The Ghosts of Margaret Atwood and Henry James: An Analysis of the Relationship Between *Surfacing* and "The Jolly Corner"

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Cynthia E. Soldan

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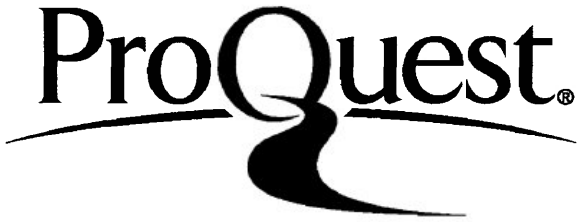

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Dedication

To my mother and father --
my very best teachers

Acknowledgments

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Abstract

In the writing of several critics and scholars comparisons have been made between Margaret Atwood's Surfacing and the supernatural tales of Henry James. This present study is based on the special relationship that appears to exist between Surfacing and James's final ghost story, "The Jolly Corner." By comparing the novel and the story and the significance in both of their psychological ghosts, it is quite obvious that they are remarkably similar; therefore, they invite similar critical approaches. In this study the attempt to analyze Surfacing uses as a foundation the psychological interpretation of "The Jolly Corner" by psychologist Saul Rosenzweig. Rosenzweig has identified the ghost in James's short story as one representing a portion or fragment of the author's self whose origin can be traced to James's decision to emigrate from America. When a similar approach is taken to Atwood's Surfacing, the conclusion reached is that the ghost in the novel represents a portion of Atwood's self that began to haunt her after the rejection of her first unpublished novel, Up in the Air So Blue.

Introduction

The traditional ghost story usually provides its reader with an apparition of one who has passed on from mortal life and haunts those places still inhabited by the living. Some ghost stories, however, feature a ghost that is not the spirit of one who has actually lived, but is instead, the impulse of an unlived life, born in the mind of the hero or heroine. Such a ghost is not an entity external to the main character; it is a portion or fragment of the character's personality or "self" that has been somehow separated from the whole. This separation or splitting off is often the result of repressed guilt or anxiety the character harbours because of a traumatic episode occurring in his or her past. The plot of a traditional ghost story often involves a fearful flight from the ghost. However, in those stories where the ghost inhabits the character's mind, a pursuit of the spirit is often evident. The hero or heroine usually becomes involved in a searching process, characterized by obsession and madness, that leads him or her to a confrontation with those spectres of the past that cause the mental instability. Such tales of the haunted, where the internal workings of the main character's mind provide the primary vehicle of the action and suspense, are called, appropriately, psychological ghost stories.

Margot Northey, in The Haunted Wilderness: The Gothic and Grotesque in Canadian Fiction, has provided one of the few comprehensive critical discussions of tales of the macabre evident in Canadian literature. Within her study, Northey discusses the psychological gothic as exemplified by Anne Hebert's Kamouraska. In this discussion of Hebert's novel, Northey identifies certain structural features that appear to be indigenous to many psychological ghost stories:

> . . . the whole novel is given as a first-person narrative, using a stream of consciousness technique that puts emphasis on inner thoughts and the reaction to events as much as on events themselves . . . The use of the interior monologue heightens the subjective colouring by allowing the feelings associated with past events to impinge upon the present, and conversely by allowing present attitudes and awareness to reshape reminiscences of the past.[1]

In the same discussion of the psychological ghost story, Northey states that "much modern gothic writing . . . attempts to reveal the horror in the apparently everyday--in what seems initially to be a fairly commonplace scene."[2] She also declares that conflict between civilized society and natural man is a feature of the psychological gothic. "The demands of society are set against the demands of the irrational, passionate or instinctive side of human nature."[3]

Another Canadian novel that appears to have many of these structural features is Margaret Atwood's Surfacing. Interestingly, Northey discusses Atwood's novel in her book, but chooses to label it a sociological gothic, as she views the societal conflict, particularly that between Canadian and American society, to be more prominent than the personal conflict experienced by the heroine. Even so, she admits to the presence of the

psychological component in the story:

> The sociological side of Surfacing is complicated by the fact that the story is a first-person narrative, and the narrator herself shows increasing psychological strain and mental instability.[4]

Atwood does state, however, in an interview with Linda Sandler in 1977, exactly what kind of a tale she has written:

> Iris Murdoch . . . writes psychological gothics--so did Henry James--and Surfacing has the elements of the mystery story and the ghost story,[5]

In the same interview she elaborates further on the origins of her novel:

> . . . Surfacing is a ghost story which follows a certain formula. . . . I was going through my papers recently and I came across an old paper on ghost stories that I'd written in university. I'd forgotten all about it, but it contains the "recipe" for the ghost story in Surfacing.[6]

Perusal of this early paper, now part of the "Atwood Papers" at the Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library in Toronto, reveals that it indeed aided Atwood in her later creation of the ghost story in Surfacing. One feature that is easily traced from this paper to the novel involves theories on the psychological ghost. The following short excerpts from the paper, titled "The Use of the Supernatural in the Novel," reveal the theoretical origin behind the spectre created for Surfacing:

> Most literary ghosts appear to the unnatural living, usually as a result of their unnaturalness. . . . they are haunted by guilt, in which case the relentless ghost is depicted by an atmosphere of horror.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> The ghost has its existence in the obsessed imagination of the haunted . . . they are not gimmicks to bristle the back hair of the reader but extensions of an unnatural state of mind; the reader believes, not that they exist externally, but that they are psychologically real.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> The particular intense effects which it is capable of producing seem to be best generated in a closed situation, treated in terms of psychological rather than social reality.[7]

Another interesting feature of this early paper is its reliance on the work and philosophies of Henry James. Atwood develops her own discussion of ghosts by referring to James's Portrait of a Lady, "The Turn of the Screw" and the preface to "The Altar of the Dead." One passage of the paper is particularly noteworthy; Atwood links James's theories on the supernatural to her own views on the most successful literary spectre:

> James is his own best illustration of what he means when he says that "prodigies . . . must loom through some other history--the indispensable history of somebody's normal relation to something." The ghosts of the dead, fulfilling their most meaningful function in the novel, are projections of the emotions of the living.[8]

Considering these early references to James, it comes as no great surprise that, in a conversation with Graeme Gibson on the origins of Surfacing, Atwood should make the following statement:

> There are various kinds of ghosts you can see. You could have just a simple straight-forward ghost story in which somebody sees a ghost which has no relation to them whatsoever. Or you can have the Henry James kind, in which the ghost that one sees is in fact a fragment of one's own self which has split off, and that to me is the most interesting kind and that is obviously the tradition I'm working in.[9]

As a result of the Jamesian influence on Atwood's novel, comparisons of the two authors have often been made in critical discussions of Surfacing. Jerome Rosenberg, in his article "Woman as Everyman in Atwood's Surfacing," states that "Atwood is a realistic writer, engaged like Henry James in elaborate studies--or rather, dramatic depictions--of nuances of the human mind."[10] Tom Marshall, in "Atwood Under and Above Water," says the atmosphere of Surfacing is "correspondingly tense and eerie, because this is a psychological ghost-story like 'The Turn of the Screw'."[11] Keith Garebian, in "Surfacing: An Apocalyptic Ghost Story," declares that

" . . . its ghosts, unlike the conventional type, are not evil or terrifying, except at certain moments to the protagonist who, like Henry James' governess in 'The Turn of the Screw', dramatizes her own psychic ebb and flow."[12]

Clearly, the writings of Henry James have had an important influence on Margaret Atwood's novel; this has been displayed consistently in the critical writing. However, up to the present time no critic appears to have made a direct comparison between Atwood's Surfacing and James's "The Jolly Corner," though this short story by James about an expatriate American who returns to inspect his inherited property and discovers the ghost of his alter-ego obviously can be compared to Surfacing. The apparent absence of such a comparison has been the case, perhaps, because James's "The Turn of the Screw" is such a well known tale of terror and also because its main character is female. In "The Turn of the Screw," however, the heroine encounters ghosts of real people who have previously lived, a situation quite unlike the experience of Spencer Brydon in "The Jolly Corner" who is confronted by a decidedly psychological ghost--the ghost of the man he would have become, had he never left America. Atwood appears to be the only author to be conscious of the connection between the two stories. In the Sandler interview previously mentioned, Atwood comments on the connection and clearly provides the link:

> The heroine should no more have killed herself than the protagonist in Henry James's story "The Jolly Corner" should have.[13]

A comparison of these two ghost stories proves to be an interesting exercise, for a remarkable number of similarities exist, so many that one is compelled to conclude that Atwood may have actually used "The Jolly

Corner" as a pattern for much of her own novel. Ultimately, such an exercise brings forth the need to look further into the genesis of both stories, for much critical writing about "The Jolly Corner" has explored its autobiographical content.

One particularly interesting article on James's final ghost story was published in Character and Personality in 1947. In this study, "The Ghost of Henry James," psychologist Saul Rosenzweig explores the origins of "The Jolly Corner" and concludes that the great American story-teller was attempting to reconcile himself to a traumatic event that occurred in his past. He refers to James's biography and postulates that a small yet signficant physical injury occurring in James's youth prompted the development of a psychological difficulty. This episode and the author's subsequent reactions to it resulted in the anxiety and depression James experienced throughout his adult life. Rosenzweig maintains that years later, James wrote "The Jolly Corner" in an effort to overcome feelings of anxiety that resulted from this early episode and the author's subsequent decision to emigrate from America. Using the psychological technique of thematic apperception analysis, Rosenzweig reveals how James, by interweaving his personal experience with the fiction, was attempting to exorcise a ghost in his own mind that was haunting him with disturbing memories of the past.

When one discovers that "The Jolly Corner" could very well be the "recipe" for Surfacing, it must be asked why Atwood would want to write such a ghost story revealing personal history. As early as her undergraduate days at the University of Toronto, Atwood exhibited substantial

knowledge of Henry James and his work. Further studies in American literature at Harvard University where, incidentally, the first rough notes of Surfacing were penned, no doubt contributed to additional exposure to James. It seems unlikely that Atwood was unaware of the many critical discussions that referred to the autobiographical nature of "The Jolly Corner." Surely, Atwood had some knowledge of the origins of James's story and perhaps, by patterning her novel after this tale, had a similar purpose in mind: Surfacing would serve as a means whereby Atwood too could deal with a ghost in her own past.

The present study is an attempt to reveal the true identity of the ghost in Surfacing. Attempting to determine the ghost's identity is not an entirely new venture; past discussions of the novel have speculated on the identity and meaning of the spectres. "Who are the ghosts of Surfacing?" asks Eli Mandel in his article "Atwood Gothic."[14] He realizes that they are more than the ghosts of an aborted child, a father and a mother. Recognizing the symbolic features of Atwood's craft, he knows they ultimately stand for something else:

> The ghosts are sexual fears, repressed contents of the imagination, social rigidity. They are also literary images, book reflections, patterns from all those readings in gothic romance, perhaps even the unwritten thesis Atwood proposed for her Ph.D. on gothic romance.[15]

This part of Mandel's discussion provides an important springboard for the present study, as it interprets the symbolic ghosts of Surfacing as projections of the author's own feelings and experiences. However, Mandel appears to have overlooked some important features of the novel is his interpretation. First, he refers to the "ghosts," but surely there is

only one ghost in Surfacing. The father and the mother are not really ghosts; they are hallucinations brought on by the heroine's period of madness. They do not provoke the "atmosphere of horror" that Atwood prescribes for literary ghosts in her undergraduate paper. There is only one ghost that functions in this way--the ghost of the aborted child. Atwood herself, in discussing the novel, refers to "the ghost in it"[16] in the singular.

Second, the heroine's abortion, providing the genesis of the ghost, is a very specific event in her past. When Mandel suggests that the ghosts are "sexual fears, repressed contents of the imagination, social rigidity, literary images, book reflections, patterns from all those readings in gothic romance," he does not view the symbolic ghost as something specific. Mandel's interpretation does not seem warranted, when one considers how crucial this single tragic experience is to the entire plot of the novel.

Mandel's suggestion that the ghost represents Atwood's "unwritten thesis" is an interesting one. Like the heroine's aborted child, it is something specific that never reached a state of completion. Atwood did not complete her Ph.D. thesis on gothic romance; the unfinished thesis including bibliographies, card files and typed drafts was given by Atwood to the Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library and is now contained in Boxes 46, 47 and 48 of the "Atwood Papers." It appears that Atwood had intened to finish the thesis; in an interview with Beverly Slopen in 1976, she states that she "plans to finish it eventually."[17] It is true that the heroine of Surfacing hopes to resurrect her "lost child . . . from the

lake where it has been prisoned for so long."[18] Therefore, one might argue that the novel is symbolically predicting the completion of the thesis. But, most importantly, one must remember that the heroine's first child was aborted and the very nature of an abortion signifies a termination, a death, a rejection. There is no evidence to indicate that Atwood's thesis was ever rejected; it was simply left unfinished. One must remember too that the abortion in the novel was a highly traumatic experience for the heroine. Her constant ruminations over this episode throughout the novel reveal the staggering effect it has had upon her mental well-being.

It thus does not seem very likely that the heroine's mental anguish and remorse symbolize Atwood's concern about her unfinished thesis. In the Slopen interview, Atwood discusses the completion of her thesis:

> . . . when it comes to a choice, I find I have other things I'd rather do. If I do write it, it will be a pure act--I won't be rewarded in any way.[19]

It appears that if the heroine's response to her abortion symbolizes something that concerned Atwood, for Atwood does tell Valerie Miner she believes that "madness . . . is symbolic of whatever is bothering a person,"[20] it seems more likely that the "bother" would stem from her literary career and not her academic life. In "Atwood in Metamorphosis," Miner states that "the real hallmark of her college career was publishing--poems in Acta Victoriana, The Canadian Forum, The Tamarack Review."[21] From her earliest university days, writing for publications appeared to be one of Atwood's greatest preoccupations. Miner states further:

> After she won a Governor General's Award for poetry in 1966, her writing began to absorb more and more of her time. Other people were beginning to recognize what Peggy had known since that Grade Twelve poem, that she was a writer.
> . . . . . .
> Several relationships broke up because of her writing. . . . She didn't marry until she was twenty-seven. Not until, as she had promised herself, she was a writer.[22]

In this interview with Miner, Atwood declares:

> . . . I wanted to write. Nothing else had as much meaning for me. It would be impossible for me to live with anyone who didn't allow me to be a writer. Repressing that part of me would lead to more misery than it would be worth.[23]

These statements seem to suggest that pursuing a literary career eventually became more important to Atwood than fulfilling her academic goals. Therefore, it does seem that if the ghost in Surfacing represents a specific piece of written work, as Mandel suggests when he mentions the "unwritten thesis," it is more likely that the work is a part of Atwood's literary endeavour; this part of her life appears to have consumed her greatest energies and been foremost in her mind. And, as the symbol of the abortion suggests, such a work was, perhaps, one that was terminated or rejected.

This study attempts to show that the ghost of Surfacing is more than a fictitious apparition; it is a portion or fragment of the author's self that was spawned early in her literary career with the rejection of her first novel, Up in the Air So Blue. It seems that Atwood has revealed this ghost in Surfacing in much the same way that Henry James revealed a ghost from his own past in "The Jolly Corner." Chapter I of the thesis, therefore, is devoted to comparing Atwood's novel to James's

short story. By illustrating their many similarities, the chapter attempts to break ground for an analysis of Surfacing based on one performed on "The Jolly Corner." Chapter II focuses on a particular treatment of "The Jolly Corner," namely, Saul Rosenzweig's thematic apperception analysis and reveals how Rosenzweig reaches his conclusion that the ghost in "The Jolly Corner" represents a separated portion or fragment of James's personality that resulted from a disturbing memory of the past. The purpose of Chapter II is to provide a framework for the analysis of Surfacing which follows in Chapter III. In this final chapter, the origins of Surfacing are traced with a view to discovering the genesis of the ghost that, portrayed in the novel, seems to be one representing a ghost of the author herself. Some of the material in Chapter III is the result of research on the "Atwood Papers" in the Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library in Toronto. The "Papers", consisting of the author's correspondence and manuscripts that document her literary career from 1958 to 1982, allow one to piece together the facts surrounding Atwood's literary past and examine the evolution of her literary personality. Such information helps to substantiate a conclusion that the ghost of Surfacing is, quintessentially, the ghost of Margaret Atwood.

In Chapter III, the structure of the mystery story apparent in Atwood's novel is also examined because Atwood maintains that Surfacing contains elements of both the ghost story and the mystery story. Unlike "The Jolly Corner," Surfacing contains features of this latter genre and hence, an added factor is introduced into the analysis of the novel. Therefore, a short discussion of Atwood's use of the mystery story

structure necessarily precedes the formal analysis. This analysis of Surfacing involving a series of postulations about the genesis of the ghost, approaches the revelation of its identity in a way not unlike the pattern followed in arriving at the solution to a mystery story.

Introduction

Notes

[1]Margot Northey, The Haunted Wilderness: The Gothic and Grotesque in Canadian Fiction (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1976), p. 54.

[2]Northey, p. 55.

[3]Ibid.

[4]Ibid., p. 66.

[5]Linda Sandler, "Interview with Margaret Atwood," The Malahat Review, No. 41 (January 1977), p. 11.

[6]Ibid.

[7]Margaret Atwood, "The Use of the Supernatural in the Novel," The Atwood Papers, Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library, University of Toronto, Box 3, Folder 13, pp. 4, 5, and 9.

[8]Ibid., p. 7.

[9]Graeme Gibson, "Interview with Margaret Atwood," in Eleven Canadian Novelists (Toronto: Anansi, 1973), p. 29.

[10]Jerome Rosenberg, "Woman as Everyman in Atwood's Surfacing: Some Observations on the End of the Novel," Studies in Canadian Fiction, 3, No. 1 (Winter 1978), p. 128.

[11]Tom Marshall, "Atwood Under and Above Water," The Malahat Review, No. 41 (January 1977), p. 93.

[12]Keith Garebian, "Surfacing: Apocalyptic Ghost Story," Mosaic, 9, No. 9 (Spring 1976), p. 1.

[13]Sandler, p. 11.

[14]Eli Mandel, "Atwood Gothic," The Malahat Review, No. 41 (January 1977), p. 169.

[15]Ibid., pp. 169-170.

[16]Gibson, p. 29.

[17]Beverly Slopen, "Margaret Atwood," Publisher's Weekly, 210, No. 8 (August 23, 1976), p. 6.

[18]Margaret Atwood, Surfacing (Markham, Ontario: Paperjacks), 1973, p. 173.

[19]Slopen, p. 6.

[20]Valerie Miner, "Atwood in Metamorphosis: An Authentic Canadian Fairy Tale," in Her Own Woman: Profiles of Ten Canadian Women, ed. Myrna Kostash (Toronto: MacMillan, 1975), p. 192.

[21]Ibid., p. 182.

[22]Ibid., pp. 183-185.

[23]Ibid., p. 184.

Chapter I

The Remarkably Similar Stories

Referring to the ghost story in Surfacing, Margaret Atwood has made the following comment:

> You can have the Henry James kind, in which the ghost that one sees is in fact a fragment of one's own self which has split off and that to me is the most interesting kind and that is obviously the tradition I'm working in.[1]

When she declares that Surfacing was written in the tradition of Henry James, Atwood does not mention a particular ghost story by James as the one after which her novel may have been modelled. However, none of James's ghost stories portray this condition of the fragmentary self more obviously than "The Jolly Corner." Comparing this story to Surfacing, one discovers remarkable similarities between the two and therefore, also may discover a distinct pattern for much of the novel.

The most obvious similarities between the two tales concern plot. Both stories begin with the main characters returning to their childhood homes after a long absence. Both have had the decision to return forced upon them to some extent: Spencer Brydon must return to New York to deal with his inherited property and the heroine of Surfacing must return to wilderness of northern Quebec because she has received news of her missing father. When they arrive, both are disappointed with the view of a place once so familiar to them. James reveals Brydon's feelings about the city that was once his home:

> . . , he missed what he would have been sure of finding, he found what he would have never imagined. Proportions were upside-down; the ugly things he had expected, the ugly things of his

> far-away youth . . . these uncanny phenomena placed him rather, as it happened, under the charm; whereas the "swagger" things, the modern, the monstrous, the famous things, those he had more particularly . . . come over to see, were exactly his sources of dismay.[2]

Atwood conveys the similar disappointment felt by her heroine:

> . . . now I'm in the village, walking through it, waiting for the nostalgia to hit, for the cluster of nondescript buildings to be irradiated with inner light like a plug-in creche, as it has been so often in memory; but nothing happens.[3]

As the stories progress, one discovers that each protagonist has become involved in a search. The significance of each search is underscored when each takes on a distinctive metaphorical hue. Brydon likens the stalking of his alter-ego to a big game hunt. James employs several images to portray this extended metaphor:

> He found himself at moments--once he had placed his single light on some mantel shelf or in some recess--stepping back into shelter or shade, effacing himself behind a door or in an embrasure, as he had sought of old the vantage of rock and tree.
> . . . . . .
> . . . he found himself holding his breath and living in the joy of the instant, the supreme suspense created by big game alone.
> . . . . . .
> . . . none the less often the rear of the house affected him as the very jungle of his prey. . . .
> . . . he's the fanged or the antlered animal brought at last to bay. (337-340)

Atwood's character is also involved in a search, and for her it takes on the flavour of a detective solving a mystery:

> Every few steps I glance to each side, eyes straining, scanning the ground for evidence, for anything human: a button, a cartridge, a discarded bit of paper. (54)

> I swivelled the caps back onto the paint tubes. I had no intention of working; now they were all out of the way, I would search for the will, the deed, the property title. Paul had been certain he was dead, that made me doubt my theory.

> . . . . . .
> The notes and numbers were apparently a location code, it was like a puzzle he'd left for me to solve.
> . . . . . .
> I had the proof now, indisputable, of sanity and therefore of death. (108-112)

Both protagonists are intent on carrying out the search alone, making efforts to keep their searches secret from their companions. Spencer Brydon is keen to keep secret his nightly visits to his house on the "jolly corner":

> Spencer Brydon had his reasons and was growingly aware of them; they seemed to him better each time he was there, though he didn't name them all to his companion, any more than he told her as yet how often, how quite absurdly often he himself came.
> . . . . . .
> . . . he imagined Alice Staverton for the instant on the point of asking him, with a divination, if he ever so prowled. They were divinations he was unprepared for, and he had at all events, averted enquiry. . . . (326-327)

Atwood's character is shown to be equally concerned with keeping her activities from her companions:

> I reach the stack of papers back to the shelf, I don't want them to see. (64)

> I took the scrapbooks into my room and hid them under the mattress, I didn't want them spying. (98)

> . . . I didn't want him with me, I'd have to explain what I was doing . . . (149)

No doubt the very personal nature of each quest prompts each character to act with such secrecy. Concerned with questions of sanity, both have chosen to avoid disclosure of their search and thereby avoid any opposition or judgmental interjection. Perhaps more importantly, as the ultimate outcome of each search is recognized, it becomes apparent that the journey each has made could not have been accomplished in the company of others.

As the tales continue, it is obvious that each protagonist is about to experience a confrontation with some unknown element. Each is involved in a descent prior to this confrontation. Interestingly, Brydon descends four flights of stairs; Atwood's character makes four dives into the lake. After three flights of stairs Brydon experiences a heightened emotional response:

> He came down further, he crossed the passage forming the access to the last flight; and if here again he stopped an instant it was almost for the sharpness of the thrill of assured escape. (349)

After three dives, Atwood's heroine also experiences a heightened emotional response:

> On the next try I thought I saw it, a blotch, a shadow, just as I turned to go up. I was dizzy, my vision was beginning to cloud, while I rested my ribs panted, I ought to pause, half an hour at least; but I was elated, it was down there, I would find it. (152)

The heightened emotional response exhibited by the characters in both tales effectively raises each to its climactic point.

With both characters on the brink of their final descents, the reader anticipates Brydon's narrow escape from the house and the heroine's discovery of the Indian pictographs. However, the character and, ultimately, the reader, are taken by surprise, for what is confronted is totally unexpected. Spencer Brydon avoids the ghost behind the door at the top of the stairs and so is overwhelmingly startled by his encounter with the "hideous monster" at the bottom of the stairs. Similarly, the heroine of Surfacing, who plunges under the water in search of Indian pictographs, is horrified when she sees instead the ghost of her aborted child. The shock and fear both characters experience as they confront a part of

themselves is similarly conveyed. James reveals Brydon's intense moment of fear:

> Horror, with the sight, had leaped into Brydon's throat, gasping there in a sound he couldn't utter. (350)

Similarly, Atwood describes the sound of terror her heroine cannot utter:

> I turned, fear gushing out of my mouth in silver, panic closing my throat, the scream kept in and choking me. (152)

Both protagonists are overtaken by a loss of consciousness following their confrontations with the ghosts. For Spencer Brydon, this loss is in the form of a "swoon" which lasts for several hours until the next afternoon. Atwood's character has a more pronounced lapse that even may be labelled a temporary loss of sanity, for she embarks on a primitive "bush-woman" existence for five days following her ghostly encounter.

Also, despite their initial terror, both characters are charged with feelings of insight following their experiences. Spencer Brydon, upon his revival, contemplates his feelings:

> He had come back, yes--come back from further away than any man but himself had ever travelled; but it was strange how with this sense what he had come back to seemed really the great thing. . . . It had brought him to knowledge, to knowledge--yes, this was the beauty of his state. . . . (352)

Atwood's character, through her "true vision; at the end, after the failure of logic" (156), comes to possess a "power" she experiences several times:

> His fingers were squeezing, he was drawing away some of the power.
> . . . . . .
> . . . the power from my father's intercession wasn't enough to protect me, it gave only knowledge,
> . . . . . .
> My room was the only one remaining. As soon as I stepped inside, I sensed the power, in my hands and running along my arms.

. . . . . .
They were my guides, she had saved them for me, pictographs, I had to read their new meaning with the help of the power. (161-170)

This knowledge or power that both characters have acquired through a vision of a part of themselves, helps them to resolve misgivings about the past. As a result, both characters are able to redefine their present situations and look to the future with new insights. The tales end with each protagonist on the brink of finding comfort and security with a loved one; however, Atwood chooses to leave the fate of her two lovers slightly questionable and ambiguous.

The plots of these ghost stories are developed within very similar structures. Each tale is divided into three separate sections. In "The Jolly Corner," the first section deals with Brydon's arrival and his growing interest in what may be in store for him at the house. In the first past of Surfacing a similar setting of the scene is evident with the heroine, at the very end of this section, "pushing" herself "reluctantly into the lake" (80) and thus, initiating the quest she will embark upon. The second section in each story deals with the ghostly encounter. At the end of Part II, Brydon loses consciousness. At this point in Surfacing, the heroine is now convinced that "everything is waiting to become alive." (170) It is at the end of the second section that both protagonists, having experienced a confrontation with a ghost and the feelings regarding their past lives, are now on the brink of reawakening to a restored self and a future devoid of old anguishes. Part III involves each protagonist acting, in some capacity, upon the

events that have transpired thus far. The three sections of both stories are proportionately similar in length. Part I in each tale is shorter than Part II, but slightly longer than Part III. ("The Jolly Corner" is divided: Part I, 13 pages; Part II, approximately 17 pages; Part III, approximately 7 pages. Surfacing is divided: Part I, 8 chapters; Part II, 10 chapters; Part III, 7 chapters.) That Part II in each, concerned with the actual search for and discovery of the ghost is more elaborate, may indicate a marking of the most important feature in each tale.

In addition to similarities in plot and structure, both James and Atwood have employed similar stylistic features. In order to enhance the mysterious element common to ghost stories, both writers use a narrative style that is vague and shrouded. This vagueness in expression is characteristic of the stream of consciousness technique that Margot Northey has declared fundamental to the psychological ghost story. Such a narrative style, where the emphasis is placed on the character's inner thoughts, often results in unconventional sentence structures. This feature is common to both stories. In "The Jolly Corner" James describes Brydon's earliest "most disguised and most muffled vibrations":

> It had begun to be present to him after the first fortnight, it had broken out with the oddest abruptness, this particular wanton wonderment: it met him there--and this was the image under which he himself judged the matter, or at least, not a little, thrilled and flushed with it--very much as he might have been met by some strange figure, some unexpected occupant, at a turn of one of the dim passages of an empty house. (325)

The vagueness of Brydon's feelings is effectively disclosed in a sentence equally vague in structure whose meaning is somewhat shrouded by its

sheer length. Atwood invokes a poetic quality in much of her prose and, along with the use of unconventional syntax and punctuation, produces narrative in some portions of the novel where meaning is difficult to decipher:

> The animals have no need for speech, why talk when you are a word
> I lean against a tree; I am a tree leaning
> I break out again into the bright sun and crumple, head against the ground
> I am not an animal or a tree, I am the thing in which the trees and animals move and grow, I am a place (195)

Generally, James's narrative is made more complex than Atwood's by his use of very long and complicated sentences. However, Atwood does render her narrative line equally complicated by incorporating many facts the reader later must recognize as falsehoods:

> At my wedding we filled out forms, name, age, birthplace, blood type. We had it in a post office, a J.P. did it, oil portraits of former postmasters presided from the beige walls. (94)

> "Look," I said, "I've been married before and it didn't work out. I had a baby too." (93)

Needless to say, such narrative styles necessitate a careful reading in order to unravel the plot; therefore, both James and Atwood demand a concentrated effort from their readers.

The use of highly-charged images is another characteristic common to both stories. Though obviously much shorter than the novel, James's story still contains a variety of compelling images. A rather delightful one in "The Jolly Corner" involves Brydon musing about his visits to the house:

> He projected all day, in thought, straight over the bristling lines of hard unconscious heads and into the other, the real,

> the waiting life; the life that, as soon as he had heard behind him the click of his great house-door, began for him, on the jolly corner, as beguilingly as the slow opening bars of some rich music follows the tap of the conductor's wand. (335)

Atwood, the accomplished poet, fills her novel with many effective and very often, quite fantastic images. One thoughtful image reveals a passing day for the unoccupied campers:

> Sun rising, drifting across the sky, shadows changing without help, uninterrupted air, absence of defining borders, the only break an occasional distant plane, vapour streak, for them it must have been like living in a hammock. (89)

Several images that appeal to the auditory sense are presented most effectively in both stories. When James describes the house, an appeal to one's sense of sound is readily achieved:

> . . . the first effect of the point of his stick on the marble . . was the dim reverberating tinkle of some far-off bell who should say where? in the depths of the house, of the past, of that mystical other world that might have flourished for him.
> . . . . . .
> , . . feeling the place once more in the likeness of some great glass bowl, all precious concave crystal, set delicately humming by the play of a moist finger around its edge. The concave crystal held, as it were, this mystical other world, and the indescribably fine murmur of its rim was the sigh there, the scarce audible pathetic wail to his strained ear, of all the old baffled forsworn possibilities. (335-336)

The same appeal to one's sense of hearing is evident within Atwood's several references to the lake and the trees:

> The wind moves, rustling of tree lungs, water lapping all around us. (174)

> I pause in the middle of the room, listening: no wind, stillness, held breath of the lake, trees. (183)

> A light wind, the small waves talking aginst the shore, multilingual water. (192)

> The lake is quiet, the trees surround me, asking and giving nothing. (208)

Both James and Atwood, quite cannily, have placed these auditory images in their ghost stories; often it is that which is heard but not seen which arouses more terror.

Images appealing to the visual sense, specifically those which deal with illumination, are present in each tale as well. James describes the "glimmering light" of his candle (304), "the hard silver of the autumn stars" (338) and the "white electric lustre" of the street lamps. (338) Atwood writes: "The sunset was red, a clear tulip colour paling to flesh webs," (171) and "The water gives off icy light, zinc moon breaking on small waves." (44) All of these images involve a particular intensity (i.e. brightness of colour, strength of metal) and consequently they serve to underscore the characters' preoccupation with light, and therefore, safety in a dark, unknown and perhaps sinister environment. One pair of images by the two authors involving illumination shows remarkable similarity. Each image appears just prior to the ghostly encounter. Brydon is descending the staircase and perceives the house in the following manner:

> The house, withal, seemed immense, the scale of space again inordinate; . . . only the high skylight that formed the crown of the deep well created for him a medium in which he could advance, but which might have been, for queerness of colour, some watery underworld. . . . At the end of two flights he had dropped to another zone and from the middle of the third . . . he recognized the influence of the lower windows, of half-drawn blinds, of the occasional gleam of the street lamps, of the glazed spaces of the vestibule. This was the bottom of the sea, which showed an illumination of its own. (348)

As the heroine of Surfacing makes her last descent into the lake she has the following perception of it:

> Pale green, then darkness, layer after layer, deeper than before, seabottom: the water seemed to have thickened, in it pinprick lights flicked and darted, red and blue, yellow and white, and I saw they were fish, the chasm dwellers, fins lined with phosphorescent sparks, teeth neon. (152)

That the house and the lake should be described in such similar ways is quite appropriate; each serves as the environment in which the protagonist conducts a search and achieves enlightenment. These two images, therefore, reveal more than the actual presence of light; rather, they take on a distinct symbolic quality.

Symbolism, then, is yet another feature common to both stories. Quentin Anderson notes that within James's "system of symbolism" in "The Jolly Corner" are the primary symbols of the house, the two selves and the divine love.[4] Atwood's novel is full of complex symbolism, and in addition to the lake and the surfacing that occurs there, other important symbols can be discerned. There are those that are concerned with birth:

> . , . they take the baby out with a fork like a pickle out of a pickle jar. . . . (86)

> . , . on the left was a woman with a round stomach: the baby was sitting up inside her gazing out. (169)

Others are concerned with photographs or pictures:

> I pieced it together the best way I could, flattening it, scrap book, collage. . . . A faked album, the memories fraudulent as passports. (154)

> I was in most of the pictures, shut in behind the paper; . . . I was the one smudged with movement. . . . Further on, glossy colour prints. . . . (116)

The symbol of mutilation or amputation, signifying the fragmentation of the protagonist, is event in both tales. James's ghost exhibits this mutilation:

> . . . one of these hands had lost two fingers, which were reduced to stumps, as if accidentally shot away. . . . (350)

Within Atwood's novel, an early reflection by the heroine reveals a very similar condition of fragmentation:

> . , . there had been an accident and I came apart. 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. (117)

It is interesting to note how, in this passage, Atwood, like James, uses a lost portion of the hand to symbolize the fragmentation and also, similarly refers to this episode as accidental. However, once the "accident" is revealed as an abortion, Atwood emphasizes this condition of fragmentation much more dramatically:

> Whatever it is, part of myself or a separate creature, I killed it. It wasn't a child but it could have been one, . . .
> . . . . . .
> They scraped it into a bucket and threw it wherever they throw them, it was travelling through the sewers by the time I woke, back to the sea.
> . . . . . .
> I couldn't accept it, that mutilation, . . .
> I was emptied, amputated; I stank of salt and antiseptic, they had planted death in me like a seed. (153-154)

Of course, the most obvious symbol common to both tales is the ghost itself. In each story the ghost represents a part or fragment of the protagonist and, ultimately, an association with a disturbing event in the past. Though each ghost is quite different--Brydon's alter-ego in evening dress bears no resemblance to the gruesome apparition of the aborted

child--it is interesting to note how each author initially describes the ghost in similar fashion employing the third person pronoun. James describes the ghost of Brydon's alter-ego in the following manner:

> It gloomed, it loomed, it was something, it was somebody, the prodigy of a personal presence. (350)

Atwood similarly conveys the heroine's perception of the phantom under the surface of the lake:

> It was there but it wasn't a painting, it wasn't on the rock. . . . It was blurred but it had eyes, they were open, it was something I knew about, a dead thing, it was dead. (154)

It is also interesting to note that before each ghost is totally recognized, the protagonists experience similar perceptions of them. Brydon perceives a "penumbra"; the heroine of Surfacing sees a "dark oval." Though rather subtle, these similarities between the ghosts do lend themselves to an appreciation of a similar symbolic significance.

Interpretation of the symbolism brings one to a discovery of thematic considerations in each tale. Having viewed the many similarities within the works themselves, it should come as no surprise that a good deal of critical opinion maintains similar views of thematic qualities in each ghost story as well.

Gloria Onley, in "Margaret Atwood: Surfacing in the Interests of Survival," links thematic considerations of the novel to arguments presented in Atwood's thematic guide to Canadian literature:

> As Atwood notes in the Introduction to Survival, Northrop Frye suggests that in Canada "Who am I?" at least partly equals "Where is here?" Here in Surfacing in the liberated naked consciousness, its doors of perception symbolically cleansed: the "place" is the Canadian wilderness which becomes the new body

> or rediscovered original body of the psychosomatic human, Canadian man/woman in contradistinction to American schizophrenic man/woman, exiled from the biosphere and from himself/herself. Surfacing is, for Canadians, an anatomy of the "deluge of values and artifacts flowing in from outside" which "render invisible the values and artifacts that actually exist 'here'."[5]

Perhaps, Onley suggests, Surfacing is the exploration of a "national neurosis" experienced by Canadians in the wake of the strong influence of American society. This neurosis, however, is not limited to a Canadian experience. Within the pages of "The Jolly Corner" one may discover a similar question of national identity. In this case, though, it is the expatriate American struggling with the influence of European values. In a discourse on Canada's struggle for identity in the shadow of American influence, Marshall McLuhan points out:

> Atwood's study of Canadian writers reveals the frontier trauma, yet one that is not uniquely Canadian. . . . On the borderline between these areas of aggression and hospitality Hawthorne and James etched their psychic adventures and the "complex fate" of being North American.[6]

McLuhan further reveals how expressions of the struggle for "group" identity within a country have been provided by Henry James:

> . . . the American sense of identity was as much a question mark in the late nineteenth century as the Canadian sense of identity is today, and James serves to stress for us the crucial role of the imaginative artist in creating the uncreated consciousness of a people.[7]

As each ghost story shares this common element of a quest for national identity, so does each, according to critical thought, address itself to issues of a more global nature. Jerome Rosenberg has expressed by the title of his article, "Woman as Everyman in Atwood's Surfacing," sentiments quite similar to those found in Ernest Tuveson's critical

discussion of "The Jolly Corner." Tuveson concludes his article as follows:

> Needless to say, this fable has broad cultural resonance. As a parable of the spiritual dilema of the sensitive mind in its era, its significance is great. . . . Spencer Brydon thus is for us a kind of Everyman, and in his conflict we find something of ourselves.[8]

Regardless, then, of nationality, the struggle present in both "The Jolly Corner" and Surfacing has been thought to be one representative of all humanity faced with conflicting values in an often hostile or at least indifferent environment.

In both tales, this struggle ultimately leads to a resolution of the conflicts, and it is within this context that yet another theme common to both stories may be discerned. Having confronted the misgivings and anxieties of the past, each protagonist awakens to the prospect of spiritual renewal. The element of resurrection from old agonies, of redemption from past guilt, is prevalent in each story. Several critics have dealt with these issues and have reached similar conclusions. In "'The Jolly Corner': A Fable of Redemption," Ernest Tuveson declares:

> It has been said that Brydon comes to accept himself. True in a way; but it is by no means the whole truth. He has arrived at a much better spiritual condition than he had experienced before. He has the chance . . . to break the shell of unconscious infantile egotism that has surrounded him throughout his life.[9]

Not so convinced of Brydon's "chance", Allen Stein finds a tragic irony in Brydon's rebirth:

> Rather than awakening to a redeeming sense of past sinfulness and fresh possibilities for spiritual renewal, he awakens to old conceits and new self-delusions.[10]

Similarly, the heroine of Surfacing has moved toward spiritual rebirth, but whether she has accomplished it is another question. Susan Schaeffer declares:

> . . . the book leaves her fate unresolved. Having seen the truth, having surfaced, the world is still as it was. . . . She has bungled her attempts at drawing, or creating, a golden phoenix, the bird of resurrection.[11]

Therefore, though the heroine initially perceives a lake "blue and cool as redemption," (16) she ultimately realizes that there is "no total salvation, resurrection . . ." (204)

That each protagonist should find redemption perhaps is not, according to some, the central issue. Jerome Rosenberg states:

> The attainment of knowledge has altered their relationship in some way; but Atwood, like James, is less concerned with the results of this alteration, more concerned with the journey traversed.[12]

This "journey traversed" is another theme explored in discussions of Surfacing and "The Jolly Corner." In both stories, the protagonists travel to their childhood homes, but these journeys serve only as backdrops to the other journey featured in both tales. "The physical journey becomes the interior journey into the mind"[13] says Catherine McLay in her discussion of Surfacing. This statement exemplifies the critical writing wherein "The Jolly Corner" and Surfacing have been viewed as depictions of the human mind in psychological turmoil. Critics of both stories have maintained that the self has been divided by the trauma of an earlier event. For Spencer Brydon, the desertion of his homeland precipitates the splitting of the self; for the heroine of Surfacing, the abortion marks the fragmentation of the personality. The portions of

the selves that have become separated from the whole are symbolized by the ghosts. The journey traversed, then, in both stories, has been viewed as the searching out and confronting of these spectres and the repressed feelings of guilt and anxiety that accompany them. When the stories are viewed in this manner, psychological theories, particularly those concerned with personality disorders, often find their way into the critical discussions. For example, in his discussion of "The Jolly Corner," Ernest Tuveson, who views James's story as "one of the most successful depictions of a psychic crisis--from within--ever conceived,"[14] explores the theories of F.W.H. Myers, a pioneer in the development of personality theory:

> Myers himself theorized that there may exist within a single person different "currents" of the psyche, moving at different rates and in different ways; for a time, the consciousness may ride one, but a crisis may jolt it onto another, or something may make the conscious awareness, as it were, subject to both currents at once, resulting in psychic confusion and even insanity. "The Jolly Corner" obviously is the account of such a critical encounter between selves--in James's phrase, "a rage of personality."[15]

In her discussion of Surfacing, Catherine McLay relies on the theories of R.D. Laing, as presented in his classic study The Divided Self, to promote her theory that "in her second novel Surfacing . . . Margaret Atwood explores a contemporary problem, the search for unity in a self which has become divided."[16] McLay quotes the following from Laing's study and in doing so, essentially describes the heroine of Atwood's novel:

> Such a person is not able to experience himself "together with" others or "at home in" the world, but on the contrary, he experiences himself in despairing aloneness and isolation; moreover, he does not experience himself as a complete person but rather as a "split" in various ways, perhaps as a mind more or less tenuously linked to a body, or two or more selves, and so on.[17]

Other critics have shared similar views of the ghost stories. Floyd Stovall, in his discussion of "The Jolly Corner," declares that "there is in Spencer Brydon a double consciousnes, . . ."[18] Roberta Rubenstein, in "Surfacing: Margaret Atwood's Journey to the Interior," states that "the journey towards wholeness involves a Jungian rejoining of the radically severed halves of the narrator's self."[19]

Both Surfacing and "The Jolly Corner" have invited many critical explorations into their themes. The brief review of some of these critical writings given here shows that they too have been remarkably similar.

If the foregoing has accomplished its aim, a general conclusion that "The Jolly Corner" and Surfacing bear many strong similarities may be made. And, if such a conclusion is acceptable, it may not be unreasonable to view "The Jolly Corner," especially in view of Atwood's own comments, as a work from which she derived the "recipe" for Surfacing. At this point it is important to note that "The Jolly Corner" is a story that many have discussed with reference to its autobiographical content. If indeed Atwood has incorporated features of "The Jolly Corner" into her novel, it may be helpful to examine these additional insights into James's work; such a discussion will provide useful background for the analysis of Surfacing in Chapter III.

Chapter I

Notes

[1]Graeme Gibson, "Interview with Margaret Atwood," in Eleven Canadian Novelists (Toronto: Anansi, 1973), p. 29.

[2]Henry James, "The Jolly Corner," in Henry James: Selected Short Stories, ed. Quentin Anderson (San Francisco: Rinehart Press, 1957), p. 322. Subsequent page references to this story appear in parentheses following the quotation.

[3]Margaret Atwood, Surfacing (Markham, Ontario: Paperjacks, 1973), p. 19. Subsequent page references to this novel appear in parentheses following the quotation.

[4]Quentin Anderson (ed.), Henry James: Selected Short Stories (San Francisco: Rinehart Press, 1957), pp. xiii-xiv.

[5]Gloria Onley, "Margaret Atwood: Surfacing in the Interests of Survival," West Coast Review, No. 8 (1973), p. 52.

[6]Marshall McLuhan, "Canada: The Borderline Case," in The Canadian Imagination, ed. David Staines (Boston: Harvard University Press, 1977), p. 231.

[7]Ibid., pp. 238-239.

[8]Ernest Tuveson, "'The Jolly Corner': A Fable of Redemption," Studies in Short Fiction, No. 12 (1975), p. 280.

[9]Ibid., p. 278.

[10]Allan Stein, "The Beast in the Jolly Corner: Spencer Brydon's Ironic Rebirth," Studies in Short Fiction, No. 11 (1974), p. 66.

[11]Susan Fromberg Schaeffer, "'It is Time That Separates Us': Margaret Atwood's Surfacing," Centennial Review, No. 18 (Fall 1974), pp. 336-337.

[12]Jerome Rosenberg, "Woman as Everyman in Atwood's Surfacing: Some Observations on the End of the Novel," Studies in Canadian Literature, 3, No. 1 (Winter 1978), p. 130.

[13]Catherine McLay, "The Divided Self: Theme and Pattern in Margaret Atwood's Surfacing," Journal of Canadian Fiction, No. 3 (1975), p. 83.

[14]Tuveson, p. 271.

[15]Ibid., p. 273.

[16]McLay, p. 82.

[17]Ibid.

[18]Floyd Stovall, "Henry James's 'The Jolly Corner'," Nineteenth Century Fiction, No. 12 (1957-58), p. 72.

[19]Roberta Rubenstein, "Surfacing: Margaret Atwood's Journey to the Interior," Modern Fiction Studies, 22, No. 3 (Autumn 1976), p. 389.

Chapter II

The Ghost of Henry James

Henry James, like Spencer Brydon, left his native America and lived abroad for most of his adult life. He made a return visit in 1904 and shortly afterward, in 1907, wrote "The Jolly Corner." On surveying the critical writing about the story, one discovers that James's "The Jolly Corner" contains considerable autobiographical undercurrent. James's biographer, Leon Edel, in his introduction to the story, states that it is "one of the most autobiographical of his tales."[1] He continues:

> The novelist had revisited the United States in 1904-05 after an absence of twenty years. . . . As a direct consequence of this he wrote, in 1907, "The Jolly Corner"-- the Self confronting the Self, the repatriated American going in search of the person he might have been had he stayed at home. James put into this tale the central myth of his life--that of America and Europe, and the questions of his personal identity.[2]

Louis Auchincloss, in his book Reading Henry James, also supports the notion that "The Jolly Corner" is a direct result of James's own experiences. After Auchincloss discusses James's disappointing visit to America, he adds:

> For the rest of his life . . . he was to be passionately concerned with the impressions collected on the trip. For were they not proof that the greatest decision that he had to make--the abandonment of his homeland--had been the correct one? Anything so important had to be worked into his fiction.[3]

In A Reader's Guide to Henry James, S. Gorley Putt discusses the autobiographical nature of "The Jolly Corner" as well:

> We are back at the crucial watershed of James's own life, back at the point where parental scorn of commerce allied with his own fear of engaging in physical competiton to dictate his official future strategy. Whether that strategy were not to be assessed as having been a cowardly retreat from American reality, or a heroic advance into citizenship of a wider spiritual and intellectual world, was the unresolvable problem Henry James was now seeking via Spencer Brydon and his doppelganger, to probe.[4]

In an article entitled "The Ghost of Henry James: A Study in Thematic Apperception," psychologist Saul Rosenzweig has also examined the autobiographical element in "The Jolly Corner." In his study, Dr. Rosenzweig has attempted to show how James used his fiction as a means of dealing with issues that affected his personal life. It is clear, however, that Rosenzweig is not seeking to merely prove the presence of autobiographical content by pointing out exact parallels between James's life and his fiction. Instead, by employing the technique of a "thematic apperception" analysis, he goes beyond revealing such correlations and attempts to show how the author "interweaves" his life's experiences with the fiction. Initially, one may see little difference between the terminology, but it is important to note that the terms autobiography and thematic apperception are not truly synonymous, It may prove useful at this point to digress briefly from Rosenzweig's treatment of James to discuss these terms.

Autobiography, as it appears in a work of fiction, may be defined as an intentional, conscious dislosing of one's life experiences within a context that is thinly disguised. Alice Munro, for example, has declared her fiction to be autobiographical and by doing so, exhibits the intentional

conscious aspect involved in this type of writing. Thematic apperception, as defined by the creators of the Thematic Apperception Test, a psychological procedure designed to assess personality, is the "conscious or unconscious expression of the author's experiences or fantasies."[5] At this point one discovers the essential differences between autobiography and thematic apperception. In the latter case, the author may be, when revealing his life's experiences in a work of fiction, unconscious of such an action. In other words, the author may be quite unaware of this infusion of personal history and thus, instead of a revelation as with autobiography, comes a projection. It is also important to note that when an author thematically apperceives, the content may be based on actual facts but may also stem from personal fantasies or imaginings. The plot and characters of a fictional work do not necessarily present an actual episode or real people from the author's life; the fictional details may represent instead very real desires, ruminations or intentions expressed by the author.

The clarification of the differences between autobiography and thematic apperception is important as there would appear to be several problems inherent in identifying exact biographical details in a work of fiction that do not seem as difficult to overcome with the thematic apperception analysis. Perhaps the most important problem involves a disregard for the literary merits of a work. For example, elements of style or thematic issues may not be given proper consideration if a work, labelled autobiographical, is merely dissected for evidence of parallel real-life occurrences. Another problem involves possible

objection by living subjects who may become offended or displeased by references to their apparent fictional counterparts. In an interview with Linda Sandler, Margaret Atwood discusses another hazard that accompanies the labelling of a work as autobiography. A misinterpretation of fictional details may lead to erroneous conclusions about the author. Atwood found this to be the case when readers approached her first two novels, The Edible Woman and Surfacing. She discovered that readers, assuming the novels to be autobiographical, read them much too literally:

> People are always asking me if I'm vegetarian and when my parents died. And they are astonished when I tell them that I am carnivorous and my parents are very much alive. . . .[6]

It is possible to avoid these problems with the thematic apperception analysis because such an analysis is not solely concerned with exact parallels between real-life and fictional details. It allows for the expression of the author's experiences through metaphor and symbol. Therefore, an examination of such experiences can be made without interpreting the fiction too literally. Consequently, when the thematic apperception analysis does not reduce the fiction to the mere re-telling of an actual episode from the author's past, it allows one a personal glimpse of the author yet at the same time avoids misinterpretation of fictional details and characters and, most importantly, still allows the fiction to stand as an imaginative work of art. Interestingly, Margaret Atwood seems to understand, if not consciously, at least intuitively, the concept of thematic apperception. In an interview with Valerie Miner,

she states:

> Simplistically, any writer writes biography. . . . I project my energy into my characters. I'm not writing down the story of my own life, but I'm imagining myself in certain situations in which I haven't been before. Fictions are possibilities.[7]

Atwood's reference to projecting her energy into her characters indicates that she has some concept of thematic apperception.

In his analysis, Rosenzweig presents a profile of Henry James as a man troubled by certain events that occurred in his youth and maintains that the author has attempted to work out his psychological difficulties through his fiction. Rosenzweig believes that James's fiction serves as a means whereby the author can restore a part of his own personality that had "split off" as a result of his decision to live abroad. This fragment of James's psyche is a ghost that haunts him and it is this spectre that finds its way into the fiction as the author tries to resolve his mental anguish. Rosenzweig discusses "The Jolly Corner" and other stories that appear to have contributed in part to the genesis of this final ghostly tale. He makes specific references to "The Story of a Year" and in discussing its special connection to "The Jolly Corner" reveals how the two tales provide the full vision of James's ghost.

"The Story of a Year" was James's first published tale appearing in the Atlantic Monthly in March, 1865. The story concerns itself with a young man, John Ford, who leaves his home to go to war. The hero forsees his own death, is wounded, and eventually dies. Henry James himself was also injured in 1861 when America was involved in the Civil

War. Rosenzweig has suggested that the wounding of Ford is symbolic of James's own injury. James described his injury, resulting from his attempts to extinguish a fire, as a "horrid even if an obscure hurt" that "establish[ed] a relation--a relation to everything occurring around [him] not only for the next four years but for long afterward."[8] Rosenzweig explains that James "could not view it as a merely personal experience but found it indissolubly united with the war which was at that moment engulfing the entire nation."[9] James's own words on the matter of his injury and the war give credence to such an interpretation:

> One had the sense, I mean, of a huge comprehensive ache, and there were hours at which one could scarce have told whether it came from one's own poor organism still so young and so meant for better things, but which had suffered a particular wrong, or from the enclosing social body, a body rent with a thousand wounds and that thus treated one to the honour of a sort of tragic fellowship.[10]

One comes to realize that this minor physical injury prompted the development of a more serious psychological injury. Ten years later, James left America for England, apparently still suffering from his injuries. Rosenzweig maintains that James's departure "represented an escape from a world disagreeable before and now no longer tolerable."[11] Within these ten years James had been in a process of psychologically withdrawing from his country. The actual departure constituted the completion of this "splitting off" and, ultimately, James's own split within himself. Rosenzweig has called "The Story of a Year" a prophetic tale. Written after James's physical injury, the story takes a soldier beyond wounding to eventual death and, symbolically, shows James predicting his own ceasing to flourish in America. With the death of John Ford came

the symbolic "birth" of a ghost--a ghost that resided in the troubled mind of the author himself.

Four "ghostly" stories were written prior to James's departure for England, but Leon Edel explains that it is not until the publication of "Sir Edmund Orme" in 1891, more than fifteen years after the emigration, that one "arrive[s] at the full-blown Jamesian tale of the supernatural."[12] According to Rosenzweig, this story and others that constitute the series of supernatural tales with heroes confronting ghosts, are an attempt by James to confront his feelings about his past. In "Sir Edmund Orme" and "Owen Wingrave" in particular, James has infused themes of vindication and restoration in an effort to exorcise his own repressed anguishes. It would appear, however, that the production of these stories did little to aid James in working out his problems. The tales reveal his deep preoccupation with his past decision to leave America, but Edel points out that James, throughout their production, experienced a state of great anxiety and depression. What was needed, apparently, was a more overt and tangible solution to James's problem. Perhaps sensing this, James made plans for a six-month visit to America in 1904. Rosenzweig has likened this trip to a criminal returning to the scene of a crime, as it would appear that James, despite his brother's dissuasion, could not resist the compulsion to return home to test the correctness of his decision to leave. As a result of this visit, he wrote, in 1907, his last ghost story, "The Jolly Corner." It was to serve as James's final fictional attempt at reconciling himself to his expatriation.

Rosenzweig proceeds to show how "The Story of a Year" and "The Jolly Corner" are intimately related:

> . . . with the death of John Ford, the ghost of Spencer Brydon came into existence. The story of the latter is a complement to that of the former. . . . As Henry James--or Ford--left America to reside abroad, Brydon returns to confront his former self. . . . like James during his visit in 1904-05, Brydon is obviously attempting to rectify the past--to face it again and test the answer previously given.[13]

Rosenzweig elaborates on the complementary relationship of these two stories by referring to their common features. One important feature common to both stories is the element of wounding. In "The Story of the Year," John Ford is wounded; in "The Jolly Corner," the two missing fingers of the ghost, appearing to have been "shot-off," indicate the resultant damage of the wounding. The female characters in each story have a similar link. Elizabeth Crowe, in "The Story of a Year," through unavoidable circumstances, forsakes her love for John Ford. After his wounding she has a dream wherein she, accompanied by another man, views Ford buried in his grave. Alice Staverton, the rekindled love in "The Jolly Corner," also has a dream wherein she sees Brydon's alter-ego coming towards her. The forsaken love of Elizabeth Crowe stands as the tragic split between James and America; the rekindled love of Alice Staverton stands as his redemption from the guilt of having left. That both characters should dream of the hero, first "lost" in his grave, later approaching "gruesome and worn," shows how James intended Alice Staverton as a foil to Elizabeth Crowe. Of these two stories Rosenzweig

ultimately concludes:

> The complementary relationship of these two tales, standing at the very beginning and all but the end of James's creative work, is so striking that one is impelled to believe the second was intentionally written as counterpart to the first.[14]

It would appear that, like the previous ghostly tales, the writing of "The Jolly Corner" did not alleviate James's psychological ailment, for it is noted that "towards the end of 1909 and for nearly a year thereafter, James suffered from a severe nervous depression which completely incapacitated him for work."[15] Rosenzweig indicates, nevertheless, that James did not give up trying to exorcise his ghost. With the outbreak of World War I, James opted to participate in the war effort, instead of withdrawing as he had done during the Civil War:

> At the earlier time he had adjusted to his personal wounds by withdrawal and by such constructive acts as the art of fiction permitted. But now a positive participation in real social action would provide the solution for the problem which had haunted him through life.[16]

Rosenzweig's thematic apperception analysis of the fiction of Henry James is perhaps a less conventional and more subjective method of viewing an autobiographical element present in "The Jolly Corner," but by the same token, it provides for a more flexible interpretation. For example, one might be tempted to speculate on the identity of Alice Staverton, especially in view of the fact that James's real life sister was named Alice. However, Louis Auchincloss reveals that "certainly there was no woman in his life. . . . there is no reliable evidence that he ever had a love affair."[17] It appears that a symbolic interpretation of Alice Staverton's role in the story is required, and the thematic

apperception analysis, less concerned with accurate correlations between real-life facts and fiction, lends itself to this more symbolic interpretation. Ultimately, this type of psychological analysis seems a fitting approach to psychological ghost stories like "The Jolly Corner," where certain features of the story suggest the author may be attempting to deal with "questions of personality identity" or, more specifically, disturbing memories of the past.

Surfacing, like "The Jolly Corner," is a psychological ghost story which contains many parallels between the life of the author and the experiences of the protagonist and also shows a similar preoccupation with an unpleasant episode in the past. Thus, the thematic apperception analysis performed by Dr. Rosenzweig on James's work seems to present itself as a viable approach to Atwood's novel. In the analysis of Surfacing in Chapter III, an attempt will be made to discuss the novel as one which contains a story about a disturbing memory from Atwood's own past, approaching Atwood's symbolic spectre as Rosenzweig has approached the ghost of Henry James. Though much of this analysis is based on factual information and a close examination of the actual text of Surfacing, it remains a subjective interpretation. Nevertheless, Atwood's comments on a characteristic of fiction appear to lend some credence to this subjective, psychological approach to her novel:

> Part of where you are is where you've been. If you aren't too sure where you are, or if you're sure but you don't like it, there's a tendency, both is psychotherapy and in literature, to retrace your history to see how you got there.[18]

Chapter II

Notes

[1]Leon Edel (ed.), Henry James: Stories of the Supernatural (New York: Taplinger Publishing Co., 1970), p. 723.

[2]Ibid.

[3]Louis Auchincloss, Reading Henry James (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1975), p. 140.

[4]S. Gorley Putt, A Reader's Guide to Henry James (London: Thames & Hudson, 1966), p. 53.

[5]C.D. Morgan & H.A, Murray, "A Method for Investigating Fantasies: The Thematic Apperception Test," Archives of Neurology & Psychiatry, No. 12 (1935), p. 289.

[6]Linda Sandler, "Interview with Margaret Atwood," The Malahat Review, No. 41 (January 1977), p. 16.

[7]Valerie Miner, "Atwood in Metamorphosis: An Authentic Canadian Fairy Tale," in Her Own Words: Profiles of Ten Canadian Women, ed. Myrna Kostash (Toronto: MacMillan, 1975), p. 190.

[8]Saul Rosenzweig, "The Ghost of Henry James: A Study in Thematic Apperception," Character & Personality, No. 12 (1947), p. 82.

[9]Ibid., p. 83.

[10]Quoted in Rosenzweig, p. 82.

[11]Rosenzweig, p. 89.

[12]Edel, p. 141.

[13]Rosenzweig, p. 93.

[14]Ibid.

[15]Ibid., p. 94.

[16]Ibid., p. 96.

[17]Auchincloss, p. 85.

[18]Margaret Atwood, Survival: A Thematic Guide to Canadian Literature (Toronto: Anansi, 1973), p. 112.

Chapter III

The Ghost of Margaret Atwood

Surfacing has probably been Margaret Atwood's most talked about piece of work. The reviews and critical discussions of the novel have been many, expressing a multitude of opinions and exploring a variety of themes.

William C. James has stated that "the narrator's external quest for her missing father has its inner counterpart in her search for insight into her present difficulties,"[1] Almost every critical discussion of Surfacing has recognized this element of the inner quest or journey in the novel. Catherine McLay declares that the novel is "an interior journey into the mind of the heroine."[2] Roberta Rubenstein says Surfacing is "a journey of self-discovery; down and through the darkness of the divided self."[3] Josie Campbell states that in the novel there is a "journey towards a consciousness of self"[4] and similarly, George Woodcock has said that Surfacing "is a novel of self-realization."[5] Several critics have approached the novel as a depiction of an inner journey and have postulated a variety of intepretations. For example, Carol Christ, from a decidedly religious point of view, declares that "Surfacing is about a woman's spiritual quest; the unnamed protagonist of her novel seeks redemption. Here the self's journey is in relation to cosmic power."[6] Susan Schaeffer has decided that Atwood's novel is "a book about mortality, the unacceptable fact of one's own death, the even more unacceptable deaths of others."[7]

Other critics, such as Eli Mandel and Tom Marshall, discuss Surfacing with reference to Atwood's other work, particularly her poetry, and reveal the recurring images and themes that are evident. Mandel discusses Atwood's first two novels, The Edible Woman and Surfacing, along with her poetry and notes how in all of Atwood's work there is "consistent and obsessive use of reduplicating images and totemic animal imagery."[8] Marshall states that "Atwood's first two novels, The Edible Woman and Surfacing are enlargements of themes of her poems . . . where the essential point is the search for one's self, for identity with one's body, one's instincts and one's country."[9]

Another approach taken to the novel concerns whether or not the conclusion of Surfacing is "affirmative"; in other words, whether or not the heroine in the novel achieves self-realization and personal growth. One spokesman in this discussion is William C. James who has noted that much "criticism . . . dealing with Surfacing [has] exhibited a continuing disagreement as to whether or not the novel, especially in its concluding resolution, can be said to be affirmative."[10] Critics such as Rosemary Sullivan and Jerome Rosenberg have debated this issue. Sullivan states that "the quest for insight in the novel has been pursued by a process of decreation, disengagement from time, from history, from language, but no bridge to re-engagement has been discovered."[11] She believes that there has been "no release . . . from the burden of the self."[12] On the other hand, Jerome Rosenberg declares that "to assert . . . the narrator has failed to develop, failed to learn anything she might apply to her life, and that therefore, the conclusion of the novel is itself

a failure seems . . . inaccurate."[13] Rosenberg sees a "triumph" in the novel because the heroine has "come to the devastating realization of her sins."[14] William C. James agrees that Surfacing displays an affirmative resolution of the heroine's conflicts:

> Though the novel closes with the narrator on the brink of a response but not yet responding, we are given to believe that she will return to the city with Joe, for she has realized that beyond flight or fight there is the possibility of trusting him. In the presence of this possibility of trust and commitment she has transcended the previous oppositions and elevated what is problematic in her life to a higher level of being.[15]

Other critics of Surfacing have viewed the inner quest in the novel to be a "journey into [the] collective heart of darkness."[16] One of these critics, Roberta Rubenstein, has noted that Atwood described paranoid schizophrenia--the split personality--as the national mental illness of Canada.[17] Gloria Onley has also viewed the novel as one exploring the issue of a "national neurosis."[18] The suggestion seems to be that in the wake of a strong American influence, Canadians have become confused and disoriented as has the heroine of the novel. Using Survival, Atwood's Thematic Guide to Canadian Literature, as a point of reference, Onley states:

> Surfacing is for Canadians, an anatomy of the "deluge of values and artifacts flowing in from outside" which "render invisible the values and artifacts that actually exist 'here'."[19]

In her article Onley draws several comparisons between Surfacing and Survival and infers what some critics, such as Bruce King, have stated. King believes that Surfacing was "consciously planned to illustrate what Margaret Atwood takes to be the mythology of Canadian literature. Indeed the novel is closely related to her Survival."[20]

It is interesting to note what Margaret Atwood has said about these many explorations into the intent and meaning of her novel:

> Surfacing was reviewed in the United States almost exclusively as a feminist or ecological treatise; in Canada, it was reviewed almost exclusively as a nationalistic one. . . . My own view is that my novel is not a treatise at all.[21]

In an interview with Linda Sandler, Atwood appears to have provided an answer to those who have debated the issue of the heroine's successful self-realization:

> . . . she is obsessed with finding the ghosts, but once she's found them she is released from that obsession. . . . she realizes, OK, I've learned something. Now I have to make my own life.[22]

In the same interview, Atwood responds to those who think she wrote Surfacing to illustrate Survival:

> The two books were published around the same time. . . , but in fact, Surfacing was finished and at the publisher by the time I started working on Survival. Some people think that I deliberately invented these themes in order to write a book about them, but that's not the way it happened.[23]

Finally, Atwood appears to express her view of most of these theories in an interview with Graeme Gibson:

> . . . all the things you've been talking about are really just sort of the jam on the sandwich . . . the other stuff is there, it's quite true, but it is a condition; it isn't to me what the book is about.[24]

In this interview, she also states:

> . . . for me the interesting thing in that book is the ghost in it.[25]

In view of Atwood's statement, it is surprising to discover that of the many critical discussions of Surfacing, few have paid much attention to the ghost. Granted, critics such as McLay and Rubenstein

have noted its significance when they explore the theme of the divided self. Keith Garebian, in "Surfacing: Apocalyptic Ghost Story," has paid considerable attention to Atwood's use of the ghost story structure. However, rather than attempting to identify the symbolic spectre, he postulates that "the ghosts . . . in this story . . . are a vehicle to connect mixed literary modes and integrate questions about innocence and guilt."[26] Eli Mandel's article, "Atwood Gothic, already discussed in the introduction, has made some attempt to identify the ghost, though the bulk of his discussion is concerned with identifying theories of the gothic and Atwood's gothic techniques. It seems that no critic has extensively discussed how the ghost of Surfacing may provide the key to an understanding of the novel. In fact, some critics have expressed skepticism about the ghost story itself. Rosemary Sullivan has stated that "Atwood's decision to write a ghost story might have been a mistake" and by doing so "Atwood has not taken enough risk, she has not explored the potential of her own vision."[27] Josie Campbell admits that "on one level, Surfacing is a ghost story" but then states that "whether or not this opens up the meaning of the novel for us remains to be seen."[28] It does seem, however, that Atwood, through her own comments on the novel and her relentless portrayal of a most haunted heroine, wishes to impress upon her reader the great significance of the ghost.

In addition, very few critical discussions of Surfacing have elaborated on the autobiographical content in the novel. In his article,

William C. James states briefly:

> There is a good deal which is autobiographical in this bifurcated vision of Surfacing. Atwood, in an interview, reveals that at the age of sixteen she had become convinced that she could not both get married and have children and be a writer too: "It seemed to me that getting married would be a kind of death. Society didn't provide alternatives then. There was no Women's Lib telling you that you could do both." Similarly, the narrator of Surfacing looks for a way of escaping or transcending or reconciling the given alternatives.[29]

Roberta Rubenstein touches on the autobiographical nature of the novel at the end of her discussion. She states that "Surfacing renders not only the archetypal journey into the self but Atwood's own personal journey back through the stages of her evolution as a poet."[30] However, both James and Rubenstein provide no further elaboration on the novel as autobiography. It appears that comments made about the autobiographical nature of Surfacing have been few and only incidental and an exclusive treatment of this issue is absent in the critical writing.

Once again, this comes as a surprise; even the most superficial reading of Surfacing reveals much biographical detail. The novel is set in the woods of northern Quebec, a place where Atwood, like the heroine, spent much of her early childhood because of her father's work. Atwood's father and the father in Surfacing share similar professions: the father in the novel is a botanist; Atwood's own father is an entomologist. The heroine of Surfacing makes several references to her older brother and episodes from their growing up together. Atwood herself has one older brother, Harold, and surely shared similar experiences with him during their youth in the Quebec bush. In fact, Atwood declares in an interview with Valerie Miner that Surfacing was written partly from childhood memories. One can readily appreciate such a declaration as

one discovers in Surfacing the early lifestyle of the heroine reflecting the lifestyle Atwood talks about in the Miner interview. Miner, writing of this interview, points out the following facts:

> The Atwoods moved into the city each winter, from the first snowfall in October or November until the ice melted in March. The transition--back to Ottawa and Sault Ste. Marie before she was six, afterward to Toronto--were always dramatic. . . . They had one identity for the city and one for the bush. She says now that the rhythmn of going back and forth made her slightly "double natured."[31]

This concept of the "double nature" emerges in the life of the heroine of the novel as well:

> . . . we could have lived all year in the company town but he split us between two anonymities, the city and the bush. In the city we lived in a succession of apartments and in the bush he picked the most remote lake he could find. . . . [32]

Finally, making the heroine of Surfacing an illustrator of books may be a parallel to Atwood herself, a writer of books. Though this linking may be too speculative for some, it is interesting to note the similarity in their careers. In the Miner interview, Atwood recalls the general lack of support for her literary endeavours from her suitors. She mentions to Miner one particular individual:

> He thought it was all right for me to write, but to publish? His attitude was nothing new, in fact it was a hangover from the Victorian idea that there's something vulgar about a woman's name appearing in print.[33]

Similarly, the heroine of Surfacing reflects about her "husband" and his attitude towards her career:

> For a while I was going to be a real artist; he thought that was cute but misguided, he said I should study something I'd be able to use because there have never been any important women artists. (56)

As well, each seems to share a similar level of productivity. The heroine of Surfacing reveals:

> This is the fifth book I've done; the first was a Department of Manpower employment manual. . . . the others were children's books and so is this one, Quebec Folk Tales. . . . (56)

By the time Surfacing was published Atwood had written four novels: two were published, Surfacing and The Edible Woman; two were unpublished, Up in the Air So Blue and The Deaths of Animals/The Nature Hut.[34] She was on the verge of publishing her fifth book, Survival: A Thematic Guide to Canadian Literature. The "employment manual" could be equated to Atwood's Survival; the four children's books could be equated to Atwood's four novels. Interestingly, both Atwood and the heroine have involved themselves in a book with an explicit connection to Quebec.

In view of Atwood's conscious use of the ghost story structure and her pointed comments about the importance of the ghost, along with her inclusion of many biographical details of her own life, it is tempting to make a link between these two elements, as does Saul Rosenzweig in his analysis of "The Jolly Corner." Perhaps, in doing so, essentially by viewing Atwood's ghost story as an exercise in personal projection or thematic apperception, an interpretation of Surfacing, quite unlike those previously made, may be achieved. Rosenzweig, through his thematic apperception analysis of "The Jolly Corner," reveals that the ghost of Spencer Brydon's alter-ego represents a spectre that was haunting Henry James. He arrives at this conclusion by examining the personal history surrounding James's emigration from America and revealing how it been symbolically interwoven with the fiction. The following analysis of

Surfacing attempts to do the same thing by showing how Atwood has symbolically provided a commentary on her early literary career and more particularly, by revealing how the ghost in Surfacing represents a ghost--a disturbing memory--from the author's literary past.[35] However, as noted earlier, Atwood maintains that Surfacing contains elements of both the ghost story and the mystery story. Unlike "The Jolly Corner," where one anticipates fairly early in the story the impending confrontation with a "doppelganger," in Surfacing a view of the psychological ghost is obstructed by a greater sense of mystery. One has no real awareness of a ghostly presence until the heroine actually encounters it towards the end of Part II in the novel because the features of the mystery story structure keep it hidden. Therefore, an examination of the features of this structure and how they are employed in the novel contributes to a more effective analysis of the ghost story.

True to the pattern of every mystery story or "whodunit," Surfacing poses a question to its reader at the beginning of the novel. Initially, the reader perceives this question to be, "What has happened to the heroine's father?" However, as the reader follows along with the heroine in her attempt to discover her father's whereabouts, he soon becomes aware that the father's disappearance is not the real mystery to be solved in Surfacing. Another mystery becomes obvious and the reader is compelled to pose a new question: "What has happened to the heroine in the past that is causing her such mental anguish in the present?"

As a well-devised mystery story, Surfacing adheres to all of the crucial features of the genre that Russell Brown outlines in his article, "In Search of Lost Causes: The Canadian Novelist as Mystery Writer." Brown indicates that there are essentially four features and all of these can be found in Atwood's novel. The first to be identified by Brown follows:

> There is, first of all, a serious disruption of the established order of things . . . occurring . . . in the past, before the story begins. That disruption is not only social but also narrative in that it lacks explanation; it is not initially comprehensible in the way the rest of the story is.[36]

In Surfacing, the heroine's traumatic abortion is the serious disruption occurring several years before the story begins, and the reader has no comprehension of this fact at the beginning of the novel. The second feature of the mystery story noted by Brown follows:

> The narrative action of the ongoing present is almost entirely dominated by attempts to construct (or reconstruct) another narrative, one which is initially elusive but which, we are led to feel, if it could be articulated, would . . . explain the reasons behind and show the sources of the present disordered state of things.[37]

In my opinion, in her many reminiscences of her past life, it appears that the heroine initiates this other narrative. The reader then must attempt to reconstruct the heroine's past as he reads the narrative of the camping trip on the island. Brown continues:

> The author's careful obscuring of that other narrative sequence is . . . the third identifying characteristic of the genre. His technique most frequently is one of deliberate fragmentation of the hidden narrative, which serves to delay the reader's ability to recognize the explanation as a whole.[38]

Atwood's hidden narrative, revealing the tragedy in the heroine's past,

maintains this feature of fragmentation. Facts and ruminations of the past life are dispersed throughout the major narrative.

The first allusion to the tragedy in the heroine's past appears on page 8, when Anna reads her palm and says, "You had a good childhood but then there's this funny break." Information about this "funny break" is gleaned on later pages of the novel:

> I never told her about the baby; . . .
> . . . . . .
> I have to behave as though it doesn't exist, because for me it can't, it was taken from me, exported, deported. A section of my own life sliced from me like a Siamese twin, my own flesh cancelled. Lapse, relapse. I have to forget. (52)
>
> I run quickly over my version of it, my life, checking it like an alibi, it fits, it's all there till the time I left. Then static, like a jumped track, for a moment, I've lost it, wiped clean; my exact age even. (78)
>
> No hints or facts, I didn't know when it happened. I must have been all right then; but after that I'd allowed myself to be cut in two. . . . with me there had been an accident and I came apart. (117)

Though the reader recognizes these as statements about the heroine's past, he is puzzled by them because of the cryptic and ambiguous manner in which they are presented. They illustrate a characteristic of the fragmentation feature present in the mystery story that Brown mentions:

> Along with this technique [of fragmentation] the author may use distraction, ambiguity and misleading appearances to make these narrative fragments even more initially puzzling.[39]

These misleading pieces of information or "deceptive fogs" as Brown calls them, are provided throughout the novel; most of them involve the heroine's failed marriage and her baby:

> I sent my parents a postcard after the wedding, they must have mentioned it to Paul; that, but not the divorce. . . . I'm waiting for Madame to ask about the baby. . . . I'll tell her I left him in the city; that would be perfectly true, only it was a different city, he's better off with my husband, former husband. (25)

The most puzzling piece of information about the heroine's past is provided when she recalls her wedding day:

> At my wedding we filled out forms, name, age, birthplace, blood-type. . . .
> . . . . . .
> I could recall exact smells, glue and humid socks and the odour of second-day blouse and crystallized deodorant from the irritated secretary, and from another doorway, the chill of antiseptic.
> . . . . . .
> "It's over," he said, "feel better?"
> . . . . . .
> My legs were shaking so much I could hardly stand up and there was an ache, slow like a groan. "Come on," he said, "we'd better get you home." He lifted my face, scrutinizing it in the light. "Maybe I should carry you to the car."
> . . . . . .
> In the car I didn't cry, I didn't want to look at him.
> "I know it's tough," he said, "but it's better this way." (94-95)

At this point something very peculiar strikes the reader, for this episode bears little resemblance to a typical wedding day. Here the reader senses that there is much more to the heroine's past than simply an unhappy marriage.

Brown continues his discussion of the mystery story genre:

> . . . the last structural element of the mystery, is the special quality of the conclusion. . . . The true goal of the mystery story and the real pay-off for its reader . . . is . . . the sense of sudden enlightenment and resolution of all uncertainties which comes when the lost narrative of the past is suddenly seen as at last whole and complete.[40]

The reader receives this "pay-off" when the heroine dives under the surface of the lake and, seeing the body of her dead father, recognizes it as the ghost of her aborted child. At this point in the novel, the reader is

provided with the full details on the past life that has haunted the heroine, that she has attempted to "wipe clean," that has ultimately caused her personality to become fragmented or divided. After she emerges from the water, the heroine recalls the true details of her "wedding day":

> He hadn't gone with me to the place where they did it; . .
> But he came afterward to collect me. . . .
> It wasn't a wedding, . . .
> "It's over," he said, "feel better?"
> I was emptied, amputated: I stank of salt and antiseptic, they planted death in me like a seed.
> . . . . . .
> Since then I'd carried that death around inside me, layering it over. . . . (154-155)

Subscribing to all of the features of the genre as postulated by Brown, Surfacing is indeed a well-devised mystery story; however, the reader feels, once the heroine's mysterious past has been revealed, that there must be more to this mystery in the novel. There are two contributing features of Surfacing that leave the reader dissatisfied with his "pay-off," even when the true story of the heroine's past is known. First, the mystery story structure is provided, but at the same time the reader has been made aware of a disdainful view of mystery stories and the methods of solution they require through the portrayal of Anna. Anna is a reader of palms and as such Atwood insinuates that this character has some perceptive capabilities. She does, after all, identify the "funny break" in the heroine's past. However, Anna has no real insight into what she reads in the palm; she identifies the tragic event and the fragmentation of the heroine that results from it, but Atwood does not allow her to contemplate its significance. Atwood underscores

the shallowness of Anna's vision with a depiction of this woman's almost fanatical use of cosmetics. Such a depiction symbolizes an obscured or "covered over" view of reality. Ironically, Anna reads mystery stories and detective fiction, where she is also involved in the processes of deduction and uncovering truths. Recognizing the superficial, inadequate view of reality Anna maintains, perhaps the reader begins to question the validity of the mystery story structure and, more particularly, the methods of solution it imposes upon its reader. In his article, "Atwood's Sacred Wells," Russell Brown comments on Atwood's use of the mystery story structure in Surfacing:

> Surfacing . . . has most of the structures and characteristics of a good mystery novel, and our awareness of the pertinence of that genre is reinforced by its several allusions to detective fiction. The novel ultimately turns the mystery on its head, however, be refusing the rational "theology" of the detective story as falsification that hides truth in the guise of uncovering it. We come to realize that the formal structures and neat closure of the mystery would obscure the real world in which events are so much less formal or tidy.[41]

The reader may wonder why Atwood has gone to such lengths to incorporate the mystery story structure and at the same time denounce its methods of solution. Again, Atwood relies on Anna to explain her ironic use of the mystery story structure. At the end of the novel, Anna scans the woods looking for the heroine, long after the men have given up looking:

> They clamber into the boat. Anna pauses for a moment, turning directly towards me, face in the sunlight, puzzled, oddly forlorn: does she see me, is she going to wave good-bye? (181)

This episode holds a mirror up to the reader, for he too has been engaged in a search for the heroine, more precisely for the secret of

her past, throughout the novel. But Anna does not spy the heroine and hence, Atwood implies that if the reader of Surfacing subscribes to Anna's mode of vision, essentially the "mystery story theology," he will not see the significance of the heroine's past experience and, ultimately, the meaning of the novel. The mystery story structure is provided, but, ironically, Atwood seems to ask her reader not to read the novel as a mystery story. Instead, she uses the structure in order to lead her reader into acquiring the sensitivity and perceptiveness of a clue-finder and puzzle-solver; this he must have if he is to solve the real mystery of Surfacing. Reading for clues, attempting to reconstruct a hidden narrative and looking for a "pay-off" is the pattern set for the reader. However, as the "mystery story theology" is "turned on its head," the reader must recognize that a hasty, literal treatment of clues or one that is too restrictive or conventional will not aid him. Armed with the "power to see," the reader must follow the heroine's lead in Part III of the novel and rely on intuition and instinct, rather than logic.

This leads one to the second feature of Surfacing that contributes to the reader's uneasiness about his perceptions of the novel. The mystery of the heroine's past is solved by the end of Part II, but the novel continues on for another eight chapters. With the narrative mystery solved, the psychological ghost story, previously subordinated to the mystery story, moves to prominence in the last part of the novel. At this point, the reader feels he must discard his old question; "What has happened to the heroine?" and replace it with one relevant to the mysterious, even bizarre behavior the heroine exhibits in the concluding

chapters of the novel. Essentially what the reader must do is disengage himself from the mystery story he has been involved with in the first two parts of Surfacing and reconsider the novel, in its entiretly, as a psychological ghost story. Prompted by the mystery story structure and its methods of solution, the reader approaches the ghost story and formulates this question: "What is the significance of this abortion and the ghost spawned from it?" Then, looking for clues, while remembering that their presence will not invite literal or conventional interpretations, the reader seeks an answer to this question and the real "pay-off"--an understanding of the meaning of the novel.

As mentioned previously, Surfacing contains a multitude of biographical details--there are many parallels that can be drawn between the heroine and Atwood herself. These details have not been incorporated by mere chance; their inclusion has been conscious and their presence is purposeful. However, if one looks at them too literally, one may erroneously conclude that Surfacing is simply a recounting from an actual episode from Atwood's own past. These biographical details function instead only as signposts, like those that the foursome encounter on their way to the lake. These details do not reveal the essence of a narrative of Atwood's past experience, but instead point the way to a view of Surfacing containing autobiographical detail.

To further the assembly of clues about a possible autobiographical story within Surfacing, one may contemplate two other distinct features of the novel. First, the use of the first-person point of view may

tempt one to speculate on the heroine's identity. This tendency in itself does not substantiate the view that the heroine must be Atwood herself. However, a fictitious name for the heroine is deliberately excluded from the novel. This must have caused considerable difficulty in writing the novel. For example, when the heroine is called by Joe at the end of the novel, Atwood has to write the following:

He calls my name, then pauses, "Are you here?" (207)

In this same passage, in the original rough draft of Surfacing, the heroine is given a name:

"Judy!" he calls the third time; he won't wait much longer.[42]

However, Atwood deliberately removes even this one reference to a name in the final version of the novel. The effect this has is one of wanting to identify the heroine, if only to name her. As a result, with only the author as the sole identity available throughout a reading of Surfacing, one may feel, if only unconsciously, a compulsion to attach the author's name to the heroine.

Taken together, these clues contribute to an autobiographical reading of Surfacing. Provided with them, one senses the presence of the author within the pages of the novel. This is precisely what Saul Rosenzweig has done with "The Jolly Corner" and the following analysis of Surfacing is based on a similar perception.

To ultimately reveal the ghost of Henry James in "The Jolly Corner," Saul Rosenzweig found it necessary to examine other fictional works by the author, specifically ghost stories, and the author's biography, in

order to trace the development of the spectre that haunted him. An exactly identical replication of this exercise cannot be accomplished with Margaret Atwood for several reasons. First, James wrote a series of supernatural tales that Rosenzweig could examine; Surfacing appears to be Atwood's only ghost story. Second, Rosenzweig had the complete biography of Henry James at his disposal and conducted an analysis of "The Jolly Corner," a work that was written near the end of the author's career. Obviously, an analysis of Surfacing cannot rely on a complete biography because none has been written. However, the present discussion concentrates on the biographical details relevant to Atwood's literary career; such information is available in published interviews and the "Atwood Papers." Finally, Rosenzweig concentrates on the ghost story "The Jolly Corner" and its relationship to James's first published work, "The Story of a Year," in order to reveal the identity of the ghost in the later tale; a somewhat similar approach to Atwood is possible except that in the case of Atwood the relationship will be between Surfacing and poetry published earlier.

Sometime during 1964, Atwood wrote a series of poems; the collection, entitled The Circle Game, was published in December of that year. Although Double Persephone appeared in 1961 as a small chapbook, it is The Circle Game, which won the Governor General's Award for Poetry, that is generally considered to be Atwood's first major published work. Judith McCombs labels The Circle Game an "interior gothic" and explores features of the collection that appear in the novel, Surfacing, as well:

> . . . the Circle has throughout a single I and single setting in which the gothic terrors gather. The female I is herself the setting of this gothic; the chamber of horrors is interior to her consciousness . . .
> . . . . . .
> . . . only the reader and the I witness the terror. Literally or psychically, the I is isolated, a silenced scream, a paralyzed Cassandra.[43]

Many poems within The Circle Game reveal a strong connection to the ghost story written the following year.[44] The poem "A Place: Fragments," for example, parallels the many allusions to fragmentation in Surfacing. It also shows Atwood's early preoccupation with the ironies involved in solving mysteries and uncovering truths:

> An other sense tugs at us:
> we have lost something
> some key to these writings
> and are locked against us
> or perhaps (like a potential
> mine, unknown vein
> of metal in the rock)
> something not lost or hidden
> but just not found yet
> that informs, holds together
> this confusion. . . .45

"Journey to the Interior" is another poem obviously echoed in the novel. The heroine's journey into madness in Surfacing, particularly her dis-association from convention and formal language, has been previously expressed in this poem:

> A compass is useless: also
> trying to take directions
> from the movements of the sun,
> which are erratic;
> and words here are as pointless
> as calling in a vacant
> wilderness.
>
> Whatever I do I must
> keep my head. I know
> it is easier for me to lose my way
> forever here, than in other landscapes.[46]

It appears, however, that no other poem in The Circle Game has more interesting connections to Surfacing than the opening poem, "This is a Photograph of Me":

> It was taken some time ago.
> At first it seems to be
> a smeared
> print: blurred lines and grey flecks
> blended with the paper;
>
> then, as you scan
> it, you see in the left-hand corner
> a thing that is like a branch: part of a tree
> (balsam or spruce) emerging
> and, to the right, halfway up
> what ought to be a gentle
> slope, a small frame house.
>
> In the background there is a lake,
> and beyond that, some low hills.
>
> (The photograph was taken
> the day after I drowned.
>
> I am in the lake, in the center
> of the picture, just under the surface.
>
> It is difficult to say where
> precisely, or to say
> how large or small I am:
> the effect of water
> on light is a distortion
>
> but if you look long enough
> eventually
> you will be able to see me.)[47]

An examination of this poem and Surfacing reveals their complementary nature and, like James's two stories, "The Story of a Year" and "The Jolly Corner," Atwood's poem and novel share many common features including similar symbols. The rustic, lakeside setting is the most obviously similarity between the two works. In the second stanza of the poem, one

recognizes the evergreens and the small frame house that appear in the novel. As one looks closer, as one must at this blurred photograph, the next two lines reveal the lake and the hills beyond:

> In the background there is a lake,
> and beyond that, some low hills.

This photographic "shot" correspond to the terrain described in Surfacing:

> The shoreline unrolls and folds together again as we go past . . . a tangled maze, low hills curving out of the water. (33)

The following two lines in the poem can be easily linked to the drowning episodes described in the novel:

> (The photograph was taken
> the day after I drowned.

The act of drowning is significantly underscored in the novel:

> The lake is tricky, the weather shifts, the wind swells up quickly; people drown every year. (34)

> . . . it's the same dock my brother fell off the time he drowned. . (34)

> This was where he drowned, he only got saved by accident. . . . His drowning never seemed to have affected him as much as I thought it should, . . . If it had happened to me I would have felt there was something special about me, to be raised from the dead like that; . . . (79)

Of course, drowning signifies death, but it appears that in both works the significance of these drownings is not merely a revelation of death. In the poem, the photograph was taken the day after the speaker drowned, and as she is still in the water, one intuitively assumes she is no longer alive and it must be her ghost that is conveying the description of the photograph. An examination of the original rough draft of the poem within the "Atwood Papers" reveals that Atwood first wrote:

> The photograph was taken
> the day before I drowned.[48]

She had, though, crossed out "before" and replaced it with "after," no doubt in a conscious attempt to tell her reader to recognize the unnatural or perhaps, supernatural state of the speaker. In her last remembrance of her drowned brother, the heroine of Surfacing declares that this memory of him was substituted for the memory of her aborted child:

> . . . at first I though it was my drowned brother, . . . but it couldn't be him, he had not drowned after all, he was elsewhere. Then I recognized it: it wasn't ever my brother I'd been remembering, that had been a disguise. . . . Whatever it is, part of myself or a separate creature, I killed it. It wasn't a child but it could have been one, . . . (153)

At this point, it becomes apparent that the ghostly element is common to both works; the ghost in the poem parallels the ghost of the aborted child, both eventually being discovered under the surface of the lake.

The poem as a photograph has its parallel in the novel:

> Photo album, I'm in it somewhere, successive incarnations of me. (74)

The lines in the poem, "a smeared/print: blurred lines and grey flecks" and "It is difficult to say where/precisely,or to say/how large or small I am" correspond with a passage in the novel where the heroine also muses, like the speaker in the poem, over her presence in some old pictures:

> I was in most of the pictures, shut in behind the paper; . . .
> School pictures, my face lined up with forty others, . . .
> I was the one smudged with movement or turning the other way. (116)

In both the poem and the novel, the speaker is difficult to locate for the observer who sees it for the first time. In this passage in Surfacing, Atwood reports what she has declared in the poem; if one wishes to see

the speaker, one must "look long enough."

Structurally, the poem and the novel both employ the mystery story device of presenting clues. The first half of the poem is a literal presentation of the photograph; the second half, conspiciously placed in brackets, functions as a clue to aid in the locating of the speaker. The original rough draft shows an even more deliberate attempt to prompt the reader to adopt the puzzle-solver role. The following lines, subsequently crossed out, appear just prior to the clue:

> are trying to find
> You look for something[49]

No doubt, Atwood has omitted this information in an effort to leave her message less obvious, more cryptic. This conscious effort to reveal the essence of the ghost in a cryptic manner has been carried over to Surfacing with the ironic use of the mystery story structure.

The use of the word "surface" obviously and importantly connects the two works. In the poem, the speaker is "just under the surface." In the novel, the actual title, Surfacing, reveals the progression that has taken place within its pages. Like James's two complementary works, the earlier one is prophetic and the later one looks backward to contemplate what has transpired.

Finally, the use of the first-person point of view marks another important similarity. In the poem, the use of the first person has been often viewed as indicating that the poet is the speaker. For example, Valerie Miner, in her article "Atwood in Metamorphosis," attempts to construct a personal profile of the author. In her concluding paragraph,

Miner poses the question, "Who is Margaret Atwood?"[50] and then, suggesting an answer, closes by quoting the second half of the poem. In his review of Atwood's Murder in the Dark, a collection of poetry and fiction published in 1982, Alberto Manguel also quotes from this poem in order to fortify his view that in this recent book "the writer's voice . . . becomes most certainly visible."[51] "This is a Photograph of Me" has often been used in this way in discussions of Atwood, where an attempt has been made to catch a glimpse of the author herself in her written works. The use of the first-person point of view together with the unnamed heroine are features of Surfacing that parallel the use of the first-person in the poem and the emphatic declaration of "Me" in its title. Therefore, the acceptance of the poem as autobiographical utterance prepares for a similar view of the novel, considering all of the many other parallels. Manguel suggests that the novel form, particularly its plot, may obstruct the view of the author as speaker. Nevertheless, the writer's voice can be discerned "if you look long enough."

Reviewing the many similarities between "This is a Photograph of Me" and Surfacing, it becomes quite apparent that poem and novel complement each other: by examining their common symbolism, one may begin to acquire a true vision of the spectre in Surfacing.

Quentin Anderson has labelled James's symbolism as systematic, and it appears Atwood's symbolism is also systematic. Understanding it requires a three-state approach. Firstly and most obviously, an interpretation of the photographic symbolism is required. The poem is a

photograph and truly, with its countless references to things of a pictorial nature, the novel also maintains this feature. The images of the pictographs, the scrapbooks, the photo albums, the movie "Random Samples" and even the dead father discovered with a camera around his neck, provide for a symbolic interpretation. The world of photography, concerned with representations of reality and the double images of negatives and positives, indicates Atwood's interest in presenting her reader with two different perceptions of reality; what one sees as the truth will be determined by how carefully one subjects what one sees to a close scrutiny. The poem declares that a mere glance will only reveal something "smeared" and "blurred"; one must "look long enough." Then, "eventually," a true perception of reality in our "bifurcated vision"[52] of the world will become apparent. In Surfacing, then, one must look long enough as well, before the true meaning of the novel can be determined. The photography symbolism, initiated in the poem and transferred to the novel through its imagery, promotes an understanding of the need to approach the fiction with care and thoughtfulness in order to see the essential meaning.

The second stage in Atwood's symbolism involves the lake and the element of surfacing. Under the surface of a lake for Atwood, rather than within the depths of a house for James, is the place with the potential for individual growth or enlightenment. Releasing oneself from that environment constitutes the accomplishment of such personal progress. It is not difficult to see the implications of this symbolism in either the poem or the novel. In the poem, the speaker is "just under the surface."

One cannot perceive her clearly; one does not know "where precisely" or "how large or small" she is. In the novel, the heroine is, as the very title reveals, "surfacing," and indeed by the end of the book, one can perceive her newly-found awareness and resolve. Within this second stage of symbolism, one can make associations between these works and Atwood's personal progress. In 1964, Margaret Atwood, a young poet having published virtually only one small collection of poetry, had not made her imprint on the Canadian literary scene. Aware of this, she declares "the photograph of me"--the vision of her as a literary artist--is "smeared" and "blurred"; her literary identity is not obviously apparent at this time. However, she anticipates her potential. She is the tree branch "emerging"; she is the ghost "in the center of the picture, just under the surface." She states that there may be some difficulty in ascertaining her exact literary views--"It is difficult to say where precisely"--or the impact she will have on the Canadian literary scene--"how large or small I am." However, she is confident that in time, her literary craft will be recognized and she will be seen as an important literary figure:

> but if you look long enough
> eventually
> you will be able to see me.

With the publishing of Surfacing in 1972, Atwood could have felt that she could declare that she was in the process of achieving literary success. No longer "just under the surface," Atwood was now "surfacing" as the successful author.

At this point it must be noted that the novel was first written

in 1965 and was titled Where is Here. The two versions are similar in most respects, but some important changes are noted. For example, the earliest rough draft shows the characters named differently. In addition, several changes in language are made and lengthy explanatory passages are omitted. An example of an important omission is found at the end of Part II. In the earlier version of the novel, Atwood concludes the chapter as follows:

> But nothing had died, everything is alive; my parents are also alive. . . .
> First I had to bring my child to life again, dredge it up from where I had put it, down in the lake, make it be not dead. After that I would be free to escape from the form I was caught in, and the knob at the top, head, would change too, I would have feelings again but I would not be infested with thoughts. I could revert, like a trained animal that gets out of the circus, the zoo. I tried for all those years, to be civilized, but I'm not and there's no longer any use pretending.[53]

In the final version of Surfacing, Atwood chooses to end the chapter this way:

> But nothing has died, everything is alive, everything is waiting to become alive. (170)

The lengthy description of the heroine's intention to resurrect her lost child in the earlier version stands as the literal explanation of what the heroine attempts to accomplish in Part III of the novel. Atwood has chosen to omit this paragraph in the final version and consequently renders her narrative even more cryptic. In general, changes made to the narrative produce a tighter, more poetic style and as well, promote a heightened mysterious quality. The change in title, however, is the most significant change. The new title, Surfacing, harkens back to the "surface" symbol initiated in the poem "This is a Photograph of Me."

The novel, by its new title, emphasizes the progress and the growth Atwood has achieved. As one contemplates the enormous success of the author's first published novel, The Edible Woman, this announcement of literary progress is indeed an accurate one. Margaret Atwood, as poet, and perhaps more significantly, as novelist, was surfacing as one of the bright new stars on the Canadian literary scene.

However, the heroine of the novel is not the only character to have surfaced:

> He trembles and then I can feel my lost child surfacing within me, forgiving me, rising from the lake where it has been prisoned for so long. (173)

The surfacing of the lost child brings one to the third and perhaps most crucial element in Atwood's system of symbolism. This symbolism provides the final key to unlocking the meaning of the autobiographical story within the novel. This important symbol evolves in the novel from the many images of conception, birth, abortion and ultimately, the ghost of the aborted child. Interestingly, these images are notably absent in "This is a Photograph of Me." However, as pointed out previously, through the element of drowning, one discovers that the ghost in the poem parallels the ghost of the child. And, as the heroine contemplates the nature of a child--"part of [herself] or a separate creature" --it may well be that the poem "This is a Photograph of Me" may not simply be a reflection of Atwood herself, as some critics have already suggested, but a picture of a part of her or a "separate creature." Children, products of oneself yet separate creatures, are not unlike works of literature. They are both conceived, take months to

gestate, and, barring any complications, are finally delivered into the world. Some analogous comments made recently by Atwood appear to give credence to an interpretation that giving birth can be used to symbolize the act of literary creation:

> I'm sure you've all heard the one about the four blind philosophers and the elephant. Substitute "critics" for philosophers and "novel" for elephant and you'll have the picture. . . .
> I think the description of elephants is a worthwhile activity. But describing an elephant and giving birth to one are two different things.[54]

The symbol of the child, viewed as literary effort, allows for the autobiographical undercurrent in Atwood's psychological ghost story to be fully revealed. Not unlike James's first story, "The Story of a Year," Atwood's poem "This is a Photograph of Me" announces the genesis of a ghost--Atwood, her literary career and perhaps more specifically, a major literary effort. Like "The Jolly Corner," Surfacing looks back into the past with the intention of facing the ghost that originated in the past--the literary effort that was conceived but never born.

In an attempt to arrive at a conclusion about the autobiographical content in the novel, one asks questions as to who is the ghost in Surfacing and what is this literary effort that was "lost"? By looking carefully at Atwood's early literary history and certain features of the novel itself, it appears that an answer to these questions can be found.

By the end of Surfacing, one might be led to believe that the heroine may have conceived another child; she anticipates the birth of

this other child:

> This time I will do it by myself, squatting, on old newspapers in a corner alone; or on leaves, dry leaves, . . . The baby will slip out easily as an egg, a kitten and I'll lick it off and bite the cord, the blood returning to the ground where it belongs; . . . In the morning I will be able to see it; it will be covered with shining fur, a god, . . . (173)

In a literary sense, the concept of giving birth is what Atwood did accomplish; less than a year after Surfacing was published, Atwood's Thematic Guide to Canadian Literature appeared in print. Perhaps this work, Survival, published later in 1972, is the "god" with "shining fur" whose arrival is symbolically predicted at the end of the novel. This "thematic guide" received mixed reviews, in large part because of its unconventional approach to Canadian literature. One can make associations between this work and the expected child in the novel, since it appears the intention was to deliver them both in very unconventional ways. As well, the reception of Survival may have been contemplated in the poem "This is a Photograph of Me" when Atwood was unsure "how large or small" a contribution her theories on Canadian literature would make to Canadian literary thought. However, though the first notes of Survival were drafted in the mid-sixties, there is no evidence to support the notion that this literary effort was ever "lost" and in need of resurrection, but this element of resurrecting the lost child is a crucial feature of the novel. Hence, Survival is probably not the literary effort represented by the ghost in Surfacing. One must examine Atwood's literary history more closely to determine the identity of the ghost.

From the "Atwood Papers" one discovers that Surfacing was originally written in 1965 and was titled Where is Here. The completed typescript of Where is Here sat for six years before Atwood picked it up again in

1971 and completed the final version which she titled Surfacing. Perhaps the lost child of Surfacing represents the earlier Where is Here that, for whatever reasons, was "lost" for a time and resurrected in 1971-72. With the proposed delivery of the expected child in Surfacing, this portion of the novel may ultimately stand as a heralding of its own arrival, for there can be no doubt that the symbolic child-to-be-born parallels the finished product of Surfacing. Both are strange, even macabre in their delivery. And, of course, the poem, "This is a Photograph of me" has already been discussed as the prophetic complement of Surfacing. By way of its similar imagery and symbolism this poem may stand as a poetic reflection on the future success of the novel that had its earliest origins in 1965. It appears logical to assume, therefore, that the ghost of Surfacing represents the earlier version of the novel, Where is Here, given new life in 1972.

However, the notion that Where is Here is the ghost of Surfacing must be completely discarded no sooner than it has been articulated. This early version of Surfacing tells virtually an identical story of a woman haunted by the ghost of her aborted child. Where is Here, therefore, cannot be the literary effort that was lost when it, like the later version, functions as a recounting of the same tragic event. Something written prior to Where is Here must be the lost literary effort depicted in Surfacing. This conclusion becomes even more plausible when one re-examines the plight of the heroine. Though she intends to resurrect her child, she can only do this symbolically; the aborted child will never really live again. As a physical entity it has been lost forever.

Therefore, Where is Here, actually given new life with the completion of Surfacing, does not remain "lost" and cannot be the literary effort that will remain lost forever.

When examined more closely, the nature of the heroine's abortion provides additional information about this lost literary effort. The heroine views the tragic loss of her child as an event not entirely of her own making. The abortion was performed by others--impersonal practitioners in a clinic of some kind. The heroine bitterly recalls their involvement:

> They scraped it into a bucket and threw it wherever they throw them.
> . . . . . .
> Pretense of the non-nurse, her armpits acid, face powdered with solicitude . . . (153-154)
>
> Nobody must find out or they will do that to me again, strap me to the death machine, emptiness machine, legs in the metal framework, secret knives. This time I won't let them. (173)

A literary rejection is not unlike an abortion; it is clinical in its execution, often impersonal in its treatment of the author and prevents the flourishing of the author's creation. Its effect on the author is almost always one of disappointment, and it may not be unreasonable to assume that in some cases it may have a detrimental effect upon the author's self-perceptions and perceptions of others. A view of the symbolic ghost of Surfacing as one of Atwood's rejected literary efforts can be substantiated by examining the circumstances surrounding her first unpublished novel, Up in the Air So Blue.

Atwood declares in an interview with Graeme Gibson in 1973, that

she had, to this point, written three novels--The Edible Woman, Surfacing and "one that didn't get published."[55] In Second Words, Atwood's recent collection of criticism, she mentions this first unpublished novel:

> (The Edible Woman was not my first novel. The first had been composed in a rentable broom closet in Toronto, but it had been rejected by all three of the then-existent Canadian publishers for being too gloomy. It ended with the heroine deciding whether or not to push the male protagonist off a roof, a conclusion that was well ahead of its time in 1963 and probably too indecisive now.)[56]

When Atwood describes the ending of this novel, there can be no doubt that this early rejected novel is Up in the Air So Blue. The unpublished typescript of this novel can be found in the "Atwood Papers" along with several letters of rejection. Dating from April 1964 to January 1965, these letters from three Canadian publishers and one American publisher, document Atwood's attempts to publish a novel. The novel was not considered to be completely unpraiseworthy, but apsects of plot, characterization and the use of the present tense were cited as flaws. Surfacing and the rejected novel have some remarkable similarities, though this should come as no great surprise. Siblings often resemble each other and the aborted child and the "resurrected" one, conceived by the same mother, would have, at least, many similar genetic traits.

In both novels, there is a similar depiction of a rustic lakeside setting. In the first chapter of Up in the Air So Blue, Cathy and her older brother Tom roam through the woods and eventually make their way to Tom's secret place near the swamp where he maintains a "laboratory" of creatures he has entrapped. This episode is resurrected in Surfacing

as the heroine remembers her older brother and their childhood:

> The laboratory, he was older then. He never caught birds, they were too quick for him, what he caught was the slower things. He kept them in jars and tin cans on a board shelf back in the forest, near the swamp; to reach them he made a secret path, marked only by small notches on the trees, a code. (141)

Many such similar or parallel episodes and images can be discovered in both works. In the first novel, two episodes of viewing photographs of young girls parallel the numerous images and allusions to the world of photography depicted in Surfacing. A hallucinatory experience with the heroine's mirror image occurs in the final chapter of Up in the Air So Blue as she pieces together the events that led to the mysterious disappearance of a childhood friend and his mother when the heroine was a child. This episode parallels the hallucinatory experiences of the heroine of Surfacing, who tries to reconstruct the events of the past she has repressed. From this stems another similarity--both novels maintain features of the mystery story structure. The inarticulated narrative of a past event, provided in a fragmentary way, is evident in both novels. The element of drowning also appears to be a common feature to both novels. Though it is not explicity stated in Up in the Air So Blue, the strongest impression is given that the heroine's childhood friend was consumed by the swamp and his mother drowned in the lake looking for him.

Perhaps the most striking similarity to be found is the use of the word "surface." In Up in the Air So Blue, "surface" imagery abounds. In the opening paragraph of the novel, one is presented with an image

of a portion of the lake and "a few mosquito wrigglers, . . . jerking just under the surface."[57] There are numerous references to the surface of the lake throughout the novel and many other "surface" images as well:

> Dust had settled in a fine layer, leaving the white-icing surface a pale grey; . . . (48)
>
> . . . the turmoil of the pillows and the blankets beneath appeared on the surface only as a slightly-defined suggestion of waves and hollows. (56)
>
> The mirror was made of bad glass; its surface was rippled. (57)
>
> He begins to walk carefully, studying the surface of the sand. (74)
>
> She is still looking at the picture; the little girl stares out at her from behind the glossy transparent surface. (81)
>
> Marsh gas bubbles up around his leg, bursting on the surface, smelling of rot. (88)
>
> The people sitting cut off at the waist by the tables are like pale frogs squatting on square black lilypads, . . .
> The tables are floating on the surface of an invisible pond. (113)

Within its one hundred and forty-eight type-written pages, the word "surface" is used twenty-four times. The precise symbolic meaning of this word does not appear to be fully articulated in Up in the Air So Blue; nevertheless, its use stands as the precursor to the well-developed symbol in Surfacing. In Surfacing, the act of surfacing symbolizes the move to truth and insight, the escaping from deception, artificiality, untruth; ultimately, "surfacing" depicts advancement or growth: intellectual, emotional, spiritual. In keeping with the theory of the novel as an auto-biographical statement on literary progress, "surfacing" may indicate professional growth as well. Though the word "surface" is not employed

to the same extent in the later novel, the title itself, Surfacing, declares its theme.

Margaret Atwood wrote Up in the Air So Blue in 1963 and made several attempts to have it published throughout 1964. In 1964, she also wrote the poem "This is a Photograph of Me." Set in similar rustic settings, both the novel and the poem underscore the significance of photographs, of drownings and of surfaces; ultimately, both initiate the evolution of Atwood's most predominant literary symbols. If "This is a Photograph of Me" appears to be a prophetic complement to Surfacing, as suggested earlier, it does so because its symbolism reflects the developing symbolism apparent in Up in the Air So Blue. This early novel is the true complement to Surfacing; it, along with its symbolism, is resurrected in the later novel like a "lost child."

Margaret Atwood pursued her goal of becoming a writer with vigor during her undergraduate years at the University of Toronto where she was a frequent contributor of poems and short stories to a variety of publications. In a written statement of goals presented to Harvard University in a bid for admission, she mentions her wish to continue creative writing:

> My writing is something that I consider to be an inseparable part of my life at university.[58]

In the Valerie Miner interview previously mentioned, Atwood declared that she intended to become a writer before she married. In view of her enthusiastic efforts to achieve literary goals, the rejection of her first attempt at a novel would certainly have come as a great disappointment

to a young talent who had been winning much praise for her previous academic and literary endeavours. In my opinion, Surfacing, first written in 1965, tells the story of this failed first attempt. The trauma resulting from the heroine's abortion symbolizes Atwood's response to the rejection of Up in the Air So Blue. In the Miner interview, Atwood states that " . . . madness . . . is symbolic of whatever is bothering a person."[59] The heroine's bizarre journey into madness is certainly not a literal depiction of Atwood's response to the rejection of her first novel. It simply provides Atwood with the most emphatic means with which she can symbolize a psychological shock. Though Atwood's response to the rejection of Up in the Air So Blue may have been in reality only one of keen disappointment and not as psychologically devastating as the heroine's reaction to her abortion, its effect was probably not unlike Henry James's "horrid even if an obscure hurt" that "establish[ed] a relation to everything occurring around [him] . . . for long afterward."[60] In some way, however small, Atwood was significantly haunted by this early setback in her literary career. Like the ghost that waited for the heroine under the surface of the lake, the memory of the first failed attempt waited to be released from Atwood's psyche. Hence, she, like her heroine, submerged herself in her past and faced this ghost in the telling of Surfacing.

Whether or not Atwood exorcised this ghost and reconciled herself to her early disappointment in the telling of Surfacing cannot be determined. If one looks to the heroine of the novel for an answer,

one discovers that her future is uncertain and unknown. The ending of the novel is tentative and ambiguous; one is not completely sure whether or not she ever leaves the island. Similarly, Atwood does not provide a clear, definitive statement about the resolution of difficulties originating in the past or about what will transpire in her literary future. However, it is interesting to note that in her next novel, Lady Oracle, remnants of Surfacing including the gothic motif and drowning and mirror-image episodes, are depicted, as well as some pointed comments on the world of literature and publishing, revealing, it would seem, additional commentary on Atwood's own literary life:

> When I was getting my drink at the bar, a man came up beside me.
> "Are you Lady Oracle," he said.
> "It's the name of my book," I said.
> "Terrific title," he said. "Terrible book. It's a leftover from the nineteenth century . . ."
> "I guess you're a publishing success," he said. "What's it like to be a successful bad writer?"
> I was beginning to feel angry. "Why don't you publish and find out?" I said.[61]

Whether this tendency to contemplate the possibility of her success or failure in her career continues throughout Atwood's subsequent publications is not known, and to undertake the task of determining this is not the purpose of the present discussion. However, looking at the example of Henry James, it may well be that a psychological ghost takes a lifetime to be exorcised from a mind troubled by memories of the past.

In any case, Atwood's Surfacing appears to stand like James's "The Jolly Corner" as a work in the author's canon that makes a concentrated effort, as Leon Edel has said of James, to deal with "questions

of personal identity." Some critics have noted that there is something about Surfacing that sets it apart from Atwood's other novels. In his article on the syntactical structure of the novel, Robert Cluett states:

> . . . to the naked eye the style of Surfacing is different from the styles of all of Atwood's other novels. Not just different--radically different.[62]

This difference becomes apparent when one compares Surfacing with The Edible Woman. These two novels were both written in 1965; however, their styles are notably different. The Edible Woman is full of comic satire and wit. In providing more sheer entertainment and promoting a variety of themes, it appears to be a work geared to winning publishing success. Surfacing, on the other hand, more mysterious and sombre, embodies much of the heart of Atwood's earliest poetry, some aspects of her early unpublished novel, Up in the Air So Blue and memories of her own past. It appears to be a novel Atwood wrote more for herself. Ironically, a general consensus indicates that readers find Surfacing fascinating and memorable. Perhaps this is because this ghost story, in the final analysis, is much more than a "working out" of a personal dilemma. Margaret Atwood has made, I feel, with this exercise in personal projection, a very important contribution to the development of Canadian literature. By directing her literary energies towards achieving personal growth, she has exemplified a seemingly necessary move the Canadian author must make in order to transcend the "man-in-exile" theme that has dominated much of Canadian literature and kept the Canadian literary identity in

a state of embryosis. It seems that before a lasting contribution to the world of literature can be made by a Canadian author, he or she must arrive at some realization about his or her own personal identity. Surfacing appears to accomplish much of this for Atwood and, hence, contributes to the fundamental view of Canadian literature held by Northrop Frye:

> Canadian literature has always been thought of as having its center of gravity in the future. Now that it has come into the present also, it may, by being where it is as well as what it is, help to make its own contribution to the future that we all hope for--not the apocalyptic futures of fantasy and nightmare, but a future in which Western man has come home from his exile in the land of unlikeliness and has become something better than the ghost of an ego haunting himself.[63]

Chapter III

Notes

[1]William C. James, "Atwood's Surfacing," Canadian Literature, 91 (1981), p. 174.

[2]Catherine McLay, "The Divided Self: Theme and Pattern in Margaret Atwood's Surfacing," Journal of Canadian Fiction, No. 13 (1975), p. 83.

[3]Roberta Rubenstein, "Surfacing: Margaret Atwood's Journey to the Interior," Modern Fiction Studies, 22, No. 3 (Autumn 1976), p. 399.

[4]Josie Campbell, "The Woman as Hero in Margaret Atwood's Surfacing," Mosaic, 11, No. 3 (Spring 1978), p. 28.

[5]George Woodcock, "Margaret Atwood: Poet as Novelist," in The Canadian Novel in the Twentieth Century, ed. George Woodcock (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1975). p. 325.

[6]Carol P. Christ, "Margaret Atwood: The Surfacing of Women's Spiritual Quest and Vision," Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society, 2, No. 2 (Winter 1976), p. 316.

[7]Susan Fromberg Schaeffer, "'It is Time that Separates Us': Margaret Atwood's Surfacing," The Centennial Review, No. 18 (Fall 1974), p. 319.

[8]Eli Mandel, "Atwood Gothic," The Malahat Review, No. 41 (January 1977), p. 166.

[9]Tom Marshall, "Atwood Under and Above Water," The Malahat Review, No. 41 (January 1977), p. 90.

[10]James, p. 174.

[11]Rosemary Sullivan, "Breaking the Circle," The Malahat Review, No. 41 (January 1977), pp. 40-41.

[12]Sullivan, p. 41.

[13]Jerome H. Rosenberg, "Woman as Everyman in Atwood's Surfacing: Some Observations on the End of the Novel," Studies in Canadian Literature, 3, No. 1 (Winter 1978). p. 128.

[14]Ibid., p. 131.

[15]James, p. 180.

[16]Rubenstein, p. 398.

[17]Ibid., p. 399.

[18]Gloria Onley, "Margaret Atwood: Surfacing in the Interests of Survival," West Coast Review, No. 8 (1973), p. 53.

[19]Ibid., p. 52.

[20]Bruce King, "Margaret Atwood's Surfacing," Journal of Commonwealth Literature, XII, No. 1 (August 1977), p. 29.

[21]Margaret Atwood, "A Reply," Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society, 2, No. 2 (Winter 1976), p. 340.

[22]Linda Sandler, "Interview with Margaret Atwood," The Malahat Review, No. 41 (January 1977), p. 11.

[23]Ibid., p. 21

[24]Graeme Gibson, "Interview with Margaret Atwood," in Eleven Canadian Novelists (Toronto: Anansi, 1973), p. 29.

[25]Ibid.

[26]Keith Garebian, "Surfacing: Apocalyptic Ghost Story," Mosaic, 9, No. 9 (Spring 1976), p. 1.

[27]Sullivan, p. 40.

[28]Campbell, p. 18

[29]James, p. 175.

[30]Rubenstein, p. 399.

[31]Valerie Miner, "Atwood in Metamorphosis: An Authentic Canadian Fairy Tale," in Her Own Woman: Profiles of Ten Canadian Women, ed. Myrna Kostash (Toronto: MacMillan, 1975), p. 179.

[32]Margaret Atwood, Surfacing (Markham, Ontario: Paperjacks, 1973), p. 63. Subsequent page references to this novel appear in parentheses following the quotation.

[33]Miner, p. 182.

[34]The drafts and typescripts of these two novels are located in Boxes 16 and 17 of the Atwood Papers at the Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library, University of Toronto.

[35]I have carefully examined Dr. Rosenzweig's discussion and the general principles of thematic apperception analysis as set out by the creators of the technique. However, with no formal training in this technique, I do not intend to conduct a truly authentic psychoanalysis of the novel. Rather, it is hoped the psychological technique will aid the student of literature in conducting a sound, credible discussion of the novel according to general principles of literary criticism.

[36]Russell Brown, "In Search of Lost Causes: The Canadian Novelist as Mystery Writer," Mosaic, 11, No. 3 (Spring 1978), p. 3.

[37]Ibid., pp. 3-4.

[38]Ibid., p.4

[39]Ibid.

[40]Ibid.

[41]Russell Brown, "Atwood's Sacred Wells," Essays on Canadian Writing, No. 17 (Spring 1980), p. 32.

[42]Margaret Atwood, Manuscript of Chapter 27 of Surfacing, The Atwood Papers, Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library, University of Toronto, Box 21, Folder 11.

[43]Judith McCombs, "Atwood's Haunted Sequences: The Circle Game, The Journals of Susanna Moodie, and Power Politics," in The Art of Margaret Atwood, ed. Arnold E. Davidson and Cathy N. Davidson (Toronto: Anansi, 1981), pp. 37-38.

[44]The chronology of Atwood's early literary endeavour is not accurately reflected in the publication dates. Surfacing was actually written in 1965 under the title Where is Here. An examination of the origins of Surfacing by way of the Atwood Papers reveals this information as well as the fact that the novel was written simultaneously or in very close proximity with The Edible Woman. This novel, incidentally, was not published until 1969.

[45]Margaret Atwood, The Circle Game (Toronto: Anansi, 1978), p. 90.

[46]Ibid., p. 71.

[47]Ibid., p. 17.

[48]Atwood, Manuscript of "This is a Photograph of Me," The Atwood Papers, Box 10, Folder 17.

[49]Ibid.

[50]Miner, p. 193.

[51]Alberto Manguel, "Small Wonders," Books in Canada, 12, No. 5 (May 1983), p. 20.

[52]James, p. 175.

[53]Atwood, Typescript of Where is Here, The Atwood Papers, Box 21, Folder 3.

[54]Margaret Atwood, "Writing the Male Character (1982)," in Second Words (Toronto: Anansi, 1982), pp. 416-417.

[55]Gibson, p. 19.

[56]Margaret Atwood, "An Introduction to The Edible Woman (1981)," in Second Words (Toronto: Anansi, 1982), pp. 369-370.

[57]Atwood, Typescript of Up in the Air So Blue, The Atwood Papers, Box 16, Folder 1, p. 1. Subsequent page references to this novel appear in parentheses following the quotation.

[58]Atwood, "A Statement of my Intellectual Interests, Related Activities and Future Plans," The Atwood Papers, Box 1, Folder 6, Page 2.

[59]Miner, p. 192.

[60]Saul Rosenzweig, "The Ghost of Henry James: A Study in Thematic Apperception," Character and Personality, No. 12 (1947), p. 82.

[61]Margaret Atwood, Lady Oracle (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1981), p. 240.

[62]Robert Cluett, "Surface Structures: The Syntactic Profile of Surfacing," in Margaret Atwood: Language, Text, and System, ed. Sherrill E. Grace and Lorraine Weir(Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1983), p. 87.

[63]Northrop Frye, "Haunted by Lack of Ghosts," in The Canadian Imagination, ed. David Staines (Boston: Harvard University Press, 1977), p. 45.

Conclusion

This discussion of Surfacing has attempted to show that within this fictional tale about a woman haunted by her past, Margaret Atwood may be telling a story from her own literary past. Two features of the novel have contributed to this interpretation. First, Surfacing is a psychological ghost story that bears many similarities to Henry James's "The Jolly Corner," a psychological ghost story that is consistently viewed by critics as a reflection of the author's own personal experience. Second, the novel contains several parallels between the heroine and the author and appears to be infused with images and recollections that come directly from Atwood's own past.

Recent literary criticism has taken a cautious approach in discussing the autobiographical element that may be present in works of fiction. The apparent lack of such discussions, especially in the case of Margaret Atwood, leads one to feel that some may not consider such analyses of an author's work to be appropriate. Sherrill E. Grace, in an introduction to the 1978 reprinting of The Circle Game, notes that in early reviews Atwood "was labelled an autobiographical writer in the narrowest sense."[1] Perhaps these early reviews prompted critics to treat the autobiographical element with caution. As noted in the introduction to the present discussion, such treatments may result in misinterpretations or a neglect of the stylistic or thematic elements. Or, in the case of a living author, they may evoke a certain disquietude in the

author. Margaret Atwood "bristles" when Valerie Miner asks her "How can we know the dancer from the dance?"[2] because Miner appears to be promoting the notion that the author and her creation are inseparable and that the literary effort, though fictional, reveals the author's life in some way. Atwood responds to Miner by telling her that "you get a whole other sense of the work if you think of it as a thing apart from the author."[3] While it is quite true that a literary work is a "separate creature" and deserves to be considered as such, a recognition of the author in his or her written work can never really harm the appreciation of the creation. In fact, it may be that part of the critic's duty is to make an attempt to see the author in his or her literary endeavour. Bliss Carman, in "The Man Behind the Book," a chapter in The Friendship of Art, discusses this duty of the critic at considerable length:

> The scientist or philosopher, with an unflinching and unquenchable curiosity, asks of the universe, "Who goes there behind the shadowy substance? What Presence inhabits these fleeting forms, which make the lovely earth? . . ." In his smaller way the critic stands before a work of art inquiring in like spirit, "What manner of man was behind this thing?" . . . To find the man behind the book, . . . to understand him with sympathy and intelligence and respect; that is the first duty of criticism. And his second duty is to help others to understand him. . . .
> . . . . . .
> The man behind the book is not easy to discover. To meet the author, to dine with him, to receive his autograph, to photograph him carefully posed in his workshop, to note the style of his collar, the set of his coat, this is not to know the man behind the book. These things only give us a glimpse of a human being embarrassed by publicity and shrinking from unwarranted scrutiny. Any real knowledge of the man behind the book is much more difficult and requires a procedure much more subtle, . . .
> . . . . . .

> For it is not merely the man apart from his work we wish to know. Having created anything in art, the creator is no longer the same; some part of him has gone into the making of his work; a large part of his real self is there, his deepest convictions, his sincerest purpose, his finest taste. It is this underlying personality which is so interesting and so profitable an object of study. How the world impressed him, with what fortitude or timorousness he fronted life, what mark sorrow left upon him, . . . where he failed and where he was strong, . . .
> . . . . . .
> In his books he has revealed himself and in them we make his acquaintance. . . . Inevitably the result of his effort bears the stamp of his own personality. . . . In short, the object of criticism is to know the man, just as his object as an artist was to make himself known.[4]

This thesis has examined Atwood's Surfacing in such a way that more than a glimpse of the woman behind the book has been seen. More particularly, this discussion has attempted to reveal in this particular novel a particular Atwood: the writer reflecting on a disappointment in her early literary career.

Carman says that to discover the "man behind the book" one requires a "procedure" and though he does not explicitly prescribe one, he does state that it must not be a superficial appraisal of the author's external characteristics or public image. It must be an inquiry based on "sympathy and intelligence and respect" that attempts to discover the "underlying personality" of the author. With the strongest wish to adhere to these criteria, two "procedures" have been employed in examining Surfacing. Both the examination of the "Atwood Papers" and the interpretation of Surfacing based on Rosenzweig's thematic apperception analysis of "The Jolly Corner" have provided the opportunity to view the novel as one where the author has discreetly

yet significantly revealed the essence of her literary self.

In the January 1977 edition of The Malahat Review, Jerome Rosenberg published a short article about his visit to the Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library and his examination of the "Atwood Papers":

> To read through this material is vicariously to relive the ferment of Atwood's ascendance, to take part in what must have been an enormously exciting time. . . . What emerges is a non-linear, labyrinthical tale. The parts of any given event are separated by several or several dozen folders; one revisits them from different viewpoints and reassesses them, like clues in a mystery.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> The Atwood papers are revealing, exciting and (certainly for scholars) essential.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> The papers reveal something of the professional growth and personality of Margaret Atwood.[5]

The "Atwood Papers" that Rosenberg examined were comprised of eleven boxes containing manuscripts of poetry and prose and professional correspondence dating from 1959 to 1968 that Atwood had donated to the library in 1970. In 1978, 1981 and 1983 the library acquired several larger accessions from the author. The "Atwood Papers," now including many more interesting documents such as the rough drafts of Surfacing, total sixty boxes at present. Now, perhaps even more so than with the smaller collection, an examination of these papers provides, as Rosenberg declares, "an incisive and idiosyncratic commentary on Atwood's work and on her progress as a writer."[6] Ultimately, what one can derive from the "Atwood Papers" are valuable "insights into the personality (the professional personality if you will) of Margaret Atwood."[7]

The second "procedure" used to understand the novel and the writer

behind it, has been an interpretation of Surfacing based on the thematic apperception analysis performed by psychologist Saul Rosenzweig on Henry James's "The Jolly Corner." Psychologists have used this method of analysis in order to aid in the constructing of personality profiles. To become expert in this procedure takes, of course, considerable knowledge, training and experience and hence, an authentic analysis cannot be conducted by a lay person. It does seem, though, that the literary critic, trying to recognize the man or woman "behind the book," can benefit his or her discussion by utilizing the basic tenets of this procedure. Thematic apperception analysis is aimed at recognizing personal projection in a fictitious or imagined story by assessing the significance of recurring images and symbols as they pertain to a hero or heroine whose feelings, attitudes or experiences seem to resemble those of the author in some way. An important criteria for this type of analysis is the availability of historical background on the individual:

> Before starting to intepret a set of stories the psychologist should know the following basic facts: the sex and age of the subject, whether his parents are dead or separated, the ages and sexes of his siblings, his vocation and his marital status. . . . A blind analysis is a stunt which may or may not be successful.[8]

The "Atwood Papers," along with information acquired from published interviews, have provided this necessary background. The two procedures employed in this study do yield some understanding of Atwood and her "professional personality" and ultimately, a newer understanding of the novel, Surfacing.

The thematic apperception analysis would not provide the most

appropriate method of analysis for every piece of fiction. Furthermore, as a psychological approach to literature, this type of analysis may not be deemed viable, especially by those who concur with I.A. Richard's view of the "abuses of psychology."[9] In Practical Criticism, published in 1929, Richards maintains a generally disdainful view of those who would approach literature from a decidedly psychological point of view:

> Poetry has suffered too much already from those who are merely looking for something to investigate and those who wish to exercise some cherished theory.[10]

Undoubtedly, there were in the 1920's, when many psychological theories were in an infant stage, superficial treatments of literature that led Richards to believe that "we should content ourselves with traditional notions."[11] However, he also makes the following statement:

> It is possible to combine an interest and faith in psychological inquiries with a due appreciation of the complexity of poetry.[12]

Modern psychology, having branched out from the early experimental laboratories and articulated some plausible and well-defined theories on the "human condition," can be of great service to those whose "interest and faith" lie in the appreciation of literature. Such a relationship between the two disciplines, can elicit newer and valuable insights into literary endeavours, especially when the author himself exhibits a notable interest in psychological inquiries.

Henry James is one author who has exhibited such an interest. It has been noted that "his later novels are distinguished by the most artful psychoanalysis."[13] In a short biographical sketch of his older

brother William, a distinguished psychologist, the following statement reveals the younger James's interest in psychology:

> The fresh and charming style in which this and his other works were written gave rise to the statement that William James should have been the novelist, while his brother, with his involved analysis of mental processes, should have been the psychologist.[14]

Margaret Atwood, too, has demonstrated an astute awareness of psychological processes. Valerie Miner reveals that "wilderness is a pervasive theme in her work. So is madness."[15] Aside from Atwood's interest in the theories and fiction of Henry James, she appears to have some of her own insights into mental processes, particularly those involved with the schizophrenic state. For example, in the final chapters of Surfacing, Atwood provides an elaborate depiction of the heroine's journey into madness; at one point she describes the heroine's confused self-perception:

> I lean against a tree, I am a tree leaning
>
> I break out again into the bright sun and crumple, head against the ground
> I am not an animal or a tree moving, I am the thing in which
> the trees and animals move and grow, I am a place[16]

Atwood's highly poetic depiction of the heroine's mental state is very similar to the schizophrenic individual R.D. Laing describes in The Divided Self:

> In Julie all perception seemed to threaten confusion with the object. She spent much of her time exercising herself with this difficulty. "That's the rain. I could be the rain." "That chair . . . that wall. I could be that wall. It's a terrible thing for a girl to be a wall."[17]

The psychological ghost story is not an unlikely creation from an author who maintains a notable interest in psychological inquiries and theories on mental processes. Therefore, a psychological method of analysis of this author's fiction may not be an inappropriate approach; more particularly, the thematic apperception analysis becomes a credible method of analysis when the author chooses to develop a narrative that reflects or parallels significant biographical information.

In his analysis of "The Jolly Corner," Saul Rosenzweig does not dissect the fiction to a point where every image, every allusion or every character is related to James's own life. For example, he does not attempt to identify or explain the significance of Mrs. Muldoony, the housekeeper. By the same token, the present discussion of Surfacing does not attempt to relate all the characters and events in the novel to Atwood's personal experience. Like Rosenzweig's analysis, it has been the significance of the symbolic ghost upon which the present study has concentrated. While some may view this as too selective an approach, it does seem that such an approach may be the desired one.

Many critics of Surfacing have been perplexed by the novel's intricacies. Susan Schaeffer has called Surfacing a "remarkably misunderstandable book."[18] Into the 1980's, critics are still pondering over Atwood's most mysterious novel; Robert Cluett concludes his 1983 discussion of the unique syntactical structure of Surfacing by stating:

> . . . in Surfacing Atwood might well have given us a tour de force richer at its most subtle levels than anyone has yet dared to imagine.[19]

It may be that in order to understand Surfacing "at its most subtle levels," one must view the novel from a different vantage point, where one crucial element of the novel, the ghost, is scrutinized until it becomes more meaningful.

In his discussion of mystery stories, Russell Brown discusses this issue of "looking . . . from exactly the right vantage point."[20] Brown notes that Henry Acquin's Blackout (Trou de Memoire) features an emblematic example of anamorphosis: the painting "Mystery of the Two Ambassadors" by Hans Holbein, contains a skull that becomes visible only if the viewer of the painting scrutinizes it from a certain angle:

> In that painting a skull is contained in the picture but depicted in such a distorted and elongated fashion that it is only visible to those who know or discover the secret of looking at the picture from exactly the right vantage point. It is this anamorphic skull . . . that makes the painting like a mystery because the detective story also gives up its secret only to one who understands how to view its depiction of circumstances from a radically new perspective.[21]

The ghost in Surfacing is not unlike this anamorphic skull; its origin in the heroine's past is mysteriously obscured throughout most of the novel and as such, one has difficulty recognizing it. Once it has been recognized, some may still find it difficult to ascertain its relevance to the meaning of the novel. Josie Campbell, for example, has stated:

> . . . on one level Surfacing is a ghost story, although whether or not this knowledge opens up the meaning of the novel for us remains to be seen.[22]

However, once one attempts to scrutinize the ghost story more closely, from a different angle, there is the potential to discover a meaningful vision of the ghost and ultimately, the key to understanding the novel in a totally different way. The present discussion, based on an examination of the "Atwood Papers" and a thematic apperception analysis of a similar ghost story, Henry James's "The Jolly Corner," has attempted to view Surfacing from a new, if not "radically" new perspective, in order to identify its shrouded ghost and discover a new meaning of the novel in its entirety. The conclusion reached is that the meaning of Surfacing has been kept "just under the surface" by its ghost; if one "looks long enough, eventually" one discovers that the ghost that has waited there too to be discovered has been the ghost of Margaret Atwood herself.

Conclusion

Notes

[1]Sherrill E. Grace, "Introduction" The Circle Game (Toronto: Anansi, 1978), p. 9.

[2]Valerie Miner, "Atwood in Metamorphosis: An Authentic Canadian Fairy Tale," in Her Own Woman: Profiles of Ten Canadian Women, ed. Myrna Kostash (Toronto: MacMillan, 1975), p. 190.

[3]Ibid.

[4]Bliss Carman, The Friendship of Art, (Boston: L.C. Page, 1904), pp. 161-167.

[5]Jerome Rosenberg, "On Reading the Atwood Papers in the Thomas Fisher Library," The Malahat Review, No. 41 (January 1977), p. 194.

[6]Ibid., p. 193.

[7]Ibid.

[8]Henry A. Murray, Thematic Apperception Test Manual (Harvard Psychological Clinic, Harvard University, 1971), p. 6.

[9]I.A. Richards, Practical Criticism (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1929), p. 302.

[10]Ibid.

[11]Ibid., p. 303.

[12]Ibid.

[13]"Henry James," The World Book, ed. George H. Locke (Toronto: W.F. Quarrie, 1923), p. 3108.

[14]"William James," The World Book, ed. George H. Locke (Toronto: W.F. Quarrie, 1923), p. 3109.

[15]Miner, p. 191.

[16]Margaret Atwood, Surfacing (Markham, Ontario: Paperjacks, 1973), p. 195.

[17]R.D. Laing, The Divided Self (London: Tavistock Publications, 1969), p. 215.

[18]Susan Fromberg Schaeffer, "'It is Time that Separates Us': Margaret Atwood's Surfacing," Centennial Review, No. 18 (Fall 1974), p. 319.

[19]Robert Cluett, "Surface Structures: The Syntactic Profile of Surfacing," in Margaret Atwood: Language, Text, and System, ed. Sherrill E. Grace and Lorraine Weir (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1983), p. 87.

[20]Russell Brown, "In Search of Lost Causes: The Canadian Novelist as Mystery Writer," Mosaic, 11, No. 3 (Spring 1978), p. 7.

[21]Ibid.

[22]Josie P. Campbell, "The Woman as Hero in Margaret Atwood's Surfacing," Mosaic, 11, No. 3 (Spring 1978), p. 18.

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