

Margaret Atwood's Postcolonial and Postmodern Feminist Novels with Psychological and Mythic Influences: The Archetypal Analysis of the Novel *Surfacing*

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Abstract

The paper analyzes Margaret Atwood's postcolonial and postmodern feminist novels from the psychological perspective of Carl Gustav Jung's theory of archetypes and from the perspective of Robert Graves's mythological figures of the triple goddess presented in his work *The White Goddess: A Historical Grammar of Poetic Myth* (1997). In this regard, the paper focuses on the mythic and psychological roles embodied and played by Atwood's victimized female protagonists who actively seek their identity and professional self-realization on their path towards personal evolution in the North American patriarchal society of the twentieth century. Thus, they are no longer passive as female characters of the nineteenth-century colonial novels which are centered on the male hero and his colonial adventures. In her postcolonial and postmodern feminist novels, Atwood further introduces elements of folk tales, fairy tales, legends, myths and revives different literary genres, such as a detective story, a crime and historical novel, a gothic romance, a comedy, science fiction, etc. Moreover, she often abuses the conventions of the existing genre and mixes several genres in the same narrative. For instance, her narrative *The Penelopiad* (2005) is a genre-hybrid novella in which she parodies the Grecian myth of the adventurer Odysseus and his faithful wife Penelope by subverting Homer's serious epic poem into a witty satire. In addition, the last part of the paper analyzes the author's cult novel *Surfacing* (1972 (1984)) according to Joseph Campbell's and Northrop Frye's archetypal/myth criticism and it demonstrates that Atwood revises the biblical myth of the hero's

quest and the idealized world of medieval grail romances from the ironic prospective of the twentieth century, as it is typical of postmodernism.

Key words: Margaret Atwood, Canada, Edward Said's postcolonial theory, postcolonialism, Linda Hutcheon, postmodernism, feminism, Carl Gustav Jung's psychology, mythic/archetypal criticism, Northrop Frye, Joseph Campbell, Robert Graves

1 MARGARET ATWOOD AS A POSTCOLONIAL AND POSTMODERN FEMINIST AUTHOR

1.1 Introduction: 'A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Woman' and Major Influences on Margaret Atwood's Work

Margaret Atwood is one of Canada's most prominent and prolific contemporary novelists who have achieved international acclaim. She is also a celebrated Canadian poet, short story writer, national critic of cultural politics, cartoonist, watercolorist and environmental activist, who is greatly concerned with human rights. Owing to her impressively successful literary oeuvre and her critically praised, best-selling novels, she has received numerous prestigious literary awards. As a consequence, now in her seventies, she enjoys the privilege of being canonized not only in Canada, where she is a cultural icon and media celebrity¹ because of her keen public appearances on television, but also in the United States, where she is an American author whose creative masterpieces are taught at school on a regular basis or, sometimes, banned from it because of their nightmarish contents.

Margaret Atwood, daughter of an entomologist and professor of Zoology at the University of Toronto, was born in Ottawa in 1939 and spent an important part of her childhood in the wilderness of northern Ontario and Quebec, where her scientist father conducted research. As a child she was initially home-schooled by her mother, a nutritionist by profession. Greatly encouraged by her academically driven parents, she read books of different literary genres profusely from an early age and loved especially comic books, folk tales, myths, Andersen's and Grimm's fairy tales, which all significantly inspired her creative writing later on. In 1946, her family moved to Toronto, where she finally attended primary and secondary school regularly (full-time). She received a Bachelor of Arts in English (honors) and minors in philosophy and French from Victoria College,

1 According to York (qtd. in Howells, 2006: 37), Atwood has become a 'Thing'. On the one hand, she is celebrated and admired as a literary and media superstar, on the other hand, she is the target of nasty comments and hostile attacks of many journalists who trash her for everything she does in the public eye.

University of Toronto, where she became acquainted with Robert Graves's *The White Goddess: A Historical Grammar of Poetic Myths* (1997)² and Jungian analytical psychology together with his archetypal theory of the collective unconscious. At the university, she also met the literary critic and professor Northrop Frye whose lectures about myth/archetypal criticism deeply influenced her as a student and writer. After winning a Woodrow Wilson Fellowship, she pursued her graduate studies at Radcliffe College, Harvard University, where she received a master's degree in Victorian literature. At Harvard, she also started working on a doctoral thesis, however, owing to her busy schedule as a writer and editor at the publishing House of Anansi Press in the early 1970s, she didn't manage to complete the dissertation on 'The English Metaphysical Romance' of the nineteenth and twentieth century. Nevertheless, she reused the doctoral research material in her novels. She also taught creative writing and literature at several universities across Canada and the United States before she could make her living from professional writing.

1.2 Margaret Atwood as a Postcolonial Critic of Cultural Politics and Postcolonial Novelist

Atwood became of age as a writer in the second half of the twentieth century when Canada, as a post-war independent state³, was still struggling with the missing national identity owing to its colonial (i.e. cultural) subordination to the former British empire. In addition, its colonially conditioned mentality was gradually evolving from cultural into economic and political subservience to the fast-expanding capitalist market of the American superpower. Concerned with this national problem, Atwood greatly contributed to the theorizing of Canadian identity in the 1970s by writing a controversial literary and critical study *Survival*, published by the House of Anansi Press in 1972, in which she presented the typically recurring themes of Canadian literature because she wanted to prove to the skeptical Canadian readership that Canadian literature had its own literary tradition⁴ and, according to her, it represented the expression of Canadian identity.

2 See also Robert Graves's *Greek Myths*.

3 Canada came into being as a Confederation in 1867, but it finally succeeded in becoming totally independent from the United Kingdom only in 1982 by way of the Canada Act.

4 When Atwood attended school in her youth and, later, when she studied English and literature at the university, Canadian literature was not on the syllabus. In the fifties, a lot of Canadian writers had to go abroad if they wanted to publish their books and be successful as authors because the book market simply did not exist or was too small in Canada where Canadian readers preferred to read American and British imported literature and magazines. From this perspective, they were not interested in buying and reading Canadian literary books since they were not conscious about

In her study, she also pointed out that Canada, as a nation, was still a colonial (i.e. cultural) victim of the former British master (i.e. victimizer) and was on its way to becoming the future victim of the neocolonial hegemony of the United States. In this regard, her political discourse, based on the victim/victimizer relationship, corresponded to the concept of dichotomy introduced by Edward Said's postcolonial theory (1978) since it confirmed Said's binary opposition between the superior, positive, colonizer and the (culturally, economically and political-ly) inferior and negatively represented colonial Other. In her decolonizing counter-discourse, Atwood further stated that Canada, as the colonial (i. e. exploited) Other, should reject the victim position⁵ and the colonially oppressive British and American masters and become a creative non-victim. She also suggested that Canadian authors should no longer write books in which Canadian characters were represented just as passive colonial victims and failures, which was typical of post-colonial authors who imitated the negative discourse patterns of British colonial novels in the early stage of decolonization according to Homi Bhabha's concept of mimicry (1996).

From this perspective, Atwood totally subverts the British colonial canon of the nineteenth century in her postcolonial and postmodern feminist novels of the twentieth and twenty-first century since she, in terms of the postcolonial feminist theoretician and critic Gayatri Spivak (1988), allows her female (subaltern) characters to speak with an authoritative voice, and be active protagonists of her narratives. This was impossible in colonial literature of the nineteenth century because it was conventionally centered on, positively represented, male heroes,

themselves as Canadians. More specifically, they were not concerned with their national identity and some of them even believed that Canadian literature and its literary tradition didn't exist at all. However, Atwood, who wanted to become a poet and a writer, discovered that this wasn't the case in the library of Victoria College where she had access to Canadian poetry and its tradition and she finally learned about Canadian literature and its tradition at the library of Harvard University. This convinced her that Canada had its own distinctly shaped culture and national identity that was expressed in their literary tradition. By writing a guide about recurrent themes of Canadian literature in her critical study *Survival* (1972), which she helped to publish together with the House of Anansi Press, she significantly contributed to promote Canadian literature in her home country and abroad. In the second half of the twentieth century, the Canadian Council also began to financially support the Canadian book market and the publishers (the House of Anansi Press and Coach House) who focused on publishing Canadian authors and their – typically Canadian – regional themes. This gradually contributed to the development and booming of Canadian national literature, which also helped to forge the Canadian national identity.

- 5 In her study, Atwood distinguishes four 'basic' victim positions which gradually enable the oppressed victim to overcome the situation of crisis and evolve into a free individual: in the first phase, the victim is in denial, in the second phase, he/she acknowledges the fact of being a victim, but attributes this position to a higher power, such as God, Nature etc.. In the third phase, the person refuses it as unavoidable – and in the fourth phase, he/she no longer needs to participate in the Victim/Victimizer game because he/she has become a creative non-victim.

the European adventurous colonizers – although the male protagonist prevails even in Chinua Achebe's postcolonial patriarchal novel *Things Fall Apart* (1958 (2009)), written in the twentieth century. In this type of literature, especially in the colonial literary canon of the nineteenth century, female characters usually appeared in passive secondary roles of no importance. Since they were oppressed by the European colonial victimizer and the patriarchal system of their country, they were colonized two times as victims and, therefore, endured double colonization from the feminist point of view.

In Atwood's novels, however, her female characters no longer appear in such secondary roles, but are usually active heroines who, metaphorically speaking, struggle to survive the double colonization since they are still victimized by the North American postcolonial patriarchal society of the twentieth century and oppressed by their domineering partner, with whom they struggle for power in the battle between the sexes. In some cases, they are also stifled by relatives and members of the Canadian family, which is usually a trap from which the protagonists of Canadian literature cannot escape according to Atwood's critical study *Survival*.

Thus, her female protagonists are still victims, but – on their profoundly personal (i.e. psychological) journey of self-discovery – they seek their female identity or even the Canadian cultural and national identity like the unnamed heroine in the nationalistically oriented, cult, novel *Surfacing* (1972 (1984)). In their struggle, they become empowered as human beings and find a unique way to stay alive in harsh patriarchal and political environments. In this regard, some of the protagonists just survive like the unnamed handmaid in *The Handmaid's Tale* (1986) and Rennie in the Caribbean jail in *Bodily Harm* (1984), whereas others grow psychologically and evolve into an artist like – the unnamed illustrator in *Surfacing*, Joan, the writer and poet, in *Lady Oracle* (1987) and Elaine, the painter, in *Cat's Eye* (1989). More specifically, the last three heroines appear in Atwood's novels of female development in which the protagonist reaches self-realization in her artistic profession and conquers the status of a creative non-victim, as Atwood points out in her study *Survival*.

2 MARGARET ATWOOD AS A WRITER OF POSTMODERN PSYCHOLOGICAL NOVELS

The Canadian literary critic Linda Hutcheon, the author of *The Canadian Postmodern* (1990) and *A Theory of Parody: The Teachings of Twentieth-Century Art Forms* (2000)⁶, classifies Atwood as a postmodern novelist who is very versatile in

6 Linda Hutcheon is also the author of *A Poetics of Postmodernism* (2003) and *Narcissistic Narrative: The Metafictional Paradox* (1984).

reviving different narrative genres, such as a crime novel in *Bodily Harm*, a historical novel in *Alias Grace* (1996) and *The Blind Assassin* (2001), a detective story in *Surfacing*, a gothic romance in *Lady Oracle*, a science fiction (or dystopian) novel in *The Handmaid's Tale* and *Oryx and Crake* (2003), a fairy tale in *The Robber Bride* (1994), etc.. According to her and Howells (2000), Atwood further challenges the conventions of these genres so that she departs from the genre conventions or mixes different genres together within the same novel and, thus, creates a new hybrid genre by parodying the existing genre or genres in the novel like, for instance, in her novella *The Penelopiad* (2005). In this way, she revises ancient myths, legends, fairy tales, etc. and modernizes them by giving them a new meaning with a contemporary parodic or ironic twist from the point of view of the twentieth and twenty-first century, as it is typical of postmodernism.

In her novels, most of her postmodern female protagonists also appear as retrospective first-person limited narrators, who are no longer reliable story-tellers, while the endings of her novels are usually open and can be interpreted in several ways. In many of her works, such as *The Blind Assassin*, *Alias Grace*, *Life Before Man* (1996), *Bodily Harm* and *The Penelopiad* (2005), she experiments with multiple narrative perspectives and intentionally signals her method of narration to the twenty-first century reader, which is a distinctive feature of postmodern writing. For this reason, her novels, which often include a narrative framework, are usually classified as polyphonic metafiction. Atwood further infuses them with playful wit, satiric black humor, irony and literary allusions (intertexts) from other literary works, fairy tales and folk tales, which is characteristic of postmodern self-reflexive writing (i.e. fiction about fiction, conscious of itself – its fictionality – and allusively referring to previous literary works of fiction). From this point of view, Atwood's postmodern metafictional narratives emphasize the linguistic, discursive, social and ideological construction of reality according to Berger and Luckmann (1988) since they no longer correspond to external reality in realism or personal reality in modernism.

Regarding the narrative structure and technique, Atwood's novels are usually fragmented stories which no longer observe a linear timeline of traditional novels of realism. In these, the plot of the story typically started at the beginning, reached a turning point in the middle with the complication of events and was resolved towards the end, whereas in Atwood's postmodern novel, the reader usually follows the stream of consciousness – more precisely – the internal monologue of the main narrator and heroine who, in this double function, gradually recounts her life and slowly unveils the personal trauma of her childhood and adolescence by means of flashbacks. In this way, the grown-up protagonist revives and remembers the significant previous events that traumatized her in the past. Atwood, thus, scrutinizes the wounded psyche of her victimized heroines who have the moral

obligation to heal from their psychological trauma and resolve themselves as human beings. For this reason, her works are also analyzed as psychological novels according to Steals (1995) since they involve the protagonist's personal growth and individuation in terms of Jung's analytical psychology.

More specifically, Carl Gustav Jung (1961) was also the first to introduce the theory of archetypes. These are 'primordial images' of the collective unconscious and recurring patterns of potential psychological behavior that is transmitted through the unconscious from one generation to another. As far as this is concerned, all human beings are born with this type of inherited knowledge of psychological behavior, which the ancient ancestors expressed in myths. Furthermore, Jung, as the precursor of the Anglo-American myth criticism, together with the major archetypal critics – Northrop Frye (the author of *Anatomy of Criticism* (1957)), Joseph Campbell (Jung's follower) and Robert Graves (the author of *Greek Mythology* (1958)) – made a great impact on Atwood and, consequently, she used their archetypal ideas in her literary creations. For this reason, the characters in her novels embody the Jungian archetypes and correspond to Graves's mythological figures presented in his study *The White Goddess*. Therefore, the following part of the paper analyzes her literary characters and heroines according to Jung's theory (which deals with archetypes, such as the Jungian shadow⁷, persona, anima, animus, self, hero's mythic quest, trickster, archetypal pattern of death and rebirth,

7 In the work *Negotiating with the Dead* (2002: 35–37, 176–178), Atwood speaks about the process of writing and admits that she, as an artist, possesses a double personality like Dr. Jeckyll and Mr. Hyde. In this case, the dark side of her personality corresponds to the Jungian shadow. As she further explains, friends and family know her as Peggy, whereas the one who secretly writes for her is her shadowy evil twin, which she also defines as her doppelgänger and alter ego in terms of Jung's theory of archetypes:

By *two*, I mean the person who exists when no writing is going forward – the one who walks the dog, eats bran for regularity, takes the car in to be washed, and so forth – and the other, more shadowy and altogether more equivocal personage who shares the same body, and who, when no one is looking, takes it over and uses it to commit the actual writing. (Ibid. 35)

Who was I then? My evil twin or slippery double, perhaps. I am after all a writer, so it would follow as the day the night that I must have /.../ at best a mildly dysfunctional one /.../. (Ibid. 36)

You might say I was fated to be a writer – either that, or a con-artist or a spy or some other kind of criminal because I was endowed at birth with a double identity. Due to the romanticism of my father, I was named after my mother (Margaret); but then there were two of us, so I had to be called something else. Thus I grew up with a nickname (Peggy), which had no legal validity, while my real name – if it can be called that – sat on my birth certificate, unknown to me, ticking away like a time-bomb. What a revelation it was for me to discover that I was not who I was! And that I had another identity lurking out of sight, like an empty suitcase stashed in a closet, waiting to be filled. (Ibid. 36)

/.../ I caved

The /J/eckyll hand, the /H/yde hand, and the slippery double
in to Fate, and embraced my doubleness. (Ibid. 36–37)

etc.) and Graves's classification of the triple goddess who is divided into the following three mythological images: 1. the innocent maiden Diana, 2. the sexually attractive or seductive Venus and 3. the evil, authoritative and destructive Hecate.

2.1 Atwood's Novels According to Jung's Theory of Archetypes and Graves's Mythological Images of the Triple Goddess

In Atwood's novel *The Edible Woman*, which is a witty satire, the heroine Marian MacAlpin⁸ embodies Graves's mythological figure of the innocent maiden Diana and is victimized by her patriarchal domineering fiancé Peter, a prospective lawyer, who wants to fully possess her and annihilate her female identity after their marriage. She is also oppressed by the expectations of the Northern American contemporary consumer society (of the 1960s) which believes that university-educated women like Marian should leave their jobs and take care of their husband and children after being married. Thus, they should become devoted (sacrificial) slaves of the domestic household since the sexist patriarchal society of the sixties didn't allow them to have a career and fulfil themselves in their profession. From this perspective, Atwood's protofeminist⁹ social satire, written in the late sixties, made fun of socially constructed myths of femininity which dictated how a woman should be and behave. For this reason, Marian feels that she is being exploited and consumed (eaten away) by the egotistic wishes of her fiancé and the ideological norms of the cannibalistic patriarchal society, which explains Atwood's humorous title of the novel as well. Although Marian wears a social mask of the Jungian persona archetype and, hence, acts to please Peter and her parents, she feels alienated from her inner self after her engagement. So, as a consequence, she becomes anorexic and refuses to eat.

In her witty novel, Atwood parodies and, thus, revises the conventions of a traditional comedy in which a young couple in love usually gets married after some obstacles are resolved between the parents of the spouses. In Atwood's anti-comedy, on the contrary, Marian betrays her fiancé by making love to Duncan – who appears in the Jungian role of her positive shadow archetype (alter ego) according to Gupta (2006: 22, 24, see also Grace 1980: 93, Macpherson 2010: 28). As far as this is concerned, he helps her see that she has become a passive victim. After this

8 According to Cooke (2004: 39) and Macpherson (2010: 26), Atwood intertextually refers to Marian as Alice from Lewis Carroll's fairy tale *Alice in Wonderland* in chapter 22 of *The Edible Woman*.

9 Atwood's novel anticipates the ideas of the second wave of feminism in the 1960s and 1970s. In this regard, Betty Friedan was the first to express the dissatisfaction of post-war women who had to stay at home as married mothers and give up their jobs in order to look after their family in her ground-breaking text *The Feminine Mystique* (1963).

realization, she calls off the wedding and, thus, regains her individual identity because she refuses to become a subservient wife. In Atwood's anti-comedy the ending is also reversed, since Marian's pregnant friend Ainsley gets married instead of her.

In the novel *Lady Oracle*, which is a witty anti-gothic satire, the heroine Joan Foster is victimized by her monstrous dominating mother Fran. She embodies Graves's mythological figure of the authoritative Hecate and the Jungian negative mother archetype, whereas Joan corresponds to Graves's figure of the innocent Diana since her wicked mother doesn't love and accept her as a fat little girl. Owing to her traumatic childhood experience, Joan has become alienated from her inner self and as a grown-up person develops different multiple personalities – which enable her to escape from her unloved self. In the public eye, she is a successful poet while she secretly writes costume gothic romances under the pen name of Louisa K. Delacourt and imagines to live the life of her gothic heroines. She is also a former fat child since she manages to lose weight with the help of aunt Lou, who embodies her good (surrogate) mother archetype, and she, thus, transforms herself into a beautiful slim woman, who incarnates Graves's seductive Venus. From this point of view, she also represents the Jungian anima – the ideal image of a woman in a male psyche, whenever she falls in love. She further fragments her personality by multiplication since she always invents a new personality for her new patriarchal lover, with whom she struggles for power, or she even tries to please her husband Arthur in the traditional role of a subservient wife. As an artist, she always finds a way to withdraw from her oppressive partners – who don't fulfill her desire of being loved – and usually escapes into her gothic world of fiction. According to Cook (2004: 92–93), Atwood intertextually refers to her as the *Little Mermaid* from the fairy tale of Hans Christian Andersen and, thus, identifies Joan's escapism with the mermaid's drifting around in Andersen's story.

In the end, Joan regains her lost identity and heals from her past trauma after confronting the ghost of her death mother since she realizes that her multiple personalities resemble the monstrous Hecate heads of her mother. According to Grace (1980), Joan is also a parody of Graves's triple goddess (Diana–Venus–Hecate) because of her multiple, intentionally exaggerated, personalities which make her character appear comic and larger than life in comparison to flat gothic heroines that Atwood parodies in her witty anti-gothic satire. In this way, Atwood revises the conventions of costume gothic romances since, according to Cooke (2004: 91), Joan is no longer a tragic (i.e. gothic) victim of unrequited love like “The Lady of Shalott” from Tennyson's ballad, to which Atwood intertextually refers to in her comic version, or a passive heroine who is conventionally saved by a gothic hero and marries him in a simplistic and predictable plot with a happy ending. On the contrary, Atwood's comic parody focuses on the idea that the protagonist Joan must actively resolve her problems on her own.

The novel *The Robber Bride* is another parody of gothic romances in which the heroines Charis, Roz and Tony seek their female identity since they are alienated from their inner self owing to their repressed childhood trauma. They are victims of the gothic villainess Zenia, the Jungian anima and Graves's sexually attractive Venus, since she steals their husbands by seducing them in the role of a femme fatale and discards them after a brief love affair. According to Atwood (qtd. in Steals 1995: 208–209), Zenia represents the ideal and dreamy image of a woman that the three heroines themselves long to be and their alter ego, the evil Jungian shadow, because she mirrors the evil side of their personality that they have learned to repress. However, in the positive role of their shadowy double, Zenia teaches them an important lesson since she makes them realize that they tried to please their husbands in the traditional role of a subservient wife, whereas their men ungratefully left them for her, their opposite, who refused to be dominated by them. Zenia, thus, makes them see that they were not saved by their marriage like passive heroines of gothic romances, but they actually saved their partners by marrying them because they took care of them. According to Howells (2000: 147) and Steals (1995: 198), Atwood's novel, thus, revises the conventions of the gothic genre and also parodies Grimm's fairy tale *The Robber Bridegroom*, in which the evil groom lures his prospective brides into the woods where he eats them. However, in Atwood's version, the man-eating role is reversed since Zenia replaces the villain of the fairy tale, as the title of the novel suggests, by seducing and sexually devouring the husbands of the three heroines. Thus, the cruel teacher Zenia, to whom Atwood (qtd. in Steals 1995: 200) intertextually refers as the biblical prostitute Jezebel and the Jungian trickster figure from folk tales, also forces them to face the psychological trauma from the past and relive their suppressed pain that enables them to eventually heal and regain their lost identity. According to Wilson (2000: 224), Zenia, like Joan in *Lady Oracle*, embodies all three mythological figures of Graves's triple goddess – the seductive Venus, the destructive Hecate, and the innocent Diana who immigrated to Canada in her childhood as a victim of Jewish persecution during World War II.

In the novel *Cat's Eye*, which is a fictive biography, the heroine Elaine Risley is victimized by Cordelia, who bullies her at school with the help of two schoolmates. Owing to her persistent verbal abuse, Elaine loses her identity (positive self-image) and becomes alienated from her inner self. According to Cooke (2004: 108, Gupta (2006: 120) and Steals (1995: 209), Cordelia represents her alter ego, the Jungian shadowy double, and embodies Elaine's evil potential. For this reason, in the second part of the novel, the two, who are twin souls, switch places. In reference to Cordelia, Atwood intertextually alludes to William Shakespeare's tragedy *King Lear*, in which Lear punishes his daughter Cordelia because she doesn't show him her love the way her sisters Goneril and Regan do. More specifically, Cordelia uses Elaine as a scapegoat for her frustration at home where

she is physically abused by her dominating patriarchal father, who plays the role of king Lear. In his eyes, she is not worthy of his love since she is not as successful as her more accomplished and beautiful sisters Goneril and Regan. Furthermore, Elaine is a victim of Mrs. Smeath, who represents the puritanical Toronto with its strict moral rules of Christian behavior, since she treats Elaine as a sinner owing to her lack of religious up-bringing. According to Steals (1995: 186) and Cooke (2004:109), Mrs. Smeath, thus, embodies the Graves's evil and authoritative Hecate, who is conventionally played by the dominating grandmother in Canadian literature, as Atwood's points out in her study *Survival*.

In the second part of the novel, however, Elaine becomes Cordelia's victimizer and succeeds in transforming herself into an accomplished painter, whereas Cordelia gradually falls into despair that ends with her death. At the end of the novel, the middle-aged Elaine, who has healed her childhood trauma with the creative power of her artistic work, realizes that Cordelia was just her father's victim while Mrs. Smeath only observed the moral (bigot) convictions of society. Therefore, she forgives them and abandons her revenge. According to Howells (2000: 144–145), Atwood's novel is a bildungsroman like James Joyce's work *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. However, Atwood's narrative replaces the traditional role of a male protagonist with that of a female one and, thus, focuses on the heroine's psychological growth and artistic development from her childhood to maturity.

In the realist novel *Life Before Man*, which is a social chronicle, the heroine Elizabeth Shoenhof, her husband Nate and Lesje Green, her co-worker at the museum, are involved in a love triangle since Nate has a love affair with Lesje while Elizabeth is in a love relationship with Chris Beechman, also a college from the museum. However, Elizabeth and Nate stay together as a married couple owing to their children. They are, thus, trapped by their family, which is also a typical theme of Canadian literature according to Atwood's study *Survival*. In Elizabeth's case, the traditional roles between the spouses are reversed since she is the head of the family and, thus, unconventionally appears in the dominating role that is usually played by a patriarchal partner, whereas her husband Nate and lover Chris lean on her for emotional support in the pleasing role that is typical of a subservient wife. Although she possesses an aggressive male personality and knows how to survive in a tough urban environment, she is a victim of her tyrannical aunt Muriel, who embodies Graves's authoritative Hecate and represents Toronto's puritanical morality with rigid religious behavior like Mrs. Smeath in *Cat's Eye*. In spite of the fact that her aunt took care of her as a child who was psychologically traumatized by the sudden tragic loss of her mother and sister, Elizabeth feels alienated from her inner self in her adult life because she cannot forgive her aunt's strict religious and moral up-bringing in her childhood. For this reason, she cannot open up to her lover and really love Chris – who commits suicide in

order to punish her cold behavior. Even at the end of the novel, she cannot forgive her dying aunt because she has turned into her, the cold and authoritative Hecate figure. However, she unconventionally succeeds in getting out of the family trap (from which the Canadian literary character usually does not escape according to Atwood's study *Survival*) since she separates from her husband and decides to take care of her children without his help.

In the postcolonial novel *Bodily Harm*, which is a political narrative, the heroine Rennie Wilford is a victim of her dominating grandmother, who embodies Graves's authoritative Hecate figure and represents the rigid religious morality of Canadian bourgeois society like Mrs. Smeath in *Cat's Eye* and aunt Muriel in *Life Before Man*. Owing to her strict and traumatic up-bringing, Rennie, who is a travel journalist by profession, flees from Griswold and remains alienated from her inner self even in her adult life. In her symbiotic love relationship with Jake, she emotionally leans on him for protection and tries to please him. Jake, who is an accomplished designer and business owner, also makes her feel invincible since he embodies Rennie's ideal image of a man in her female psyche or the Jungian animus according to Gupta (2006: 101–102). However, she soon realizes that she has become a victim of his sadistic sexual games, in which he always plays the victor/victimizer, whereas she always ends up being his sexual slave. Moreover, she is a cancer survivor and, hence, decides to flee from her dull everyday life to the Caribbean islands. There, she recovers her lost sexuality with Paul, an American CIA spy agent and drug smuggler, but she ends up in Caribbean jail owing to her involvement in Paul's trading American weapons in exchange for Caribbean drugs. From this perspective, Atwood parodies and, thus, revises the predictable plot of gothic romances according to which Rennie should be conventionally saved by Paul, the gothic hero. Instead, in her political and anti-gothic novel, Paul turns out to be a villain and not Rennie's rescuer. In the narrative, Atwood also criticizes the American involvement in the violent politics of the Caribbean postcolonial dictatorial regime which suppresses the uprisings of the communist party and the human rights of their citizens with the help of the army and police. As far as this is concerned, Atwood further shows that, owing to the economic and political partnership between Canada and the United States, Rennie is automatically considered a political prisoner of the Caribbean totalitarian regime simply because she is a Canadian citizen. In her political novel, Atwood, thus, demonstrates how the totalitarian power politics of the Caribbean oppressive government and Jake's sexual power politics work. According to her, they both can do harm to innocent human beings like Rennie and get away with committing evil acts without punishment.

In the multi-perspective novels *Alias Grace* and *The Blind Assassin*, Atwood revives a historical genre since she depicts various historical events of the Canadian past in the background of both novels. More precisely, in *Alias Grace*, she fictionally

constructs the life of Grace Marks, a nineteenth-century Irish (immigrant) servant girl who was convicted of having helped to murder her employer Thomas Kinnear and his housekeeper and mistress Nancy Montgomery. Grace Marks is, thus, a historical figure (of Canadian culture) who was sentenced to life imprisonment and spent most of it in a lunatic asylum. In Atwood's fictionalized version, based on documented facts, Grace recounts her personal life story to Doctor Simon Jordan. He further tries to unlock her memory since she suffers from amnesia and cannot remember the double murder. From this point of view, she embodies the elusive Jungian trickster archetype because she reveals to the doctor just what has already been said about her during the trial. She, thus, remains an enigmatic figure till the end of the story since she keeps the reader wondering whether she is an innocent victim of circumstances or a cold-blooded murderer.

The novel *The Blind Assassin* is a mosaic (i.e. genre-hybrid) narrative like *Alias Grace*. More specifically, it is a family saga which is set in the Canadian fictional town of Port Ticonderoga and depicts Toronto's historic events of the 1930s and 1940s in the background of the novel. The heroine Iris Chase is a victim of her rich industrialist husband Richard Griffen, a sexual bully whom she marries when she is only eighteen years old in order to save her father, a button-factory owner, from bankruptcy. From this perspective, she embodies Graves's innocent maiden Diana because she sacrifices herself for the good of the family according to Cooke (2004: 148). In reality, her arranged marriage turns out to be just a trap in which she, as a young wife and virgin, is repeatedly abused by her violent patriarchal husband. He also rapes and impregnates her younger sister Laura, a minor, who is later incarcerated in a lunatic asylum and forced to undergo an abortion by Richard. For this reason, the revengeful sister Iris ruins her husband's political career by publishing a scandalous novel entitled *The Blind Assassin* about a supposed love affair between her sister Laura and the Communist agitator Alex Thomas – although the novel is really about her secret love affair with Alex. In addition, the rumors about Richard's sexual involvement with Laura, initiated by Iris, force her husband to commit suicide. She is also 'the blind assassin' of her sister Laura, as the title of the novel-within-the-novel suggests, since she informs Laura about the death of her beloved Alex and accidentally reveals to her that she had a secret (extramarital) love affair with him which brakes Laura's heart and causes her suicide.

Unlike the historical narratives *Alias Grace* and *The Blind Assassin* about the Canadian past, *The Handmaid's Tale* is a dystopian social satire and speculative novel (also science fiction) which refers to the fictive future of the United States. As Atwood's later dystopian trilogy (*Oryx and Crake*, *The Year of the Flood* (2012) and *MaddAddam* (2013)), it deals with a futuristic post-apocalyptic and nightmarish world which mirrors our (high-tech) society of today in an exaggerated way and, as a catastrophic vision of our future, it criticizes the evils already present in our contemporary world.

More precisely, in Atwood's Orwellian dystopia *The Handmaid's Tale*, the heroine Offred is a victim of Gilead's Christian fundamentalist regime in which she serves just as a surrogate mother for reproduction or a two-legged womb. In the role of a handmaid, she has no human rights and is assigned to the Commander Fred and his wife Serena Joy, a couple from the ruling elite, since they cannot have children owing to the toxic pollution of their technologically overdeveloped world. In her novel of the 1980s, Atwood recreates the strict moral and religious world of the seventeenth-century New England's Puritans and intertextually refers to the Puritan community described by Nathaniel Hawthorne in *The Scarlet Letter*. In his novel, innocent people are portrayed as prisoners oppressed by the rigid religious norms of their theocratic world from which they cannot escape like citizens in Atwood's dystopian world of Gilead's totalitarian theocratic republic (founded by the extremist American New Christian right of the 1980s on the east coast of the United States in the year 2000). However, the protagonist of Hawthorne's novel Hester Prynne manages to survive in the harsh religious surroundings because she refuses to die inside her inner self like Atwood's handmaid Offred – who tries to remember the life before the regime when she was a university-educated American citizen and a happily married mother. By remembering her past, she reconstructs her identity, which is a form of therapy that helps her survive and maintain her sanity. In her work, Atwood also intertextually refers to the biblical handmaid Bilhah – the surrogate mother for Rachel's baby in the Old Testament owing to Rachel's infertility. Bilhah's role is, thus, fulfilled by Atwood's protagonist Offred, who also embodies Graves's innocent maiden Diana in the forced sexual intercourse with the Commander, while the sterile wife Serena Joy fulfills the role of Rachel. In addition, Atwood's dystopia, published in 1985, criticized the conservative ideas of the American religious party of the 1980s since its members represented the puritanical values of America and were against contraception, abortion, pornography and homosexuals. They also advocated the traditional values of the patriarchal system according to which women should stay at home and look after their family. They, thus, wanted to force women to give up their basic human rights, as it is shown in Atwood's nightmarish narrative vision that can be compared to the existing world of Islamic religious fundamentalism of the 1980s.

In the multi-voiced and genre-hybrid novella *The Penelopiad*, Atwood parodies the *Odyssey*, Homer's original version of the Grecian myth about the adventurer Odysseus and his faithful wife Penelope. In her comic satire, the story is retrospectively told from the sarcastic and ironic perspective of Penelope, who also addresses the twenty-first century reader from the Grecian Underworld after her death, while her maids, who have no voice in Homer's original epic poem, sarcastically and ironically comment her unreliable metafictional narrative in different genres. More specifically, Atwood's mythological novella repeats the well-known

mythic story of Antiquity with the same literary characters, setting on Ithaca, major events and further continues Homer's original text by adding new events. As far as this is concerned, her parody gives prominence to the hanging of Penelope's twelve maids, which is only briefly mentioned in Homer's version as a minor event, while Atwood's Queen Penelope no longer appears as a faithful wife since she is rumored to have slept with her suitors during Odysseus's absence from home. In addition, she is viewed as a shrewd liar, who plays the role of the Jungian trickster archetype, like her husband. In her parodic revision of the Grecian myth, Odysseus is acquitted of having murdered Penelope's suitors and of having ordered the hanging of the innocent maids in the videotaped process (more specifically, a burlesque travesty) that takes place in the twenty-first century court of law. In her witty satire, Atwood ridicules the idealized heroic past of the epic genre and the double moral standard of the Grecian patriarchal ideology. As far as this is concerned, the immoral husband Odysseus was allowed to cheat on his wife on his mundane adventures away from Ithaca, whereas his wife Penelope, a rich aristocratic woman, had to remain faithful to him in order to be respected in his patriarchal kingdom where she just increased Odysseus's wealth by marrying him.

3 THE ARCHETYPAL ANALYSIS OF THE PSYCHOLOGICAL NOVEL *SURFACING*

Atwood's novel *Surfacing* is a detective story in which the unnamed heroine (i.e. the surfer) searches for her missing father, a retired botanist, in the wilderness of Quebec. However, from a more personal and feminist prospective, she seeks her authentic inner self and her female identity which she lost owing to her past relationship with a patriarchal married man who forced her to undergo an abortion. For this reason, the novel corresponds to a psychological quest narrative since the surfer travels back in time and dives into the unconscious side of her psyche in order to remember and heal her past trauma. Her psychological journey involves a renovation of her personality according to Jung's analytical psychology and follows Joseph Campbell's monomyth about the hero's adventures presented in his work *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (1973). For this reason, her journey is a mythic quest as well. More specifically, Atwood's three-part novel corresponds to Campbell's three-part schema of the hero's separation from society in the first part, his initiation and later illumination (i.e. revelation of self-knowledge) in the second part and the return of the hero to civilization in the third part. It, thus, coincides with Campbell's mythic quest structurally and thematically.

Furthermore, the surfer also follows the mythic pattern of personal transformation which derives from the *Bible* (i.e. *The Book of Jonah*) and it is known as a

heroic quest which involves death and rebirth and Jung's personality renewal within the process of individuation. Moreover, the surfacer's quest for individuation, which coincides with Campbell's mythic schema, also corresponds to Frye's romance journey which describes the same transformation as the biblical story of Jonah. For this reason, Pratt classifies the narrative *Surfacing* as a novel of rebirth and transformation in her work *Archetypal Patterns in Women's Fiction* (1981). In reference to the surfacer's archetypal journey, Atwood further alludes to Galahad's search for the holy grail in medieval quest romances which deal with the same biblical (mythic) pattern of personal transformation as well. Since the twentieth-century heroine of the novel revives the grail motif in her memory search of the aborted baby, Atwood's quest narrative also corresponds to the definition of a grail romance (also quest romance) according to Frye's *Anatomy of Criticism*, as it will be demonstrated in the following paragraphs with the detailed analysis of the novel.

According to Frye, specifically, the surfacer's grail quest starts with a perilous journey into the dangerous Canadian wilderness, where she starts her inner search for her self and the external search for her missing father. This also indicates Campbell's first part of the hero's adventure – his separation or departure from society. In the initial phase, the surfacer is alienated from her parents, her inner self and emotions because she has suppressed the memory of her traumatic abortion and pushed it into the unconscious part of her psyche. In this regard, her initial psychological state corresponds to Frye's *agon* which indicates her conflict with the unconscious side of her self or the Jungian shadow. For this reason, she has also lost her identity and feels psychologically divided into two halves – the head, and the body which represents her heart and feelings – “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.” (*Surfacing*, 102). She also perceives herself as a powerless and innocent victim of her previous dominating patriarchal partner, the married art teacher, with whom she had an affair. In the second phase of Campbell's initiation, the surfacer discovers her father's rock drawings which guide her to the lake where she dives into the water in order to find her missing father. However, at the same time, she figuratively dives into her unconscious realm where she discovers her psychological shadow: “My other shape was in the water, not my reflection but my shadow /.../” (*Surfacing*, 165). According to Christ (1976: 322), the lake offers her “redemption” (*Surfacing*, 16) since, under water, she finally faces her suppressed traumatic event and, thus, confronts the shadowy part of her self by acknowledging the death of her aborted baby – “/.../ dark oval, trailing limbs. It was blurred but it had eyes, they were open /.../ it was dead.” (*Surfacing*, 165). The dead baby also caused her emotional death, which corresponds to Frye's definition of *pathos*. Ironically, the lost baby represents her “evil grail” (*Surfacing*, 165) as well. Since she gains this self-knowledge with the

help of her father's guidance, she considers it his gift. At this stage, her self-revelation also indicates Campbell's illumination. However, his father's gift is not enough for her to heal her split. So, under the spiritual guidance of her dead mother, she also finds a picture of a woman with a baby inside her belly, which she considers her mother's gift, and decides that she will conceive a baby with her present non-patriarchal partner Joe. She, thus, makes love to him in the role of a goddess according to Frye (qtd. in Pratt 1981: 138) and Campbell's divine sexual union. During her intercourse, she heals her split by rejoining the two halves – the head with the body and integrates them as part of her selfhood:

I guide him into me, it's the right season, I hurry. He trembles and I can feel my lost child surfacing within me, forgiving me, rising from the lake where it has been prisoned for so long /.../ the two halves clasp, interlocking like fingers, it buds, it sends out fronds. /.../ I will be able to see it: it will be covered with shining fur, a god /.../. (*Surfacing* 190–191)

According to Pratt (1981: 157), her godlike baby is the re-found grail that represents her elixir of life and enables her psychological transformation or rebirth since she finds her authentic self and, thus, her female identity in the new regenerative role of a mother.

In the second half of Campbell's inciation, which he calls atonement with the divine parents, the surfacer leaves the lover Joe and her friends. She escapes into the wilderness, where she loses her sanity, becomes one with nature and reconciles with the memory of her drowned father, who was found dead in the lake, and her lost mother, who died of cancer long time ago. In a shamanic trance, she imagines to see the ghosts of her divine parents and forgives them for having died and having left her too soon. She realizes that they are no longer "gods" (*Surfacing*, 220) and lets go of their innocence which she attributed to herself as well – /.../ Our father, Our mother /.../ they dwindle, grow, become what they were, human. /.../ their totalitarian innocence was my own." (*Surfacing*, 220). According to Frye, the romance journey is based on the innocence and idealization which the hero usually attributes to his happy childhood and to the divine images of his good and spiritually guiding parents from childhood at the beginning of his romance story, whereas the end of his journey is usually indicated by the loss of his childhood innocence and idyllic past. This corresponds to surfacer's reconciliation with her dead parents who were just mortal beings and her disillusionment with the previous partner since she admits that she worshipped and idealized him as a god like her parents – although he was just an average person with flaws.

According to Grace (1980: 109), the surfacer's parents and her aborted baby represent her psychological conflict or the Jungian shadow which she resolves by

consciously confronting the loss of her dead baby together with the death of her parents. By letting go of their ghosts, she finally heals her divided self and achieves wholeness in the psychological process of Jung's individuation – although her personal growth and transformation will continue all her life. At the end of her journey, she also gives up the belief that she is a powerless victim – “/.../ above all, to refuse to be a victim /.../” (*Surfacing*, 222) – and, thus, conquers the non-victim position, as Atwood points out in her critical study *Survival*. In the third part of Campbell's schema, the hero conventionally returns to civilization and, in the protagonist's case, her non-patriarchal lover Joe comes to look for her in the Canadian bush in order to take her back to town since she has no other choice, as Atwood suggests at the end of the narrative – “/.../ withdrawing is no longer possible, and the alternative is death.” (*Surfacing*, 222)

4 CONCLUSION

As it was demonstrated in the archetypal analysis, the novel *Surfacing* follows the textual world of the heroic quest according to Campbell's (also Frye's and Jung's) mythic schema. Her quest also corresponds to the mythic pattern of personality renovation present in the *Bible* (and in medieval quest romances) since the protagonist (surfacer) imitates the biblical (mythic) quest in her contemporary world of the twentieth century. However, Atwood's version revises the ancient (mythic) story of the hero's quest by introducing a new ironic meaning according to which her heroine realizes with disillusionment that her adult life is full of deceptions and no longer idyllic like her perfect and happy childhood. In this novel, as in many other ones, Atwood subverts the traditional roles of colonial novels in which male protagonists appear in the main adventurous role. As far as this is concerned, the female characters of her postcolonial and post-modern narratives, which are often multi-voiced and genre-hybrid metafiction, no longer play passive figures in secondary roles of no importance, as it was typical of the nineteenth-century colonial canon. On the contrary, they mostly appear as active and positive heroines in search of their female identity and self-realization like the surfacer, the quester of *Surfacing*, who pursues her goal of personal transformation and, in her particular case, the male partner Joe plays the supportive role of a helper.

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Psihološki in mitski vplivi v postkolonialnih in postmodernih (feminističnih) romanih Margaret Atwood: Arhetipska analiza romana *Na površje*

Članek raziskuje mitske in psihološke razsežnosti v postkolonialnih in postmodernih ter žanrsko hibridnih pripovednih delih Margaret Atwood v okviru arhetipske kritike, medtem ko analiza avtoričinega romana *Na površje* natančneje prikaže, kako Atwood mitske prvine v tem delu posodobi.

Ključne besede: Margaret Atwood, Kanada, postkolonialna teorija Edwarda Saida, postkolonializem, Linda Hutcheon, postmodernizem, feminizem, psihologija Carla Gustava Junga, mitska/arhetipska kritika, Northrop Frye