The unnamed narrator of Surfacing comes back to her home in Northern Quebec after a gap of nine years in search of her father who is reported missing mysteriously. The protagonist is working as a commercial artist. The reason for deliberate separation from her parents is that the heroine was in love with her art teacher who exploited her innocence. Against her wishes, he got the pregnancy terminated. Unable to cope with this painful reality she gave her parents a different version. She wrote a postcard and informed them that she was married, had a child and lost him to the husband whom she divorced. She invented for herself a different reality which was more acceptable than the actual one and "had come to believe the fantasy of a female adulthood constructed for her parents' benefit and had repressed the real story." To some critics, the narrator's search for her missing father typifies and constitutes the essentially Canadian attribute not to disown one's parents and emblematizes her desire to recover the holistic sense of self by relating herself to her origins and roots and thereby escape from being what Atwood calls "free floating citizen of the world." While to Valerie
Broege, Atwood’s *Surfacing* contains analysis of "American psyche." Broege sees the narrator as a "representative of the Canadian psyche, feminine, passive, lacking identity and suffering a victim complex." In Alan Twigg’s words, the novel positively "reflects society." Some readers point out that Margaret Atwood has dealt with Canada as a collective victim. This is affirmed by Atwood, "what I’m really into in that book [Surfacing] is the great Canadian victim complex." Marilyn Yalom believes that *Surfacing* presents "the chaos of the unconscious." Since the protagonist is an artist, Russel Brown sees in it "implications of the artist in the myth-making process."

It is clear that this unnamed protagonist has a problem with the past and that is affecting her psyche. Since it is a first-person narration and the author does not say anything about the character by way of authorial intrusion most of what the narrator says is tempered by the narrator’s own ideas. The narrator is, therefore, unreliable. Yalom is right in saying that the narrator has "constructed a fabric of lies. . . so as to seal over the painful ugliness of a truth rejected by her psyche" (pp. 76-77). The novel’s technique also requires an objective standpoint from which to view her. She is terrified of past and strives to shut out the agony of experience. Her life follows a pattern of self-alienation of a severe kind
leading towards her neurosis. Horney’s theory provides the key to understand how the narrator’s self withers and how her contact with the outside world recedes leaving the core of her integrity impaired. From Horneyan psychoanalytical angle, the protagonist adopts the strategy of withdrawal to escape her conflicts. A deeper probing will show the psychological causes behind the dislocation of her psyche.

The chief thing needed for a proper appreciation of the protagonist’s character is the psychological understanding of her motivation and the key to it lies in comprehending her divided self. Her tense and conflictual relation with the past has problematised her perception and she feels like a "Woman sawn apart in a wooden crate" (§, p. 102). Abortion and her husband’s lack of support are the fountain-head of her neurosis. She calls abortion an accident, "only with me there had been an accident and I came apart" (§, p. 102). The event has left the protagonist a psychic wreck, "emptied, amputated." Describing the devastating effect of abortion on a woman’s psyche, Atwood has displayed a superb and penetrating awareness. A scholar remarks "The trauma of abortion has never been dealt with such an extraordinary understanding before in fiction." The heroine could not forget the memories of this traumatic experience. They are so real and alive that she remembers the "criminal hand" of the non-nurse, whispers and its clinical details. It
affected her later life completely in addition to what it
did to her psyche. She herself confesses that she could
never be the same again. Her refusal to accept "that
mutilation, ruin I'd made" (S, p. 137) created intra-psychic
and interpersonal conflicts. It crippled her relationship
with Joe to such an extent that she could never think of
marriage, and as for having a child, she is emphatic, "After
the first I didn't ever want to have another child" (S, p.
74). One inner urge of human life is to create, to
generate, to make alive, to bring forth something new out of
the hidden treasure of being. For a woman, motherhood can
lead to the satisfaction of this creative urge. In the
protagonist's case, however, the abortion came as a bane and
dried up her human urge for creativity.

The protagonist suffers from a very strong guilt
complex which is intensified by her feeling that even unborn
babies have eyes and can see like the baby in the picture
"sitting up inside her gazing out...," she identifies
with the unborn baby when she says, the baby was "myself
before I was born..." It keeps haunting her continually
and memories of it often get mixed up. She would have
managed this crisis had she shown some will-power and gained
support of her ex-lover. His absence at that particular
moment hurts her so much that she returns to it over and
over again and always finds him missing from this agony of
her experience. "He wasn't there with me. I couldn't remember why; he should have been, since it was his idea, his fault" (S, p. 74). It is not the hurt that ruins her life, it is her inability to cope with it that causes her emotional imbalance. Her solution is to stay out of it, to avoid everything and everyone. It is not a healthy person's reaction. At the time of difficulty she could enlist the support of her parents and her lover. But the heroine complicates things for herself when in the hour of her need she breaks ties with her parents and avoids seeing her lover. She confesses:

After the slaughter, the murder, he couldn't believe I didn't want to see him any more; it bewildered him, he resented me for it, he expected gratitude because he arranged it for me, fixed me so I was as good as new; others, he said, wouldn't have bothered. Since then I'd carried that death around inside me, layering it over, a cyst, a tumour, black pearl; the gratitude I felt now was not for him (S, p. 139).

The heroine's anger and resentment are understandable. But what is difficult to swallow is the phobia and anxiety the incident generates. A psychologically healthy person would get over the crisis with the support of her dear ones - may be parents or husband or lover. Shashi Deshpande's Urmie, the heroine of *The Binding Vine* is shattered by the death of her baby, but by and by she overcomes her trouble by getting involved in the social problem of a raped woman.
Portrayal of psychic cases of women who are rived either by abortions or barrenness or death of a child abound in literature by women, be they from any country. Nella Larsen's Helga Crane, a black American woman, for example, is psychologically disturbed when one of her many children dies. Anita Desai's Maya (Cry, The Peacock)⁹ and Monisha (Voices in the City)¹⁰ are childless. Both have seriously injured psyche. One kills her husband in a fit of insanity while the other commits suicide on a flimsy issue. The problem with them is that they magnify ordinary situations, blow them out of proportion and succumb to self-hate. Those who have the strength to face life and its existential angst, accept the ups/downs not stoically but by being actively happy: Mulk Raj Anand's Gauri, R. K. Narayan's Savitri (The Dark Room¹¹) or Iris Murdoch's Dora (The Bell¹²). It would be profitable to comprehend the conflicts of these women and to see what creates inner rift in some while others remain immune from trouble under identical external circumstances.

Discussing the problem of Atwood's heroine from a feminist angle, one critic refers to "the psychological dimensions of sexual politics which can lead a woman to the point of insanity."¹³ But when interpreted from Horneyan angle, it is different. Horney contends that a neurotic makes secret claims towards life and expects his life to be
as he/she visualises it. He cannot face facts because his claims clamour, "I am something extra special " and hence, "entitled to be treated . . . in accord with his grandiose notions about myself" (NHG, p. 41). This includes demands made on fate also. The protagonist of Surfacing demands preferential treatment from her ex-lover, but finds herself alone in the hospital for abortion which gives a blow to her "shoulds." She broods: "He hadn’t gone with me to the place where they did it; his own children, the real ones, were having a birthday party" (§, p.138). She cannot escape the pains and sufferings of a hard, harsh, protean reality. Her lover’s attitude means that she is ordinary which is beyond the scope of her neurotic claims. In these circumstances, the only significant thing is to cling to life. To come back to everyday world means a return to knowledge. She dreads this knowledge that he is a married man. She wants to keep it locked, to forget it. Forgetting is her road to sanity and health. "A section of my own life, sliced off from me like a siamese twin, my own flesh cancelled. Lapse, relapse, I have to forget" (§, p. 42). In her effort to forget it, she becomes an "escape artist."

The protagonist’s difficulties start with abortion and revelation of her ex-lover. His words shatter her self-image. Her self-pride forbids her to do anything with a man who is another woman’s husband and has children. She cannot
"accept" and hence, cannot get over her anxiety. To cope with this, she invents a less painful version of her situation. She now creates fantasies in order to present an ideal image of herself. In this realm of fantasy, she is away from pain because she is innocent and it is all the fault of her husband. Her refrain is: "I am innocent." She builds this image by fabricating lies and by twisting her memories. She remarks:

I have to be sure they're my own and not the memories of other people telling me what I felt, how I acted, what I said: if the events were wrong the feelings I remember about them will be wrong too, I'll start inventing them and there will be no way of correcting it, the ones who could help are gone. 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 (S, p. 67).

These lies are her neurotic needs. Tennessee Williams signifies the need of lies thus: "There are no lies but the lies that are stuffed in the mouth by the hard-knuckled hand of need, the cold, iron fist of necessity." When the protagonist is trying to establish her innocence she is showing her desperate compulsive drive. Carol P. Christ refuses to see this need, rather, he observes that she suffers from a "typical female delusion of innocence." For another critic, it is not the delusion of innocence but
the fact that "for the female individual to survive, she must recognize and reject not only the pathology of social and sexual arrangement but her own participation in these arrangements as well." However, the fact is that the narrator projects herself as powerless and innocent, a victim of her husband's cruelties because by denying the child and withdrawing herself from all responsibility, the heroine survives the crisis and saves herself from psychological disintegration. Not only does this protect her against self-hate, it also feeds her pride. She blames her non-husband as she holds him responsible for her calamities. She does not feel the need to "explain to them why it wasn't really mine." She refuses to identify her child as her own. She blames it on him:

It was my husband's, he imposed it on me, all the time, it was growing in me I felt like an incubator. He measured everything he would let me eat, he was feeding it on me, he wanted a replica of himself; after it was born I was no more use. I couldn't prove it though, he was clever: he kept saying he loved me (§, p. 28).

She feels she was used as an incubator. For her failure to cope with this clever man, she blames even her parents for not teaching her the techniques of survival in the city. For a neurotic like her, it is nothing but an act of externalization. She feels, "I'm inoculated, exempt, classified as wounded" (§, p. 81). Externalization in case
of the protagonist is of great significance. It not only helps her to retain her ideal image of innocent victim of her ex-lover's cruelty but also works as a defence strategy to save her from inner conflicts and consequent onslaughts of self-hate. Emphasising the need of posture of innocence for the protagonist, Margaret Atwood writes:

If you define yourself as innocent then nothing is ever your fault--it is always somebody else doing it to you, and until you stop defining yourself as a victim that will always be true. It will always be somebody else's fault, and you will always be the object of that rather than somebody who has any choice or takes responsibility for their life. And that is not only the Canadian stance towards the world, but the usual female one. 17

The narrator not only defines herself as innocent but she also thinks she is powerless. By imagining herself as powerless she feels that she is not evil. "I think, as I had no idea what I would do with the power once I got it; if I'd turned out like the others with power I would have been evil" (S, p. 31). She considers the use of power as evil. Margaret Atwood contends, "The other thing you do, if you are defining yourself as innocent, you refuse to accept power. You refuse to admit that you have it, then you refuse to exercise it, because the exercise of power is defined as evil." 18 Being an innocent, powerless and betrayed woman, she removes herself from the "inner battle
field" and relieves herself of the tension by her withdrawal. In Horneyan terminology, it is a neurotic trend. In the words of Wayne Fraser, the heroine views herself "a 'nice' victim of both male aggression and American killer instinct."\(^{19}\) By being withdrawn, she feels happy at her non-attachment, happy that she has no expectations from life and from others.

Withdrawal is not new for the protagonist. Earlier in childhood she has learnt that she can escape from her inner turmoil if she frees herself from all wishes, emotional ties and efforts for winning. She glorifies her aloofness and remains stoic. Anthony Storr describes a schizoid person as cold, aloof and detached. This is "a complex mask for a repressed longing for love."\(^{20}\) The narrator in childhood is not a schizoid person but the posture of her stoiccy does conceal her repressed longing for love. The reason for this repression is found in her family. Paris writes that Horney assigns more responsibility to the family than to the culture for the neurosis. He remarks: "The important role Horney assigns to culture as the determinant of neuroses notwithstanding, she places more responsibility on the family."\(^{21}\) According to Horney, "a child who grows up in a congenial atmosphere of confidence, encouragement in his activities and constructive discipline" develops self-confidence. Lack of this atmosphere makes the narrator
"socially retarded" which she confesses is worse than mentally retarded. The protagonist’s parents lacked the emotional involvement necessary for child’s growth. The protagonist’s father was a botanist who "admired the eighteen century rationalist" and the mother could enter "no emotions" in her diary. When the child is in awe of parents' "perilous innocence," he regards them as "Gods" and develops "faith in (their) capacity to recover from anything." It is natural for a child to develop ontological insecurity and put some emotional distance between himself and others.

The protagonist has spent her childhood in the lake forest before moving to the city life. She has always felt a stranger, a sort of alien in both environments. Being split "between two anonymities, the city and the bush" (§, p. 53) she remains alienated in both. She cannot relate to other children in spirit of spontaneity because she is alien to their customs and religion. Her parents did not teach her religion, so she learns it as other children learn about sex. When a child does not share the fears and the defences of culture and religion, he or she has to pay, as Horney says, in The Neurotic Personality of Our Time, "an exorbitant price" for defences consisting in "an impairment of capacity for achievement and enjoyment." Thus raised in an atmosphere far removed from realities, she can neither
accept reality nor can she participate in life. It is evident in her refusal to attend the funeral of her mother. A more or less similar situation is depicted by Camus in The Stranger when the hero fails to express his emotion on his mother's death. This freezing of emotion is indicative of a severed connection with the core of being.

Atwood's protagonist cannot accept her mother's death realistically, nor can she respond appropriately to it which is the reality, the ultimate end of life. She confesses later "when she died, I was disappointed in her", she stops participating and remains bound to door knobs, fences and knots. She no longer seeks affection nor does she fight. She feels disappointed and disinterested in life. She confesses, "I was disappointed in my self: I must have been a hedonistic child, I thought, and quite stodgy also, interested in nothing but social welfare" (S, p. 85). She intuits the causes of alienation in the early stage of her childhood. The narrator recalls her childhood argument with her brother in which she remarks:

    fighting was wrong, we weren't allowed to, if we did both sides got punished as in a real war. So we battled in secret, undeclared, and after a while I no longer fought back because I never won (S, p. 129).

The protagonist of Surfacing stops playing games. This tentamounts to rejecting life as such. This fear of playing
games derives not only from her mistrust of her own capacity but also from her tendency--characteristic of neurotic--of always wanting to succeed. She cannot settle for averages, therefore, she prefers not to attempt at all. She is trying to create a special position for herself through this exaggerated refusal. To compensate for these feelings of uncertainty and inferiority, she directs her energies to becoming a "'lady'." She is seeking safety and her need is neurotic and urgent. She herself affirms, "'A lady'" or "'A mother', either one was safe; and it wasn't a lie, I did want to be these things" (S, p. 85). She takes neurotic pride when she succeeds in conforming to this image. It is reflected in her remarks, "I was civilized enough" and have become "finished product." Feminist critics view this neurotic trend of the protagonist differently. They blame the patriarchal social system which oppresses and treats women as second sex. One critic argues that "the world is masculine on the whole; those who fashioned it, ruled it, and still dominate it today are men."23

In fact, her conformity to the social image of femininity can be attributed to the compulsion of self-destructive drives generated by her pride system rather than to her gender. It is her search for glory which is allied to her pride system that she keeps on shifting between withdrawal and compliance--her two major neurotic solutions.
The protagonist's flashbacks on her days with her ex-lover reveal her compliant drives. Like ontologically insecure people, the narrator feels real, alive and whole when she relates to her lover. He serves her psychological needs of love and belonging. Like a true compliant character she values love as the most essential part of life. She recalls:

For him I could have been anyone but for me he was unique, the first, that's where I learned. I worshipped him, non-child bride, idolater, I kept the scraps of his handwriting like saints' relics, he never wrote letters, all I had was the criticisms in red pencil he paperclipped to my drawings. Cs and Ds, he was an idealist, he said he didn't want our relationship as he called it to influence his aesthetic judgement. He didn't want our relationship to influence anything; it was to be kept separate from life (§, pp. 142-43).

It is clear that her relation with the art teacher is one of morbid dependency. She submits to his love, his demands for aborting the child. She restores her pride dwelling on his admiration and values his notes. She has an idealised image of him and experiences her own search for glory through him. She listens to him when he tells her that "there have never been any important women artists" and believes that "he was right, there never have been any" (§, p. 46). She even gives up the ambition of becoming "a real artist" and starts believing that "men ought to be superior"
(S, p. 105). She experiences his success as her own, his glory is hers. This gives her feelings for him the neurotic intensity that makes it romantic. Horney associates it with morbid dependency. For the dependent partner in such relationship:

Love must and does appear as the ticket to paradise. . . . no more feeling lost, guilty and unworthy. . . . love seems to promise protection, support, affection, encouragement, sympathy, understanding. It will give him a feeling of worth. It will give meaning to his life. It will be salvation and redemption. . . . To love, for him, means to lose, to submerge himself in more or less ecstatic feelings, to merge with another being, to become one heart and one flesh (NHG, pp. 239-40).

The failure of her relationship with the art teacher deals her a severe blow. The dismal sense of having failed produces self-reproach and self-contempt. These, in themselves, are damaging feelings. To save herself, the easiest way she finds is in withdrawal and she shifts her energies to the strategy of detachment. Withdrawal is her defense mechanism to guard her idealized self-image as an independent individual. This elevates her in her own eyes. She feels not only invulnerable but righteous and superior too. The narrator's self-conscious superiority reflects in her thoughts; she recalls that she is not "prepared for the average, its needless cruelties and lies" (S, p. 183). Her parents "didn't teach us about evil, they didn't understand
about it" (§, p. 138). She believes "their totalitarian innocence was my own" (§, p. 184). These feelings become pronounced when she says that she alone can find her father while others have failed. This appeal of freedom is seen in her remarks about Mr Percival. She does not like her publisher’s interference in her work. She does not allow her friends to plan the search for her father and "right now I wish they wouldn’t be here." Her behaviour matches the description Horney gives of the difficulties faced by detached persons and their need to be alone. The unnamed protagonist confesses, "it’s true, I am by myself, this is what I wanted, to stay here alone." Her wish to stay alone is not a healthy drive of a detached independent person.

What she considers freedom is just a flight from conflicts. It is a neurotic striving for resignation. It signifies a peace born out of "absence of conflicts." In spiritual pursuit of detachment, struggle is for higher goal. Abraham Maslow terms it "metamotivation." Hindu psychology envisages freedom from ego involvement to the optimum degree possible. Real freedom implies "cessation of all conflict and liberation from fear." J. Krishnamurti points out that "unless the mind is absolutely free from fear, every form of action brings more mischief, more misery, more confusion." The narrator is not free from fears. She is afraid of life and is closed to all its
possibilities. She is afraid of Paul and his wife discovering about her. She admits "she is afraid" and in order to evade it, "I wanted to keep busy, preserve at least the signs of order, conceal my fear, both from others and from him. Fear has a smell, as love does" (S, p. 72). Thus it is seen that she experiences fear in her relationship with Joe and her friends. She is afraid that they may not find about her past.

To the narrator, resignation "means giving up struggle and settling for less" (NHG, p. 260). It is a process of curtailing life and growth; wrongly does she think that she has achieved peace. Since she has not developed a healthy self-esteem, she reaches for false glory based on neurotic pride and lives in that ivory tower of her pride safe in the belief of independence and hence her own significance. Erroneously she substitutes the real self by her actualized self-image. She blocks all consciousness. Her false self has emerged where she felt the need to give a faked version of her life. Her false self suffers from marriage which has never existed and which the narrator calls the "paper act." She realised her glorified image of herself when she pities herself for marrying a "wrong person" and getting a divorce. "A divorce is like an amputation, you survive but there's less of you" (S, p. 36). Thus she alienates from the real self as well as from the others. C. G. Jung employs the
term "self" to mean that part of a new centre of personality which includes the conscious as well as the unconscious and brings a feeling of "oneness" with life--human, animal and plant. Like Horney, Atwood in exchange of conversation between Joe and Marian in The Edible Woman terms the real self as the "Core." In Surfacing, the protagonist's alienation has started when she splits her life into "head" and "heart" and experiences herself as split and divided self. She views herself "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" (§, p.102). Her neurotic pride system and its demands on herself alienate her from historical present as well as from past and more crucially from all emotions. She calls her parents "they" as if "they were somebody else's family" (§, p.8). She realises that she has become an insensitive and unfeeling creature. "I realised I did not feel much of anything, I hadn't for a long time. Perhaps I'd been like that all my life" (§, p. 99). This is symbolised by her physical numbness; she confesses that what to feel became a kind of rehearsal for her. She recalls:

I rehearsed emotions, naming them: joy, peace, guilt, release, love and hate, react, relate; what to feel was like what to wear, you watched the others and memorized it. But the only thing there was the fear that I wasn't alive: a negative (§, p. 105).
Avoidance of deeper involvement is the character trait of the withdrawal type. Erich Fromm in *Man For Himself* calls it "negative relatedness." Erickson uses the term "negative identity" for the state in which "I" is burdened down rendering an individual unable to participate in speciation. In the narrator's case "I" is not encumbered but stunted by her super-ego, her glorified image. She is sure that one can retain one's independence and sanity by closing all communication. Communication is both painful and humilitating to her. Avoidance of deeper feelings is seen in her relationship with Anna, David and Joe. Sharing and communication is difficult both for her and Joe. It exposes her vulnerability and feelings of inadequacy. That is why she gives half-truth to Anna. When she asks about her emotional commitment, she tells that she is married but keeps silent about the baby. "I haven't told Joe either" (S, p. 42). It is a painful reminder of her inadequacy to keep her husband when Anna could hold David.

She avoids all kind of commitment. She loves Joe but she shrinks from marriage because it would mean emotional commitment. She wants to keep her intimacy on physical level only. She says "Everything I value about him seems to be physical: the rest is either unknown, disagreeable or ridiculous. I don't care much for his temperament" (S, p. 51). Many critics find Atwood's protagonist sceptical of
the magic word "love." Firestone observes that love between sexes is "complicated, corrupted or obscured by an unequal balance of power."\textsuperscript{25} The cause behind this scepticism is that she is exploited and betrayed by her first lover who did say "he loved me" and the narrator will "never trust that word again" (\textit{S}, p. 41). They also claim that she distrusts the word "love because for men, love is nothing but sex"... "love is taking precautions" (\textit{S}, p. 74) and even Joe who is only "half formed" is no less demanding. However, it is the tyranny of the narrator's shoulds that allow her only distant or transitory relations. Therefore, she cannot allow her sexual relationship with Joe to "degenerate into love." The "shoulds" of a resigned or detached people are "negative" in nature. According to Horney, they do not develop lasting relationship, they need to maintain their distance in these relationship as well. They must not show others their feelings, which ought to stay hidden, and they should not expect anything of life or other people lest they be disappointed (\textit{NHG}, pp. 64-66). Their shoulds demand the repression of their needs and feelings. That is the reason why the protagonist cannot openly express her love for Joe though she feels for him "I'm fond of him, I'd rather have him around than not; though it would be nice if he meant something more to me" (\textit{S}, p.36). It becomes comprehensible now, why the
protagonist cannot express her love though she feels for Joe.

In reality, she values marriage based on love and commitment. She has respect for her parents' and Paul's marriage. "The barometer couple in their wooden house, enshrined in their niche on Paul's front porch, my ideal" (S, p.132). Now we are in a position to understand why she says 'No' to marriage with Joe. Though her excuse is "I've tried and failed... But marriage was like playing Monopoly or doing crossword puzzles, either your mind worked that way, like Anna's or it didn't; and I'd proved mine didn't" (S, p. 81). Actually she has to protect her image of detached person and repress any desire for intimacy and commitment.

However unfeeling, rude and alone she may pretend to be, she is essentially highly strung. She cannot tolerate other people saying that her father is dead. She reacts with vengeance. She doubts even David and feels that he is telling lies. It may be argued that even a healthy person resents criticism and injury to his pride. But there is a sharp difference between the two. A normal person's pride is based on substantial attributes of his personality such as feeling of quiet dignity at having achieved something in life. Neurotic pride, on the contrary, stands on shaky grounds. It rests on the idealized image that she alone is
capable of discovering her missing father. Therefore, the protagonist's reactions to the ordinary suggestions given by Paul or David are violent and baffle the readers. Two causes work behind these reactions. Her friends hurt her neurotic pride by being with her in her search for her father. At the conscious level she knows that she is not self-sufficient as she glorifies herself to be and that she has to depend on them. Secondly, she is disgusted with her dependency which denotes her weakness. Thus, she alternately glorifies and scorns her independence and loneliness.

Inside, she is afraid, feels lonely and needs friends. She is happy when they are around but she shows her disregard because it is against the taboos of her withdrawal. She is caught in the crossfire of her conflicting "shoulds." She remarks; "Still I'm glad they're with me, I wouldn't want to be here alone; at any moment the loss, vacancy, will overtake me, they ward it off" (S., p. 33). She also wishes that they "weren't here. Though they're necessary" (S., p.10). So long she has been successful in her self-deceit considering herself immune. Till the narrator reaches the lake whatever pain is experienced remains at the superficial level of pseudo-self. At the sight of fish that she has killed, she discovers her vulnerability: she is not stoic, that she has not done away
with ties and deeper feelings and she can be touched by grief.

As Marian’s crisis in *The Edible Woman* reaches a critical point when she identifies with an edible commodity the protagonist of *Surfacing* faces crisis when she identifies with the heron. She sees her predicament in the death of heron who is killed by Americans and strung up like a lynch victim. "Anything we could do to animals we could do to each other, we practiced on them first." It is very difficult for her to reconcile to the fact that innocents get slaughtered because they exist. In fact, it is a projection on other people of characteristics which in course of the novel she is forced to acknowledge as her own. Incensed by the manner Americans destroy the thing they have no use, the protagonist realises "the only relation they could have to a thing like that was to destroy it." It is simply to prove that "they had the power to kill." Bellowing with pain and anger she directs her self-contempt towards Canadians. It is a case of displaced emotions. She blames them for allowing this to happen and shows a deep indignation when she perceives an irony that they are not Americans but Canadians who have killed the heron. They are also turning into like them, she bursts. At this revelation, her indignation alternates with self-accusation:
I felt a sickening complicity, sticky as glue, blood on my hands, as though I had been there and watched without saying No or doing anything to stop it: one of the silent guarded faces in the crowd. The trouble some people have being German, I thought, I have being human (§, p. 124).

She admits her complicity in the killing of heron, it brings her a deep sense of her own evil. And finally she admits to the abortion and her guilt. She confesses "I let them catch it. I could have said no but I didn’t; that made me one of them too, a killer" (§, p. 139).

This heron incident is very vital because it initiates the process of self-analysis in the case of the protagonist. She not only discovers the reason of the prevailing evil but also the hierarchy of victimization in which the powerful gets the less powerful. She views this tendency to evil as innate: "To become like a little child again, a barbarian, a vandal: it was in us too, it was innate" (§, p. 126). We can discern a slow progress in the narrator from neurotic egocentricity towards an allocentric perception while analysing her own emotional bankruptcy. She perceives similar atrophy of heart in David.

David is like me, I thought, we are the ones that don’t know how to love, there is some thing essential missing in us, we were born that way, Madame at the store with one hand, atrophy of the heart. Joe and Anna are lucky, they do it badly and suffer because of it: but it’s better to see than to be blind,
even though that way you had to let in the crimes and atrocities too. Or perhaps we are normal and the ones who can love are freaks (§, pp. 130-131).

Human life, says Buber, is life in dialogue and we can know the self only through it. This presupposes a communication between the consciousness of individuals. Till now, the protagonist did not have "I-thou" communication and hence she could not develop "personal empathy." Now psychologically she begins to relate herself to other people. The relationship of Anna and David becomes worthy of her attention which was so far outside the scope of her neurotic drives. Now she perceives Anna as a compliant character whose marriage is not based on an emotional commitment but on a set of rules. If she breaks them it upsets the balance. David has his own compulsions; in Hornyan terminology, his destructiveness is sadistic. He has pronounced sadistic trends because of his feelings of futility. As regards his life, there is a gap between the self and his falsely elaborated view of himself. Violence and cruelty towards Anna is an avenue of escape from his conflicts. The aggressive type does not let his victim grow independent, free from his control. This trend is seen in his relationship with Anna. When she goes on with Joe he is jealous and possessive about her. The reality of the situation is that David does not know "how to love." He
suffers from atrophy of heart. He wishes to be loved absolutely and accuses Anna of infidelity. In fact, he is so insecure that he cannot allow Anna to be independent.

The protagonist suggests a way out of being victimized by David. She says "may be you should leave or get a divorce." As a compliant character Anna is unable to follow the protagonist’s advice. It is her compulsive drive and due to her need of David she has "come to love" him, and is ready though cryingly to expose her naked body so that David can collect the sample of victims for Random Samples. In Anna’s passivity and powerlessness, she not only sees a feminine passivity but her own suffering due to her morbid dependency on her ex-lover. In freeing Anna she is freeing herself. For the first time she makes an independent decision: unwinds the camera film, throws it in the lake inspite of Anna’s warning to her "You better not do it they’ll kill you." She feels happy "hundred of tiny naked Annas" are no longer bottled and shelved. In this act of freeing Anna she has taken an action which she thought she was powerless to do. But this is a brief moment of self-discovery. She undergoes a great struggle. Her "grandiose fantasies" about herself as a detached person perish; self-hate emerges with the realisation that she has been an escape artist expert at untying knots only; she has lacked human warmth. Her inability to share feelings with others
on a human level had isolated her. Pure violence erupts as an ultimate form of introspection.

To comprehend the behaviour of the narrator, we have to explore the psychological terrain of her inner being. The narrator's state of mind is "disjointed, chaotic and restive." The narrator loses her own reality and participates in shamanic rites. She sees Amerindian river Gods, and different native Indian visions in which her parents appear as birds and animals. In Laing's terminology she is showing psychotic alienation. "When the 'self' becomes more and more participant in phantasy relationships, less and less a direct participant in real relationships, in doing so it loses its own reality."^26

According to Joseph Campbell, these are symptomatic of her unconscious fears and tensions. Like other psychoanalysts Jung and Freud, Campbell sees the co-relation between logic of myths and dreams. In the The Hero with a Thousand Faces, he points out the psychological significance of these mythological and legendary heroes for the modern man. To him, it is a "symbolic expression" "given to the unconscious drives, fears and tensions that underlie the conscious part of human behaviour."^27 Erich Fromm stresses upon the importance of this primitivism in man's search for himself. According to him "these are primitive systems such
as animism and totemism in which natural objects or ancestors represent answers to man's quest for meanings." To an ordinary onlooker, these visions are hallucinatory or mental abrasions but a scholar sees in it "religious ecstasy." These mental abrasions in case of the narrator are the ghost of her psyche, that is why Atwood calls this novel a "ghost story." By confronting these ghosts, she traces her father's sanity and possibility of his death by drowning. In these mental abrasions she has gone only that far, and it was possible for her to come back. Her father's death symbolically represents the spiritual death of self. Her pushing herself "reluctantly into the lake" is an image that serves as a metaphor to reveal the protagonist's incipient descent into the self to discover within her psyche the split between head and feelings.

The discovery of her dead father gives her the transformative power and the illumination that "Gods of the head" are not enough for her quest for herself. Mother's gift: childhood painting of mother and child becomes her guide to materiarchal perception. Now she perceives that everything is alive, everything is waiting to become alive with this maternal power. She rejects her passive innocence, rediscovers her consciousness and regains her essential nature as a woman. She gives up the old belief that she is powerless and takes responsibility for her
decisions and her life. "I have to recant, give up the old belief that I am powerless and because of it nothing I can do will ever hurt anyone" (stå, p. 185). Erich Fromm opines that when a man accepts his power and uses it, he can make his life meaningful. Man must accept the responsibility for himself and the fact that only by using his own powers can he give meaning to his life.

Only if he recognizes the human situation, the dichotomies inherent in his existence and his capacity to unfold his powers, will he be able to succeed in his task: to be himself and for himself and to achieve happiness by the full realisation of those faculties which are peculiarly his--of reason, love and productive work.30

The split in this divided self gets healed when she accepts her duality and becomes free from it. Sherill Grace observes, "it is not duality but polarization that is destructive and freedom comes only when the dualities are accepted."31 She is healed when she accepts her both halves.

Her acceptance of both halves--head and feeling is evidenced in the act of turning the mirror around. She views herself "a natural woman... a new kind of centrefold." She gives up withdrawing because now she can face life without any defenses. "Withdrawing is no longer possible and the alternative is death" (stå, p. 185). She
decides to "prefer life" (§, p. 182) and discovers that "feeling was beginning to seep back into me." She does not need to stay as the centrefold but makes move towards people. Now she realises that it was not "the men" she hated but "the human beings, both men and women" (§, p. 148) "who represent evil." In the beginning of the novel she considered the possession of power as evil but now her vision is clear and she is aware that evil can be "dealt with, stopped and predicted." She feels that evil is not confined to Americans only, it is innate in us. With our power, we can stop it.

With this new found power, she is ready to face demands and questions of Joe who has returned to the island. She is fully herself and fully human as Marie Francoise Guedon views her. Guedon says, "The heroine comes back from her dive into wilderness to re-possess herself, her memory, her normalcy. She has gained acceptance of herself and reality. She is now fully herself and fully human."[^32] She accepts the humanness of her parents. She acknowledges that they are not Gods, "they dwindle, grow, become what they were, human" (§, p. 183). In accepting their humanness she frees herself from the cruelties of her false self. She accepts her humanness with her frailties and subsequent guilt.
Now she gains ultimate sanity. According to Rigeny, now "to the protagonist belongs the ultimate sanity; the knowledge that woman can descend and return--sane, whole, victorious." The symbolic conception towards the end indicates the rebirth of her aborted child and signals the beginning of the process of her becoming whole again. "The two halves clasp interlocking like fingers." Rigney views in it the possibility of 'self-actualization' (p. 119). The narrator feels there is "No total salvation, resurrection" (S, p. 183), but Atwood writes "the heroine of _Surfacing_ does not end where she began." She sees the possibility of actualization for her.

Though we have no reason to refute what Atwood says about her heroine (for, she is her creator), we have our doubt regarding her self-actualization. The unnamed protagonist is a brilliantly documented figure having her motivational system and operating within a value-system she has lived in. The positive streak in her character shown at the end is generally interpreted as her healthy vision. But, it must be remembered that prior to the end, the heroine has discovered the cause of her father's death. With this discovery, the period of uncertainty and mental tension is over. Relieved of tension she sees life as worth accepting. She reconciles with its ups and downs.
It is difficult to accept that the protagonist who has harboured anger, frustration and defeat for long and has not even undergone any self-analysis can really become a self-actualizing individual within a short time. However, we can grant her healthy vision and appreciate her decision to go back to normal life. This acceptance is found in Anita De'pai's Sita in *Where Shall We Go This Summer?* which reveals the guts to face life and reconcile with it. There are others who run away from life: Kate Chopin's Edna (*The Awakening*)\(^5\) and D.H. Lawrence’s the woman who rode away. At least, Atwood lets her heroine confront facts, "to survive with dignity."\(^6\) She achieves integration and becomes whole after experiencing fragmentation. Probably she paves way for her next prototype, Joan Foster who will be discussed in the next chapter, dealing with *Lady Oracle*. 
Notes and References


18. Graeme Gibson, pp. 14-15
19. Wayne Fraser, The Dominion of Women, p. 126


29. Wayne Fraser, *The Dominion of Women*, p. 133.


34. Linda Sandler, *Margaret Atwood: Conversations*, p. 45.