), but she has also developed a concern about society in environmentalist terms, as will be commented on section 2.2.

This versatile author has been awarded numerous prizes –such as two Governor General's Awards, a Giller Prize and a Man Booker Prize (Godard); as well as more recent prizes like the Prince of Asturias Award for Letters that she received in 2008 or the Harvard Arts Medal (2012), among others– and has also been granted honorary degrees from several universities.

2.1. Atwood and the Canadian Wilderness

For the purpose of accurately depicting Margaret Atwood as a writer, and specifically as the author of the novel *Surfacing*, a better understanding of Atwood as a person is crucial. In this case, I would like to make emphasis on her relationship with the wilderness, focusing on her childhood in the Canadian woods.

The most determinant fact of Atwood's early years was dictated by Carl Atwood, her father. He worked as a scientist for the Federal Department of Lands and Forests of Canada, where he did some important research on tree-eating insects. The requirements of his profession directly influenced his whole family's way of life. In order for Carl to be able to accomplish his researching activities, they often spent long periods of time in the woods. Such periods usually corresponded to summer, when they moved to the bush and established an encampment, returning to the city –not necessarily to the same residence each time – when autumn arrived. This was performed in an almost cyclical manner:

Life in the bush, from Margaret's cumulative descriptions, was remarkably orderly. The family would live in tents while Carl Atwood built a small, just serviceable cabin; once he had them ensconced, he would start work on a bigger cabin. This process would be repeated casually when he moved to a new location. (Sullivan 28)

As Atwood herself has commented, her family habits made others consider her parents as “eccentric” people (Atwood, *Negotiating* 11). They were certainly leading unusual lives, and such peculiarity generated not only murmurs, but also a series of repercussions that I will proceed to enumerate in the following paragraphs.

The most obvious and direct consequence of this lifestyle is that it did not allow them to settle in any specific place for too long. “Home” meant a different environment each time. This circumstance prevented Atwood from establishing meaningful bonds with people: “since we lived in isolated places and moved a lot, they [family photos] were more familiar than most of the people I actually encountered” (Sullivan 19-20), she explains. This fact would surely be translated into an independent nature, which was also nourished by Atwood's own parents. In her book *Negotiating with the Dead: A Writer on Writing*, she describes her father as someone who “believed in self-sufficiency” and her mother as a “tomboy” (6), for she liked to perform physical activities and enjoyed reading. Since Atwood spent months in the forest alone with her parents and her older brother Harold, it is logical to presume that their attitudes exerted a significant influence on her developing personality.

Another consequence of this nomadic behaviour was that Atwood (like her brother) did not attend school regularly. In fact, she says, “I did not attend a full year of school until I was in grade eight” (Sullivan 11). This unusual childhood is something to be hardly associated to the life of a future writer; though, no schooling does not mean lack of education. Their mother Margaret Killam assumed the role of the teacher during those retirements to the bush: “they were taken out of school early in the spring, or would be returned late in the fall, and Mrs. Atwood gave them their lessons” (Sullivan 30). Their father also taught them informally, primarily about biology. Atwood has claimed home-schooling to have been a “definite advantage” that did not disconnect her from the world of literature at all. Actually, this alternative education provided her with the two main constituents of every writer's childhood: books and solitude.

The childhoods of writers are thought to have something to do with their vocation [...]. What they often contain [...] are books and solitude, and my own childhood was right on track. There were no films or theatres in the North, and the radio didn't work very well. But there were always books. I learned to read early, was an avid reader and read everything I could get my hands on. (Atwood, *Negotiating* 7)

A third outcome of her experience in the Canadian bush is Atwood's estrangement from other human beings. Living on the borderline between the city and the wilderness, she considered the urban world as “the fearful place where she had to learn the mysterious codes of behaviour that everyone else took for granted” (Sullivan 54). However, this is not necessarily to be considered a totally negative issue, for growing up unaware of society's conventions gave her more freedom to make her own decisions (e.g. she did not have such a strong sense of gender roles as the other girls of her age). Additionally, this divided impression of reality resulted on the Atwoods developing a sense of duality: “The family lived in two worlds, the city of her Ottawa childhood, which was mostly just a winter landscape of cold and snow, and the world of the remote bush” (Sullivan 26). This instability made her become restless, always looking for her own space; the place where she *belongs* to.

In her literary works, it can be noticed a reflection of her own life in the woods. This mirror-like effect takes place whether implicitly or explicitly in her writing; the former referring to those works in which the wilderness is certainly present, but not considered a key element of the narration; and the latter addressing those writings in which Atwood has directly presented a piece of her own history, usually disguised as one of her characters' lives (such as the case of the novel under study, *Surfacing*, a work in which many aspects of the

protagonist's life match with those of the author –a circumstance that will be explained further on in this essay).

This close relation between Atwood's memories of her life in the wilderness and the picture the author portrays about the North in her works is an issue that will be more deeply discussed in the following section.

2.2. The Power of Nature in Atwood's Work

As it has been discussed, nature has played an essential role in Margaret Atwood's life, especially in her childhood. As a writer, this has undoubtedly been reflected in her work. Rosemary Sullivan states: "the landscape of childhood provides the foundation layer of our psyche. Margaret's landscape was the north woods" (29). On these grounds it can be argued that the Canadian wilderness has had an impact on Atwood's mind-set, thus affecting her writing in diverse manners.

The Canadian territory is characterized by a hostile, cold nature; "a wilderness of immense rivers, lakes and islands" (González-Rodríguez 7). Consequently, it has often been perceived as threatening, but always beautiful. These ideas have led to the notion of the North as a "*femme fatale*" (Atwood, *Strange* 108): a female, cold, and savage nature that will conquer and exert her power over you. Thus, the wilderness that is being mentioned here is not a mere landscape. Often addressed as an abstract concept, Canadian nature has been approached as "a state of mind" by Atwood herself (*Strange* 10). Canadians embrace the wilderness –whether consciously or not –, adopting it as part of their national, cultural and personal identity. Being Canadian turns into a mental experience. Atwood is not an exception to this phenomenon. Her psyche was developed within this wild environment and, consequently, it can be observed that nature is a recurrent element in her works.

One of the earliest examples of this fact is her first non-fiction work *Survival: A Thematic Guide to Canadian Literature*, published in 1972. In this book, Atwood claims that the notion of survival is the central theme of Canadian literature, addressing the topic of nature as something to be confronted by the victim in order to survive (Godard). In the same year, she also publishes *Surfacing*, the novel that concerns us in this paper and that portrays nature as a medium through which the protagonist connects with her own psyche. Then in 1991 Atwood releases *Wilderness Tips*, a collection of short stories in which, to a greater or lesser degree, include the element of the Canadian wilderness (as a setting, a medium, or a refuge).

Years later, Atwood's literature adopts a more environmentalist approach. In her novel *Oryx and Crake* (2003) she presents a dystopian vision of the future in which humanity finds itself on the verge of extinction due to its own unfortunate acts. This novel constitutes the first part of a dystopian trilogy whose stories converge, followed by *The Year of the Flood* (2009), and *MaddAddam* (2013). This trilogy follows the same pattern as her previously published work *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985), which takes place in a near-future world, polluted by toxic chemicals and nuclear radiation in which fertile women are forced to become the breeders of the new society (Boyd). Each of the foregoing works constitute examples of Atwood's interest on denouncing environmental degradation.

As it has been explained, her concern about the preservation of nature and the environment can be traced back to her childhood. In spite of the transformations that Canadian literature has underwent since the 1970s –particularly its urban orientation – her interest on this matter has clearly withstood through the years.

3. THE NOVEL: *Surfacing*

In the preceding chapter I have composed a general picture of the author, with particular emphasis on her relation with the wilderness and how such connection has influenced her literary works. This background information will partly serve as the basis upon which *Surfacing* will be analysed.

The following paragraphs deal with the novel itself. I will present its main characteristics, providing a general view of the plot and the critical reception the novel has received since it was published 43 years ago.

3.1. Introduction to the Novel: The Story of a Nameless Woman

Published in 1972, *Surfacing* is Margaret Atwood's second novel and one of her most famous ones. Nevertheless, there is no total consensus about its genre. This work has sometimes been classified as a detective novel, since the action is initially driven by the narrator's search of her missing father. On most occasions, however, critics have considered it "part detective novel, part psychological thriller". Personally, I opt for classifying this work solely as a psychological thriller, since –while it is true that there are other relevant themes and events taking place in the story – the plot is, to my mind, primarily focused on the narrator's psychological journey of self-discovery. Meanwhile, Atwood has described *Surfacing* as her "woman-in-the-woods novel" (*Strange* 139) also owing to its plot, which may be summarised as follows:

Surfacing tells the story of an unnamed woman artist that decides to return to her native Quebec in order to search for her father, an old naturalist who has mysteriously disappeared. She is accompanied by her boyfriend Joe and a married couple –composed by her friends Anna and David – in this difficult journey. The four of them lodge in a lake-side cabin where the protagonist used to stay with her family as a child. During her first contact with her old province after many years of living abroad, the main character constantly compares her memories of the place with the present, usually depicting the latter as the deteriorated version of the past.

The group was supposed to leave after a few days; however, the protagonist is increasingly convinced that her father is alive somewhere in the wilderness, so they stay one more week. They go on several trips looking for any sign or trace of the man, while the boys start a film project called "Random Samples". Throughout these trips, the nameless character

reveals glimpses of her own thoughts and memories. However, the information the reader receives is eventually disproved.

Right after the protagonist decides to immerse herself in a lake, she admits that the memories that had been shared with the reader are “fraudulent as passports” (144). Suddenly, whatever seemed true is reversed: her true past is revealed to be a story of a woman who was forced to have an abortion by the married man she was in love with; in addition, the seemingly perfect marriage of Anna and David is eventually exposed as an abusive, unfaithful relationship.

The protagonist’s recovering of that truth is the turning point from which the story becomes a psychological journey. Detached from her immediate reality and totally immersed in her own mind, she develops an obsession that leads her to stay alone in the forest for several days performing a primitive, animal-like behaviour, and rejecting anything related to human beings (for she now sees *them* as the enemy). In the meanwhile, the main character experiences visions of both of her dead parents which eventually allow her to feel at peace with herself.

Surfacing ends with the protagonist’s spiritual healing through the acceptance of her painful memories. She adopts rational thinking again and Joe comes to rescue her. However, no clear information is given about what she decides to do in the end¹.

Concerning the formal aspects of the novel, *Surfacing* is structured into twenty seven chapters of varying length through which the anonymous, female, first-person narrator and main character recounts her journey of introspection. The style in which this narration is written fits under the designation of ‘stream of consciousness’ for there is no transition between descriptions of present events and the memories that they evoke. They are narrated in a way that represents the chaotic manner in which the protagonist’s troubled mind works.

¹ The presented plot of the novel bears a certain resemblance to the life of the author herself in several points. For example, both the father of the protagonist and Atwood’s father were naturalists and had a negative concept of society, as opposed to a profound admiration for nature; Atwood’s father has been described as that of “an early environmentalist and something of a pessimist where human beings were concerned” (Sullivan 35). There is also a specific anecdote about the mothers that seems to be directly copied from the real life to the literary world. In both cases the family was in danger due to the attack of a bear, and both mothers yelled “Scat” to scare the animal away (Sullivan 29). Another noticeable similarity is that the two of them have a brother that fell into a lake and almost drowned. From these facts it can be inferred that Margaret Atwood used her own memories as the basis of the life of *Surfacing*’s main character.

3.2. Critical Reception and Current Relevance

Surfacing was published only three years after Atwood's first novel *The Edible Woman*, so comparisons between the two texts were unavoidable. *The Edible Woman* had been a great success, today considered as one of her masterpieces. *Surfacing* is definitely different from its preceding publication, and Atwood's publisher, Jack McClelland, was aware of this fact. He warned the writer about the possible negative scenarios that she may confront as a result of this change of direction in her writing style. As Nischik explains, the publisher feared that Atwood's second novel would not be easily sold (190), probably due to its symbolic and surrealist nature.

Unexpectedly, *Surfacing* had a really positive reception: "it turned out that, continent-wide, the reviews were amazingly good" (Sullivan 289). In fact, the novel swiftly became a best-seller. *Surfacing*'s success was such that *The New York Times* commented on the novel that it was "'first rate' and 'thoroughly brilliant'" (Sullivan 289). As a result, and unlike its contemporary –the non-fiction *Survival: A Thematic Guide to Canadian Literature* – this novel has been printed in numerous countries outside Canada.

Nowadays, *Surfacing* is conceived as a classic of Canadian literature, and has become a habitual text of study at diverse educational institutions, including my own university. This fact is of much significance, for it provides an idea of the actual range of influence the novel has achieved. In line with the just mentioned presence of *Surfacing* at universities, I would like to share Burkhard Niederhoff's view about the novel. He is Professor of English Literature at the University of Bochum, and has described the book as "a powerful and disturbing novel that has become a classic of twentieth-century fiction" (*The Return* 60).

On another front, and regarding *Surfacing* as a primarily Canadian literary work, the novel "has often been claimed as a defining novel for Canadians' sense of their selves" (Nischik 190). Thus contributing to shape Canadian identity, which had largely been an issue of debate in previous epochs. Indeed, this idea of *Canadianness* largely motivated Margaret Atwood to write the novel, as Sullivan claims in her work:

[...] asked what *Surfacing* had to do with her life as a writer, she replied: "A great deal... For me it came out of pressures that are oppressively Canadian. The constant pull of two embattled languages, the threat of extinction, the amorphousness of identity; and, physically, the water-and-rock of the northern Shield country, where lakes are mazes and you cannot travel without your reflection and your echo". (289)

Thus, *Surfacing* plays an important role in Atwood's work. It does not only constitutes a great success in her writing career, but also expresses all those initial opposing forces she felt as a Canadian writer at the age of thirty-three.

II. A JUNGIAN LITERARY APPROACH

4. C. G. JUNG AND LITERARY THEORY: A JUNGIAN APPROACH TO LITERATURE

As it has been stated in the introduction of this paper, the chosen theoretical framework for the analysis of *Surfacing* is the analytical psychology of Carl Gustav Jung, in its application to literary texts. Psychoanalysis provides a means of understanding the human psyche, which to my mind is the element that prevails in Atwood's second novel – there is an external plot that is being overshadowed by the intensity of the internal one, performed inside the protagonist's mind. Nevertheless, within psychoanalysis there are numerous theoretical orientations. The reason why I decided to base my analysis on Jung's ideas specifically is because they are oriented to lead the individual to wholeness; a goal that is shared by the protagonist of the novel, who –as will be further explained later on – is concerned about having lost part of her self.

C. G. Jung's work "has been furthered first by Freud and then by Alder" (Jung, *Modern Man* 57). Jung was indeed a disciple of Freud since they met in 1907. However, this collaboration was interrupted by 1913 since Jung did not share the definition of the concept of *libido* with the father of psychoanalysis; he could not accept the idea "that the main drive in human life is sexual" (Vernon). From this point on Jung developed his own theory, which is focused on self-knowledge as the tool by which people can aim to reach *wholeness*. In order to distinguish Sigmund Freud's theory from his own, he decided to denominate his approach "analytical psychology" (Jung, *Modern Man* 28).

Jungian analytical psychology is currently in vogue. The work of Jung and his followers, the so called Jungians, has been increasingly valued within the field of the literary studies due to the broad spectrum of possibilities it encompasses. As Papadopoulos asserts: "Jung is known for his emphasis on direct experience and avoidance of typified formulae through which one should filter her or his perceptions and experiences" (3); in other words, Jung defends that, as there is not only one type of psyche, there should not be a sole standard approach to it². Thus he provides different concepts and points of view that have proven to be useful for the task of analysing literature, as a product and representation of the human psyche.

In Jung's words, psychology can play an important role in the study of literature "for the human psyche is the womb of all sciences and arts. We must expect psychological

² For further information see: C.G. Jung. "The Two Psychological Types." *Two Essays on Analytical Psychology*. New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1928.

research [...] to explain the formation of a work of art” (Jung, *Modern Man* 152). Therefore, psychoanalytic approaches to literature are totally justified.

The following sections will deal with some Jungian ideas and concepts, focusing on the ones that can be applied to the analysis of the novel under study. This general introduction will provide the reader with a basis intended to facilitate the understanding of the analysis to be conducted on chapter 5.

4.1. The Language of Archetypes

First of all, I would like to state a clear definition of the idea of ‘archetype’. To begin with, it is important to make a differentiation between archetype and symbol, since they are indeed quite dissimilar. If we take into account Jungian psychoanalysis, this differentiation can be explained starting by a Jungian concept that constitutes the primordial origin of the two ideas: the *collective unconscious*.

According to his theory, people have both a personal unconscious and a collective or super-personal unconscious. The latter has been described by Jung as the “deep layers of the unconscious, where sleep the primordial images common to humanity” (Jung, *Two Essays* 67). That is to say, the collective unconscious contains a number of ideas –or to be more exact, the germ of those ideas – that have been inherited from one generation to the next. They are images that repeat themselves through history, resulting for example in the recurrence of similar legends and themes at different times around the world. These “primordial images are the deepest, the most ancient, and the most universal thoughts of humanity” (Jung, *Two Essays* 68), and they are the archetypes. We can therefore speak of archetypes as primordial images that arise from the collective unconscious.

However, the archetype appears in abstract form. It has been imprinted upon the mind of every human being for eras, but it needs of certain conditions to be able to reappear –the archetype must be shaped through the use of a symbol. Thus, symbols transform those primordial ideas into actual images in a much more concrete and restricted sense, usually according to the cultural aspects of the community that is shaping such image. On this basis, a clear distinction that can be made between symbols and archetypes is that archetypes are universal, while symbols are cultural. The concept of god illustrates this point: “The idea of an all-powerful divine being [...] is an archetype” (Jung, *Two Essays* 73); there are several concepts and images –symbols– through which this idea is represented throughout the world, but the basic concept of a superior power –archetype– is shared by humanity in general.

Now that the concept of archetype is explained, I will proceed to comment specifically on the archetypes that appear in *Surfacing* in a general way, for they will be further explained in the context of the novel in chapter 5. The reader must bear in mind that the elements that are going to be described belong to a mental, psychological sphere. In this case, such sphere can be reduced to the Self, meaning “the totality of the whole psyche” (von Franz 162); it includes the conscious and the unconscious³. All of the archetypes I am going to present here appear in the unconscious part of the Self.

I would like to start by the archetype of the *shadow*. It embraces those “aspects of one’s own personality that for various reasons one has preferred not to look at too closely” (von Franz 174). The shadow represents the hidden or even unknown attributes of a person. On some occasions, people can see their own unconscious tendencies in other people. This phenomenon is called ‘projection’.

The next archetype is the *animus*, a Latin word meaning ‘spirit’ and the counterpart of *anima*, which means ‘soul’. The former is applied to women, and the latter, to men. Since the protagonist of *Surfacing* is a woman, the archetype of the animus will be the one to be used in the discussion of the novel. The animus is a “woman’s masculine inner figure” (Saguaro 153) and constitutes a personification of a woman’s masculine qualities. It produces opinions that are conceived as absolute truths, for they “very often have the character of solid convictions not lightly to be shaken, or of principles that apparently possess unquestionable validity” (Jung, *Two Essays* 227). These opinions are influenced by a woman’s father: “The father endows his daughter’s animus with [...] incontestably ‘true’ convictions” (von Franz 199). Animus’ convictions can act as advices that may or may not fit the woman’s situation.

Apart from this masculine figure, women also possess feminine symbolic forms. This is the case of the *Superior Female* figure. It is the personification a woman’s whole Self, and is represented in dreams and visions by “a priestess, sorceress, earth mother, or goddess of nature or love” (von Franz 208); any figure that can be conceived as a feminine source of wisdom. For this reason, just as the animus is influenced by the father of the individual, this figure can also be an archetypal image of the mother. This feminine archetypal symbol of the Self intends to express something that is timeless. As a consequence, this figure may not assume the form of a wise old woman but might also appear as a young lady, or as a woman that is somehow simultaneously young and old.

³ From this section on, the word “Self” is written with a capital letter because this is the way in which this concept is spelled in Jungian analytical psychology.

However, the Self is not always expressed in the form of a human being. This fact leads us to the last Jungian archetype: the *Cosmic Man*. Such an archetype is described as a “gigantic, all embracing figure that personifies and contains the entire universe” (von Franz 213). Since this figure represents what is complete, “it is often conceived of as a bisexual being” (von Franz 216), for example. This representation of the Self reconciles opposites, bringing them together and forming a whole.

The previously explained archetypes are only a portion of the gamut of representations of the unconscious and the Self that Jung presents in his analytical psychology. These figures vary depending on the individual, not only in terms of gender, but also in accordance to their mental health, their type of psyche, and/or past experiences, among other factors.

4.2. The Quest for Wholeness: The Process of Individuation in Jungian Analytical Psychology

The terms and concepts that have been explained in the preceding section are not purposeless. They all have a specific function or role that affects the psyche of the individual. Whether their influence is positive or negative, in a healthy mind the individual must be able to discern the limits between his own psyche and the archetypes that may appear in it.

We always proceed on the naïve assumption that we are masters in our own house. The first thing we have to do is to accustom ourselves to the idea that, even in our most intimate psychic life, we live in a kind of house through the doors and windows of which we look out upon a world, and that the objects or contents of this world, although profoundly affecting us, do not belong to us. (Jung, *Two Essays* 225)

The importance of this fact is even clearer when you realize that archetypes do not only have a function, but also a cause. Something has motivated their presence (the repression of an attribute of the personality, a shocking experience, a mental condition, etc.). Therefore, neglecting the existence of these autonomous figures makes the task of finding a solution to these conflicts even harder. In these cases the psyche finds itself divided into two: the conscious does not accept what is happening in the unconscious (even though it is affected by it), and so the problem that caused this situation is not addressed. This scenario may lead to the development of a mental condition in the individual. As a solution to these circumstances Jung proposes the process of individuation.

Individuation means to become a whole; a complete being, psychologically speaking. This concept has been described by Jung in the following way: “Individuation means to become a single, discrete being, and [...] it also includes the idea of becoming one’s own real

self. Hence individuation could also be translated as ‘coming to selfhood’ or ‘self-realization’” (*Two Essays* 183). Thus, through the process of individuation a person should be able to reconcile the conscious and unconscious part of his or her Self in order to become a true individual. Instead of neglecting those things that were hidden in the unconscious, they are released and adequately assimilated.

It should be noticed that there is no standardized process of individuation; each person has to take into consideration the nature of his or her own problems and determine what is right for them. However, there are some basic steps that usually form part of such process. Marie-Louise von Franz, a Jungian psychologist, states that “the actual process of individuation [...] generally begins with a wounding of the personality and the suffering that accompanies it” (169); thus, the first step and also the cause of this process is an initial shock that affects the psychological stability of the individual.

At this stage the person senses that something is wrong, but being aware of something and being able to address it are two complete different things. According to von Franz’s explanations on the topic of individuation, “if one focuses attention on the unconscious without rash assumptions or emotional rejection, it often breaks through a flow of helpful symbolic images” (170-171). In other words, one must make a conscious decision to accept the unconscious in order for the latter to open up. When this happens, the troubled unconscious reveals a series of images and symbols that –as it was explained in section 4.1 – shape the archetypes that the mind is hiding. This private communication is established through the person’s dreams, for “the language [...] of the unconscious are symbols, and the means of communication dreams” (Freeman viii). The importance of dreams is one of the main points of Jung’s analytical psychology.

Now that the person has made contact with the archetypes of his or her unconscious, it is time to face them. This does not mean that they should all be confronted and eliminated; in each of them there might be something useful from which the individual might be benefited: “every personification of the unconscious –the shadow, the anima, the animus, and the Self – has both a light and dark aspect” (von Franz 234). The individual must deal with the archetypes and decide if they are representations of something negative they should overcome, or of a valuable lesson they should accept, nurture and follow. This is one of the most difficult problems in the process of individuation; however, the individual “has gained access to the sources of psychic life, and this is the beginning of the cure” (Jung, *Modern Man* 242).

In Jung's words, the final aim of this internal struggle is to "free the self from the false wrappings of the persona on the one hand⁴, and from the suggestive power of the unconscious images on the other" (*Two Essays* 185). This way, the individual is liberated from his or her own mental constraints, in order to be able to accept the real Self that has been hidden or repressed. In this sense, the process of individuation can be seen as a kind of psychological 'rebirth'.

⁴ "The persona is a means by which a man can appear to be this or that, or by which he is able to hide behind a mask" (Jung, *Two Essays* 185).

III. A JUNGIAN ANALYSIS OF THE NOVEL

5. A Psychoanalytical Reading to *Surfacing*

As I have previously manifested in this paper, I consider that Atwood's *Surfacing* main plot is developed on a mental scope. The events that take place inside the mind of the narrator and main character overshadow the rest, even though the former are in many cases consequences of the latter. For this reason, the idea that in *Surfacing* the psychological experiences the protagonist undergoes are equally –if not more– real than “reality itself” is key to fully understand my approach to the novel⁵.

In this third part of my project I will deal with the analysis of *Surfacing* per se. For such purpose I will apply the methodology that has been presented in the preceding chapter (Jung's analytical psychology) since it allows me to study the novel from the perspective I consider the most appropriate among the existing psychoanalytical theories. In order to develop a clear argumentation of my analysis, and even though Jungian analytical psychology embraces a much wider spectrum of ideas, I will conform to the concepts that have been explained in the previous sections only.

The main point I aim to defend in this project can be summarized as follows: the story presented in the novel *Surfacing* can be translated into a process of individuation in Jungian terms. In order to be able to validate my theory, I will compare what it is portrayed in the novel with the actual process proposed by C. G. Jung. This procedure will allow me to point out in which aspects do both journeys –Jung's process of individuation, and the one described in *Surfacing* – converge or vary in any sense. In my analysis I will also comment on what originates this process in the novel, how it is undergone by the narrator and main character, and the results it presents.

5.1. Wounded and Sunk: The Starting Point

In chapter 4 it was explained that the process of individuation starts with a wounding that negatively affects the individual. This first step is fulfilled in *Surfacing*, for the protagonist suffers a series of negative experiences that would later develop into psychological conflicts. Such experiences are partially hidden from the reader and the rest of the characters for most

⁵ The meaning I tried to convey with this sentence is that in *Surfacing*'s psychological reality predominates over the external one (often considered the only relevant dimension of reality; that is, “reality itself”). However, I do not regard that the external events are the only reality that exists. Something does not cease to be *real* because it is happening inside of one's mind.

of the story, even though she offers glimpses of them throughout the narration in a 'stream of consciousness' style.

One of the first revelations about the main character's difficult past appears in the fifth chapter of the novel. The group had already started to look for the protagonist's father in the forest, when she suddenly starts to talk about a previous experience with her 'former husband': "He said he loved me, the magic word, it was supposed to make everything light up, I'll never trust that word again" (47). In this fragment she allows the reader to discover that this relationship has ended in negative terms and as a consequence, she has become colder and distrustful.

After this failed relationship, the protagonist proves unable to establish meaningful connections with other people. This is distinctly seen in how she feels about others; especially about Joe, her current boyfriend. For instance, when she describes her first meeting with Joe she mentions that what he liked about her was that she acted "as if I were feeling no emotion. But I really wasn't" (28). She also explains that she does not really love him, even though she wants to "it would be nice if he meant something more to me [...], no one has since my husband" (42), confirming the idea that her past relationship affected her capacity to build social and emotional connections. Another example of her coldness appears much later, after she rejects Joe's proposal of marriage. The protagonist confesses that she does not feel bad about it; in fact, she does not feel anything at all:

I realized I didn't feel much of anything, I hadn't for a long time. Perhaps I'd been like that all my life, just as some babies are born deaf or without a sense of touch; but if that was true I wouldn't have noticed the absence. At some point my neck must have closed over, pond freezing or a wound, shutting me into my head; since then everything had been glancing off me. (105-106)

This emotional detachment is reflected from the very beginning on the way she talks about herself, for which purpose she often uses words like "dead", "frozen", and "numb".

However, her sentimental disappointment is not the only *wounding* the protagonist has suffered. The relationship between her and her 'former husband' reveals to have been much more complicated when the reader interprets some of the memories the narrator offers. One of the most relevant ones is the description of the protagonist's wedding. From the very beginning there are some elements that do not seem to fit in a regular marriage ceremony: "At my wedding we filled out forms, name, age, birthplace, blood type" (87). In fact, when she continues talking about the setting she does not describe a church or a court, but a hospital: "I could recall the exact smells, glue and humid socks and [...] the chill of

antiseptic” (88). She also mentions that once it was finished, she could hardly stand up and felt an ache. From this information the reader can infer that the main character has been subjected to surgery.

The real scenario is that her ‘husband’ was really a married man that had an affair with her – she did not know anything about this situation until he confessed it to her (chapter eighteen). As a result of this relationship, she became pregnant and he forced her to have an abortion: “He said I should do it, he made me do it. [...] I could have said no but I didn’t; that made me one of them too, a killer” (143-144). She deeply regrets having accepted this decision and expresses it continuously throughout the whole novel. One of the clearer statements she makes about this is the following one: “it [the baby] was taken away from me, exported, deported. A section of my own life, sliced off from me like a Siamese twin, my own flesh cancelled” (48). She also describes the procedure as a “slaughter” and a “murder” on some occasions. After the surgery, the protagonist ended her relationship with this man.

Therefore, the two main *wounds* or initial shocks that the protagonist underwent are: first, her failed relationship with a married man that made her feel afraid of being emotionally hurt again (hence her reluctance to open up to others); and second, the forced abortion of her first baby⁶. This situation led her to a state of mental instability that marked the beginning of her process of individuation.

5.2. “The Missing Part of Me”: The Protagonist’s Divided State

In this section I will describe the initial state of the protagonist’s mind in the *wounding* stage. This way, it will be easier to notice if there has been a significant evolution between the first stages of the individuation process and the final one. The first thing to take into account is that the protagonist’s immediate response to her traumatic experiences was not to face them, but to reject them. The story she presents to the reader and the other characters (including her own parents) is that of a failed marriage that finished with a divorce and her separation from her only child. She constructed this false past because she could not cope with reality. As a result, the protagonist created a *shadow*; blocking a part of her own personality:

It was all real enough, it was enough reality for ever, I couldn’t accept it, that mutilation, ruin I’d made, I needed a different version. I pieced it together the best way I could,

⁶ The motif of the abortion also appears in Atwood’s *Wilderness Tips*, in the short story called “Hairball”. As in *Surfacing*, a woman has an affair with a married man (though in this case the protagonist (Kat) was aware of that fact before starting the relationship). In this short story the protagonist is not actually pregnant; Kat is diagnosed with an ovarian cyst that is extirpated, but after it is done, she keeps the cyst for she believes it is the aborted baby of her relationship with the married man, to whom she is too attached.

flattening it, scrapbook, collage, pasting over the wrong parts. A faked album, the memories fraudulent as passports; but a paper house was better than none and I could almost live in it, I'd lived in it until now. (143-144)

She hid them in her own unconscious under false memories and anecdotes that eventually became the only version of her life she recognized. She herself suspects that there is something wrong about this invented version of her life, but cannot discern what the problem is: "I have to be more careful about my memories, I have to be sure they're my own and not the memories of other people telling me what I felt, how I acted, what I said" (73). This estrangement from her own past leaves the protagonist's life divided into two: the *before* and the *after*, and since she has rejected her own past, half of herself has been erased.

As a consequence of this unconscious decision, the protagonist feels *divided*. She is not sure about why, but throughout the novel the main character expresses her concern about not feeling complete, portraying herself as a divided self. She continuously makes reference to something she calls "the missing part of me", which stands for her past self.

Probably, the main reason behind this division is her forced abortion. It was the culmination of her failed relationship as well as the physical representation of a separation inside herself: "I'd allowed myself to be cut into two. [...] The other half, the one locked away, was the only one that could live; I was the wrong half, detached, terminal. I was nothing but a head, or no, something minor like a severed thumb; numb" (108). The abortion marked the end of the relationship and of the life she knew. It is important to notice that she has identified herself with "the wrong half" of herself. The part she is looking for is her old self, the one that knew how to feel alive. She is now nothing more like the carcass of the person she was.

The protagonist blames the division for her incapacity to feel emotions; since she is not a complete being, there are some 'human functions' she cannot perform. She projects this problem onto David, Anna's husband. He is unfaithful and shares with his wife an abusive relationship. The protagonist sees in him the reflection of her own lack of feelings: "David is like me, I thought, we are the ones that don't know how to love, there is something essential missing in us, we were born that way [...], atrophy of the heart" (136-137).

This is the picture that is offered at the beginning of the process: that of an individual that has been fragmented –*wounded*– by a series of negative experiences she does not know how to overcome. From this point on, the protagonist will start to reflect on her mental conflicts more and more, resulting in a journey of self-discovery that will develop into her personal process of individuation.

5.3. Healing the Self: Archetypal Symbols in the Novel

The process of individuation has been started by the *wounding* phase. According to the theory explained in chapter 4, the next steps include establishing contact with the unconscious and facing the figures the individual may find there. These tasks can be performed in different ways, for each person's individuation process is unique. Each of us has to find his or her own path to wholeness.

The journey to individuation of *Surfacing*'s central character takes place in the Canadian wilderness. When the protagonist decides to come back to her old city, it is not only her father who is missing, but also her own identity. By coming home she is searching for her origins; a clue that can take her back to her old self. In this sense, the setting in which this quest takes place is key, especially in the case of Canadian writings. According to Hammill, in Canadian literature the wilderness is conceived in two main different ways: "the first group, which represents nature as hostile and treacherous [...]. In the second group the natural environment is the site of authenticity, provides healing, escape and self-knowledge, and may also teach humans about their kinship with animals" (64). In *Surfacing* the Canadian wilderness clearly represents the second option. Even though nature is sometimes depicted as dangerous, it is the place in which the protagonist is able to reconnect with her old self. The wilderness is presented in this novel as a tool for introspection and self-discovery.

Therefore, when talking about the elements that guide the protagonist's process of individuation in *Surfacing* we should add the symbolism of the landscape to the Jungian archetypes. These two kinds of archetypal symbols play different but fundamental roles in the protagonist's transformation. In order to facilitate the comprehension of the process of individuation that occurs through them, they will be addressed in the following paragraphs in the same order as they appear in the novel.

The first archetypal symbol to be analyzed is the boat. This symbol holds a special relevance on two occasions: the first and the last time it appears. The boat, as a means of transport, "is the symbol of voyaging" (Chevalier and Gheerbrant 106). It represents the transition from one place to another; from one situation to another. The first boat appears in the third chapter of the novel. It carries the protagonist and her friends from the village to the island in which her family cabin is located. It is Evan's boat, owner of the Blue Moon Cabins. The fact that they are called 'Blue Moon' is interesting due to the meaning this astrological phenomenon conveys. The moon by itself symbolizes "periodical change and renewal [...], a symbol of change and growth" (Chevalier and Gheerbrant 669), whereas the blue moon is the

term that refers to an extra full moon in a year. A boat named after this event reflects an unexpected opportunity of growth, an extra chance of redirecting your life. If we apply this information to the story, it can be concluded that the fact that the protagonist travelled in Evan's boat at the beginning of the novel marks the start of her metamorphosis.

The last boat is Paul's. It appears in the very last chapter of the novel when Joe and Paul come back to the island to look for the protagonist, who has been isolated in the forest for several days. In this case, the boat is painted white – a color that is often associated with the feelings of innocence, peace, and hope. Thus, a white boat implies a positive transition. They want to take her to the village; that is, back to reality. Both boats bring the protagonist the same opportunity: to leave her old self behind in each trip. They provide her with the means to make a change. This is vital for the individuation process to succeed because, as in every metamorphosis, the old form must die to allow the new one to live.

Secondly, and bearing certain relation to the previous element, there is the archetypal symbol of the lake. As it has been explained in the previous paragraphs, at the beginning of the novel the protagonist crosses a lake in order to go to her family's old cabin. That is, the lake is the physical frontier between the civilization and the wilderness – the psychological frontier between her present and her lost past.

In addition, it cannot be ignored that the lake can also be conceived as water. Water possesses a wide range of interpretations, however, "the symbolic meanings of water may be reduced to three main areas. It is a source of life, a vehicle of cleansing and a centre of regeneration" (Chevalier and Gheerbrant 1081). These three meanings fit within the idea of *Surfacing* as a process of individuation, as it involves rebirth or renovation. Nevertheless, a lake is not just plain water, there is another aspect attached to it: depth and lack of transparency. These characteristics imply that we cannot see the whole picture of the lake, only the surface. What is in the depths is hidden from knowledge until we explore it. This way "the depths themselves [...] become a symbol of the unconscious" (Chevalier and Gheerbrant 1089), of the unknown.

Apart from these features, water is also characterized by its capacity to reflect images. Like a mirror, water echoes reality. However, according to Frank Davey's study, "the mirror in Atwood is deceptive" (94). An example of this can be found in the seventh chapter of *Surfacing*, when the protagonist describes the lake as a "dark mirror" (67) that distorts reality. Atwood explains this situation is common because "women-in-the-wilderness books [like *Surfacing*] frequently contain a mirror scene – a scene in which the woman looks in the mirror and sees that she has been altered" (*Strange* 130). In fact, there is another moment in which

the protagonist looks at an actual mirror that reflects her “distorted glass face” (175). If we come back to the reasoning that the lake is a mediator between the present and past of the protagonist, it would be normal to find a distortion in its reflection. Things have changed.

The protagonist immerses herself in a lake three times during the novel. But the immersion that influences her and the storyline the most is the second one, in chapter seventeen. It was already their second week in the cabin, and the narrator tells the reader that she is planning to dive into the lake in order to look for a painting that she believes can help her to find her father. As it happened in the seventh chapter of the book, the protagonist decides to look at her reflection in the water. Again, what she finds is not a true reproduction of reality: “My other shape was in the water, not my reflection but my shadow” (141). This event foresees what is going to take place next.

She immerses herself in the water and dives. She is not able to find the painting; however, she does see something: “It was there but it wasn’t a painting [...]. It was something I knew about, a dead thing, it was dead” (142). Taking into account that the depths hide the content of the unconscious, the fact that she sees a dead thing underwater might be a reference to the repressed memory (or *shadow*) of her dead child. This is confirmed when, immediately after she goes out of the water, a key moment of the novel takes place: the protagonist reveals her true past. Not so much to the reader, but primarily to herself.

The main character has then entered the lake –the door of the unconscious (she herself acknowledges that “the lake was an entrance for me” (147)) – and has found what her mind hides. This event means that the second step of the process of individuation has been accomplished: she has established contact with her own unconscious. Hereafter, the conscious and unconscious part of her Self are put closer together, even though the division has not been completely fixed. In the next chapter the protagonist mentions this development making reference to “the half of me that had begun to return” (148). Part of her repressed memories have become conscious.

After the immersion, the main protagonist spends most of her time alone in the woods. For this reason, the third archetypal symbol I will analyze is the forest. Yet, this forest is not a regular one, it is Canadian. Therefore, it is necessary to bear in mind that, on the one hand, Canadian nature is often conceived as “untamed, unpredictable, mysterious, ungraspable, often defying human logic and convention” (González-Rodríguez 11); and, on the other hand –as it was explained in the first part of this chapter – the wilderness can also be perceived in a positive way. Faye Hammill describes the Canadian North as “suggestive of freedom, space, escape and unspoiled landscapes” (76). This is common in Atwood’s narrative. As a Canadian

writer, the wilderness is almost omnipresent in her works, appearing both as a positive and negative element: “The recurrent stories of backwoods settlements, wilderness explorations and the malevolence, or else the regenerating power, of nature are retold in many times in Atwood’s own fiction” (Hammill 86).

This enigmatic, ambivalent place is the setting in which the last chapters of the novel take place. It is important to take into account that this happens right after the protagonist has immersed herself in the lake, the entrance to the unconscious. By extension, therefore, the forest should be the unconscious itself. In chapter fifteen, the narrator herself describes her mind using terminology related to the forest: “in my brain the filaments, trails reconnected and branched” (130). This idea of the forest as the unconscious is reflected in the work of contemporary analysts, who “regard the darkness of the forest and the deep roots of its trees as symbolizing the unconscious. The terrors of the forest, like all panic terrors, are inspired, Jung believed, by fear of what the unconscious may reveal” (Chevalier and Gheerbrant 401).

Such fear is reflected by the main character throughout the first part of the novel. On several occasions she reports to feel something looking at her, or to hear “echoes” or even the sound of someone –or something – breathing. Sullivan explains this sensation is commonly related to the Canadian wilderness, for “the northern woods, to anyone who has spent time in them, seem almost like an animistic presence. Someone, something, sits at your back, watching” (288). The fact that the protagonist senses such presences in the forest might represent the memories and figures her unconscious hides. However, this is only the negative side of the forest. After the immersion, the protagonist changes her attitude and turns the forest into a positive element: it is not the forest that is dangerous; it is the human beings. This change can be understood as a consequence of the *wounding* she suffered. She was afraid of what her unconscious contained until she realized that the suffering that provoked this situation was originated by a human action. For this reason, the protagonist starts to establish a strong connection with Canadian nature as a shelter against human cruelty.

As a consequence, the main character rejects her human nature, since she feels it makes her an accomplice of human wickedness. Instead, she embraces animal life and stops identifying as a human being. Displaying features of this animal behavior, one night she decides to have sex with Joe in the forest, but with the only purpose to get pregnant, for “pleasure is redundant, the animals don’t have pleasure” (161). After this event, she recovers and accepts the memory of her lost child; the emptiness that was inside her (due to her abortion) has been filled: “I can feel my lost child surfacing within me, forgiving me, rising from the lake where it has been imprisoned for so long [...]. The two halves clasp” (162).

These ‘two halves’ make reference to her conscious and her unconscious – her present and her past. They have been united through the acknowledgement of her most hurtful wounding. Now that this memory has “risen from the lake” and emerged from the unconscious, she is no longer *divided*.

In this part of the story, the protagonist decides to stay in the wilderness by herself following the pattern that had been established in the book *Swamp Angel* by Ethel Wilson – Atwood explains – “instead of going off into the woods to be with a man, they [women] start going off into the woods to be by themselves” (*Strange* 124). Now that she has recovered her past, she is ready to work on the conflicts that stop her from healing herself. For that purpose, she isolates herself in the forest. That is, she immerses herself into her own unconscious.

The protagonist has achieved the second stage of the individuation process: now she is able to face the figures that inhabit the forest of her unconscious. The first one she finds is the Cosmic Man. This encounter occurs shortly before her retirement to the forest. The main character, unwilling to believe that her parents have left her without any explanation, looks for a gift from her mother in the cabin. When she finds an old drawing, the protagonist considers her search has finished:

The gift itself was a loose page, the edge thorn, the figures drawn in crayon. On the left there was a woman with a round moon stomach: the baby was sitting up inside her gazing out. Opposite her was a man with horns on his head like cow horns and a barbed tail. The picture was mine, I had made it. The baby was myself before I was born. The man was God [...]: if the Devil was allowed a tail and horns, God needed them also, they were advantages. (158)

This fur god with tail and horns matches the definition of the Jungian archetype of the Cosmic Man for one main reason: it joins opposite elements to create a complete being. This figure reconciles a traditionally good element (God) with negative features of the Devil. The idea that something needs a positive and a negative side to be complete is also reflected in other parts of the novel. In chapter four, for example, she mentions that her brother distinguished two types of leeches because “there had to be a good kind and a bad kind of everything” (38). This is what she eventually does with herself: as a divided self, she identifies two parts of her being: the good one and what was left of herself – the “wrong half” (108). The Cosmic Man’s function in the protagonist’s unconscious is to provide unity. To achieve equilibrium the individual must “unite the opposite forces within themselves” (Jung, *Man and his Symbols* 156). Only when these two sides were joined together, she was able to feel complete.

During her period of isolation in the forest, the main character is focused on one specific task: being able to establish contact with her parents. Her mother had passed away years ago, and she had already been informed that her father had been found dead too. Nevertheless, she is convinced that “If I will it, if I pray, I can bring them back” (172). She has not overcome the fact that they have left her. They did not have a close relation before they died, so she could not say goodbye to them. It should be noticed that, since the protagonist’s *division* had already been fixed (symbolically speaking, when she had sex with Joe), the inability to feel emotions that she blamed on such fact does not exist anymore. Therefore, faced with the frustration of having to accept the death of her parents, she proves capable to cry: “I’m crying finally, it’s the first time, I watch myself doing it” (172). This is a symptom that shows the protagonist is approaching wholeness.

In order to connect with the spirits of her parents, she concludes it is necessary for her to reject every human-made element and live in close contact with the forest. “They can’t be anywhere that’s marked out, enclosed” (180) is the rule she lives by. From a psychoanalytical perspective this makes sense. The person needs to disregard the elements that link her with her conscious life in order to be able to fully explore her own unconscious.

Through this method, the protagonist is finally able to have a vision of her mother – her Superior Female figure. In the fourth chapter of this essay it was explained that this image is characterized by two features. First of all, the Superior Female acts as a source of wisdom. The “role of Mother as the first carer, as the primary law-giver, and as the initial instructor in language” (Saguaro 9) fits in this definition. The second feature attributed to the Superior Female is that of representing timelessness, appearing young, old, both, or neither. In the case of *Surfacing* the vision that the protagonist has about her mother is described as follows: “Then I see her. [...] her hair is long, down to her shoulders in the style of thirty years ago, before I was born” (182). Her mother died at an old age; however, the image the protagonist sees is that of a young, childless woman. She is old and young at the same time. After a few moments, the image of her mother is gone. The fact that the protagonist has seen her mother disappear means that the unconscious figure her mother personified (Superior Female) has been integrated into consciousness.

The following day, the image of her father appears to her in the forest. Like the mother, he also embodies a function of the unconscious: the animus. It is easy to conceive the protagonist’s father as an animus figure because of the influence he has exerted over her daughter. An animus is supposed to provide statements that will base the opinion of the

woman. The protagonist's father also accomplishes this function. The reflection of her father's ideas in the protagonist's opinions and behavior is most obvious in her tendency for isolation. Her father "found them [people] irrational; animals, he said, were more consistent, their behavior at least was predictable. [...] Even the village had too many people for him, he needed an island" (58-59). This inclination towards isolation was reflected on his daughter even since she was a child: "they [other children] found my hermit-crab habits amusing" (72). She also describes herself as a "socially retarded" person. Nevertheless, the most discernible example is that of her behavior at the end of the novel. She, like her father, isolates herself into the woods and appreciates animals over humans. The principles of her father was passed onto her through the complex of the animus.

There are some aspects to be taken into consideration in the description the protagonist gives about the encounter with the image of her father. The first of them is that she does not recognize him as her father, but more specifically as what her father has become: "He is standing near the fence with his back to me [...]. I say Father. He turns towards me and it's not my father. It is what my father saw, the thing you meet when you've stayed here too long alone" (186-187). In the last sentence the protagonist is making reference to a phenomenon related to Canadian woods: being *bushed*. In previous chapters she describes it as being "crazy, looney", what happens when you stay alone in the forest for too long. However, in the novel there is no reference about *what* is the thing you see when you are in such state.

The protagonist describes the form her father has adopted as something "too dangerous for me to be frightened of it", a creature with "yellow eyes, wolf's eyes, depthless but lambent" (187). I suggest that, considering that this being appears in the Canadian wilderness and is described as a terrific predator, there is a possibility that the thing she saw was a kind of Wendigo. In Canadian legends and stories, the Wendigo "appears as a robust, cannibal giant spirit-creature" (González-Rodríguez 11), and "its prevailing characteristic seems to be its ravenous hunger for human flesh" (Atwood, *Strange* 82). Due to its characteristics, the fact that the protagonist considers it 'too dangerous' would be totally justified. Moreover, the legend of the Wendigo includes another detail: it is possible for someone to become a Wendigo "by being eaten by one, or by tasting human flesh" (Atwood, *Strange* 83). Therefore, it would have been possible for the protagonist's father to become one of them.

The second outstanding aspect of the vision of the father is what the protagonist discovers at the end of it: "When I go to the fence the footprints are there [...]. I place my feet

in them and find that they are my own” (187). My interpretation of this fragment is the following: the image of her father came out from inside herself, from her own unconscious. Thus, the animus figure that was personified by the protagonist’s father had been –like the one represented by her mother – liberated into her consciousness.

The representations of the parents hold a particularly strong importance in the mind of an adult individual. As Saguaro explains: “For the child, the parents are his closest and most influential relations. But as he grows older this influence is split off; consequently the parental imagos become increasingly shut away from consciousness [...]. In this way the parental imagos remain as alien elements somewhere 'outside' the psyche” (158). In other words, the parental figures get weaker as the person grows older, and the way in which their function is maintained in the individual is through unconscious representations of them. For this reason it is important for the adult to acknowledge them, in whatever form they are presented.

5.4. Returning to the Surface: End of the Process

The individuation process is almost over. The protagonist has entered her unconscious and faced the personified complexes that inhabited it. As a result, she has been able to completely accept the memories her unconscious was hiding, thus recovering her past, her “lost half”.

The clearest example of this advance is what happens after she has met the images of both her parents: she has a dream. The content of the dream is highly relevant, but first of all, it should be noticed that in the fifth chapter of the novel, the protagonist claims to be unable to dream. Dreams are a key element in Jungian analytical psychology for they are considered the means by which the unconscious speaks to an individual. The protagonist was neglecting her unconscious at the beginning of the novel; she blocked it completely. For this reason, it is logical to expect her to be incapable of dreaming anything. The fact that she is able to do it *now* is the consequence of having acknowledged her unconscious.

The content of the dream itself was depicted by the narrator as follows: “During the night I have a dream about them [her parents], the way they were when they were alive and becoming older; they are in a boat, the green canoe, heading out of the bay. When I wake in the morning I know they have gone finally” (188). This dream represents that the protagonist has finally been able to accept the death of her parents. The image of them going away in a boat is highly symbolic: now that the conflict has been solved, they are going out of her unconscious. The fact that they are gone is now a conscious fact for the protagonist.

After the dream, the protagonist considers there is no reason for staying in the forest any longer. Recovering her rational thinking, she reflects on what has happened, including the incident of her failed relationship. She realizes there is no reason to worship her “former husband” as she did before, for, she concludes, he was “normal man” that gave her average cruelties and lies. She also starts to question the gods again “they have receded, back to the past, inside the skull” (189) – they are back to the unconscious. Finally, she prepares herself to go back to the village: “I dress, clumsily, unfamiliar with buttons; I re-ender my own time” (191). Psychoanalytically, what is happening in this last part of the book is that the protagonist is slowly coming back to external reality. Nevertheless, to do so she will need to cross the door of the unconscious again –the one that brought her to her past – in order to go back to the village, which she herself identifies with “the present tense” (51).

Conveniently, at this moment she sees a boat approaching her. It is Paul’s boat, Paul and Joe are coming for her. Joe calls her numerous times, but she does not answer. The protagonist sees him as “a mediator, an ambassador, offering me something: captivity in any of its forms, a new freedom?” (192). She hesitates in going with them or not because she does not know what she is going to find at the other side. Now that she has managed to feel comfortable with her inner life, the problem is being able to come back to her outer one. This is an issue that Jung contemplates in his analytical psychology. A person that has faced the personifications of the unconscious “thinks with mounting excitement that he has grasped and solved the great cosmic riddles; he therefore losses all touch with human reality” (Jung, *Man and his Symbols* 234). The process of individuation implies a great risk: you may lose yourself in your own unconscious. The reader does not know if this is the case of *Surfacing*’s main character or not. The novel closes with an open ending in which we are not told what the protagonist decides in the end.

6. CONCLUSIONS

In her novel *Surfacing*, Margaret Atwood starts to introduce surrealism as an innovation in her writing style. As a result of this, most of the action of the novel is developed in the mental scope of the protagonist's mind, who also acts as a first person narrator, introducing her inner life to the reader. The aim of the current study was to analyze the novel using a methodology that could allow me to give such mental experiences an explanation. For this purpose, I have applied C. G. Jung's analytical psychology, focusing on one of his concepts: the individuation. Achieving individuation means to reach a state of wholeness in a psychological way; a complete acceptance of your whole self.

One of the most significant findings that emerges from this study is that the events that take place in the plot of *Surfacing* can be interpreted as stages or consequences of the protagonist's own process of individuation. In the past, she had undergone several difficult experiences that left her emotionally wounded. As a response to this, such experiences were secluded in her unconscious, thus neglecting a part of herself. In order to recover it, the protagonist immerses herself into an introspection journey in which she manages to identify, accept, and overcome her inner conflicts. This idea of *Surfacing* as a process of individuation provides a possible interpretation for the title of the novel. During the narration, the verb 'to surface' is used in two senses: waking up, to be reborn or to emerge from a lake. All of them refer to actions in which an individual turns from a dark medium to a bright one. On this basis, 'surfacing' may refer to the protagonist's emotional healing, her transition from a difficult part of her life to a brand new start through the process of individuation. In this essay, I comment on this process in detail. The main conclusions about the development of the protagonist's self-exploration of the mind can be summarized as follows:

First of all, the protagonist undergoes several stages in her process of individuation. During each of those states she faces a different representation of what is hidden in her unconscious as a consequence of her past traumatic experiences. These images have both positive and negative features; the protagonist needs to identify what should be confronted or learned about them, thus acknowledging their existence and liberating them from her unconscious. It is necessary to follow a pattern, for it is possible for an individual to get lost inside his own unconscious and disconnect from the external world. For this reason, in *Surfacing* the protagonist's progress is led by a series of archetypal symbols that emerge from her own mind, some related to the Canadian landscape; others corresponding to certain Jungian concepts.

Secondly, another conclusion I have reached during this investigation is that the two kinds of archetypes present in the novel have different but complementary roles in the healing process of the protagonist's mind. In relation to the Jungian archetypes of the novel, they are for the most part personified complexes of several functions of the unconscious. They represent, through images that the main character can identify, different aspects of her mind that she needs to deal with in order to be able to advance. They are the key of her mental and emotional recovery, for they have a really strong influence on the mentality of the protagonist. Each of these images or visions constitutes one of the stages of the healing process, which eventually leads her to individuation.

Canadian landscape's function in this story is to establish bridges between one mental stage and the next; especially the elements of the lake and the forest – the entrance to the unconscious and the unconscious itself, respectively. There is a correspondence between the transitions that are being made in the mind of the protagonist and those taking place in the physical reality; in other words, the shift from one phase to another is guided by and represented on the landscape. For this reason, one can talk about microcosm and macrocosm in *Surfacing*; the macrocosm of the landscape affects and reflects the microcosm of the mind. It should be taken into account that wilderness plays a fundamental role not only in the transformation of the protagonist of this story, but also in the life of Margaret Atwood; this is not a coincidence, but a reflection of Atwood's psyche in her own work, as she herself recognizes (Sullivan 289).

This project provides a new framework for the analysis of Atwood's *Surfacing*. My procedure is characterized by using Jungian analytical psychology as the basis of my methodology as well as addressing the novel as a whole. While it is true that there are studies in which Jungian ideas have been used to talk about this novel, such approaches have been focused on specific aspects of it (the usage of language, the narrative technique, the theme of gender identity...). My contribution is original in the sense that its scope includes the totality of the plot as the object of study. From the point of view of Jungian analytical psychology, Margaret Atwood is not only a writer, a feminist, or an environmentalist. She is also a maker. In this novel Atwood has created a character with a whole inner world, so profusely complex that it can be analyzed under a Jungian scope.

The issue of the relation between the writer's mind and the traces of it that you can find in her work was not addressed in this study. Unfortunately, being limited to a specific number of characters and –most of all – to a restricted period of time, I could not develop an

investigation on the topic. Nevertheless, a further study could be conducted to investigate the fact that the life of the protagonist is certainly similar to Atwood's in certain aspects.

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