

Becoming a Trickster and Gaining Vision as Parts of the Survival Process in Margaret Atwood's *Surfacing*

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ABSTRACT

This article focuses on survival as a key pattern in Margaret Atwood's novel *Surfacing* (1972) and explores the process the nameless narrator of the novel undergoes in order to reject her role of a victim and to fight for her survival as a complete, full-value human being. The first step in this process is becoming a trickster creature, as identified by Paul Radin in his monograph *Trickster* (1956) and the second is gaining vision, as described by Sharon R. Wilson in her essay "Blindness and Survival in Margaret Atwood's Major Novels".

KEYWORDS

Canadian literature, trickster, Margaret Atwood, *Surfacing*, gaining vision, survival, visual imagery, victimization

"Canadian writing, interesting? An oxymoron."¹ With such words we are introduced to a major prejudice against Canadian literature that had been formed in minds of critics as well as literature teachers in *Survival, a Thematic Guide to Canadian Literature* (1972), written by Canadian author Margaret Atwood.

Margaret Atwood, nowadays probably the best known name representing Canadian literature both at home and abroad, became over the years a well-known and highly regarded author that receives a warm reception from both critics and a wide readership all over the world. Being a prolific writer, her works show versatility in literary genres and forms and the academic world has produced countless studies on various aspects of her work. In the introduction to *Survival* she presents a brief sketch of the rather unpleasant situation Canadian literature was facing in the decades following the Second World War, which included a generally spread opinion that Canadian literature has nothing interesting to offer, neither to the readers nor to the critics.

When Atwood travelled the country in the 1960s, giving poetry readings and selling her books afterwards, she noticed a considerable absence of views on the subject of Canadian literature.² Many literature teachers and critics tended to favor the attitude of Cultural Cringe,³ believing that the Great Good Place was, culturally speaking, elsewhere,⁴ ergo that there is, in fact, no Canadian literature to discuss, and if yes, then it must be a "second-rate copy of real literature, written in the States or in England."⁵

When Atwood published her *Survival*, she has already been an established author, having written a novel *Edible Woman* (1969) and a Governor-General's Award-winning

collections of poetry *The Circle Game* (1966) and *The Journals of Susanna Moodie* (1970). On the grounds of Atwood's previous experience with the perception of Canadian literature it "came as a shock to her"⁶ that *Survival*, an account of themes present in Canadian writing not only ignited a ferocious debate but also became a runaway best-seller,⁷ proving the fact that there was Canadian writing worth the discussion and proper research and that it was interesting not only for academics and critics, but also to the thirty thousand people who bought *Survival* in the first year it was published.⁸

In *Survival*, Margaret Atwood identifies and approximates the major themes such as the victimization of man and its relation to survival, the image of nature as a ruthless, killing monster, victimized animals who must, ultimately, lose to men, original inhabitants who are in a similar position as victimized animals, family that restrains the individual who craves freedom but is unable to break the family ties etc. Atwood also explores how these themes relate to the writing of Canadian authors and why they might possibly be of such importance that would justify their frequent manifestation. She tries neither to evaluate, nor provide a history of Canadian literature, her aim is to outline a number of key patterns that distinguish Canadian literature from other literatures and to show that a certain key pattern might represent also a reflection of a national habit of mind.⁹

In *Survival*, Atwood functions as a mere mediator and intentionally excludes herself from the account, as well as strictly avoiding using her own writing as a source of relevant examples. Still, she does not deny the influence these themes have had on her own works of fiction.

What is the most significant key pattern, identified in Canadian literature that Atwood analyzes can be deduced from the title of the monograph itself. Atwood claims that "every culture has a single unifying symbol at its core."¹⁰ While for America it may be the Frontier and for England possibly the Island, for Canada it is undoubtedly *Survival*.¹¹ In contrast to *The Frontier* with its sense of adventure and excitement or the sense of security that *The Island* can offer, *The Survival* offers just the idea of hanging on, staying alive.¹² The survivor in Canadian fiction experiences no triumph or victory for having survived, he has just the mere fact of him staying alive.

With one's survival there is inevitably also a preoccupation with the obstacles to it.¹³ Earlier Canadian writing deals with external obstacles, such as the land or the climate. Later writing, including also Atwood's works, tends to deal with rather internal obstacles as well as with obstacles that are harder to identify. They are no longer obstacles to physical survival, but rather to spiritual survival, to life as anything more than a minimally human being.¹⁴ In such cases, survival of the protagonist has "multiple levels"¹⁵ and works as a metaphor for having a chance to exist as a complete, full-valued human being that is not tormented and victimized. Victimization is an important precursor

6 Atwood, *Survival*, 3.

7 Atwood, *Survival*, 3.

8 Atwood, *Survival*, 3.

9 Atwood, *Survival*, 19.

10 Atwood, *Survival*, 40.

11 Atwood, *Survival*, 41.

12 Atwood, *Survival*, 41.

13 Atwood, *Survival*, 42.

14 Atwood, *Survival*, 42.

15 Sharon R. Wilson, "Blindness and Survival in Margaret Atwood's Major Novels," in *The Cambridge Companion to Margaret Atwood*, ed. Coral Ann Howells (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 178.

1 Margaret Atwood, *Survival: a Thematic Guide to Canadian Literature* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Ltd, 2004), 3.

2 Atwood, *Survival*, 5.

3 Atwood, *Survival*, 5.

4 Atwood, *Survival*, 5.

5 Atwood, *Survival*, 5.

to the actual fight for survival, as it is the most common grounds from which the process of the survival fight starts.

"Many of Atwood's protagonists tell a tale of survival and resistance,"¹⁶ claims Madeleine Davies in her essay "Margaret Atwood's Female Bodies." It can be concluded then that in order to repudiate the role of a victim and to achieve survival, either the literal or the figurative one, they use various strategies and tricks. When looking at Atwood's female characters, we may notice certain traits that may be interpreted as a link between them and the trickster myth, as identified and analysed by Paul Radin in his monograph *Trickster*. He describes trickster as an entity "that possesses no well-defined and fixed form,"¹⁷ therefore the changeable nature of Atwood's characters can be interpreted as a trickster trait and we may say that the female protagonists of Atwood's novels often take up a role of a trickster in order to fight for their survival. Radin also claims that trickster entity is often identified with animals, for example hare, raven, coyote or spider¹⁸ and that "trickster is at one and the same time creator and destroyer, giver and negator, he who dupes others and who is always duped himself."¹⁹

In *Survival*, Atwood herself does not use the trickster concept when referring to repudiating the victim role and consequent survival; this concept was, to a certain extent, used by Sharon R. Wilson in her introduction to the collection of essays, *Margaret Atwood's Textual Assassinations* (2003), where she claims that "Atwood's survivors are trickster creators, using their verbal "magic" to transform their worlds."²⁰ However, Wilson focuses more on Atwood's characters as the trickster narrators, narrators who are unreliable and who through words try to change their reality. This theory is more suitable for Atwood's later novels, such as *Alias Grace* (1996), *The Blind Assassin* (2000) or *Oryx and Crake* (2003) where the protagonists fight for their survival primarily via the act of storytelling. Still, it is possible to say that Atwood provides her female characters with certain double-naturedness and "generic hybridity"²¹ that approximate them to Radin's trickster creatures from Indian legends and that give them a more general trickster nature than the one identified by Sharon R. Wilson. Therefore we may say that it is possible to interpret the dual nature and split selves of Atwood's female protagonists as a proof of them possessing a trickster trait. It is also possible to interpret their turning into a trickster entity as a first step on their way to survival.

Apart from the characters that manifest their trickster nature in the act of storytelling, most predominantly of all Atwood's female protagonists, the trickster myth marks the nameless narrator in *Surfacing*, who must undergo a complex internal transformation – from human being into an animal and back again in order to fight for her figurative survival. Becoming a trickster creature is, however, only a part of the survival process. Another part of it, is connected with the author's use of vision imagery.

Sharon R. Wilson, in her essay "Blindness and Survival in Margaret Atwood's Major Novels" perceives "a consistent emphasis on the failure of Atwood's protagonists to see clearly – from defective sight to distorted vision and moral blindness. While symbolic

16 Madeleine Davies, "Margaret Atwood's Female Bodies," in *The Cambridge Companion to Margaret Atwood*, ed. Coral Ann Howells (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 69.

17 Paul Radin, "Prefatory Note," in *Trickster* (New York: Schocken Books, 1972), xxiii.

18 Radin, "Prefatory Note," xxiv.

19 Radin, "Prefatory Note," xxiii.

20 Sharon R. Wilson, "Introduction," in *Margaret Atwood's Textual Assassinations*, ed. Sharon Wilson (Columbus: Ohio University Press, 2003), xii.

21 Coral Ann Howells, "Introduction," in *The Cambridge Companion to Margaret Atwood*, ed. Coral Ann Howells (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 10.

blindness may be a necessary beginning for narrative quests (when the main character is a victim), regaining some vision is arguably necessary for survival."²² It is therefore important to link vision imagery that the author uses with the survival theme, as gaining vision seems to be a part of the process that the characters must undergo in order to survive, again either literally or figuratively.

Regarding the vision imagery, in Atwood's earlier texts the focus is often on the protagonist's distortion of vision, especially through mirrors and cameras.²³ This is especially true about novels such as *The Edible Woman*, *Surfacing*, *Lady Oracle* (1976), *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985) or *Cat's Eye* (1988) even though in Atwood's most recent novels, *The Blind Assassin* and *Oryx and Crake*, vision imagery continues to be relevant. In her specification of vision imagery that is used in the text in order to hint on the ongoing survival process, Wilson includes various vision images among which she counts "being blind or having partial or obscured vision...confusing a mirror with reality; seeing through a camera, binocular, television, or another distancing, framing agent; seeing with a magnifying lens, which may involve seeing light in the dark, developing a third eye, being an "eye-witness" and an "I-witness" and developing "empathetic vision."²⁴

Wilson links vision imagery to survival when identifying Atwood's narrators as "the ones who are usually blind and therefore the narrative is not only about the narrator's personal growth and personal, national, and artistic vision, but also multiple levels of survival."²⁵ Therefore it is possible to trace how the vision imagery is used in the process in which the narrators repudiate their victim role, regain their identity and start to "write their story not in the "white ink" of the mother's milk, but in the blood-red ink of the body."²⁶ White mother-milk suggests placidity and meekness, while blood is linked with aggressivity, force, strength. This metaphor, used by Madeline Davies in her essay "Margaret Atwood's Female Bodies" can be interpreted as a suggestion that the fight against victimization of Atwood's characters transformed from mere yappyish attempts into a serious fight that may change their unhappy situation and enable them either to save their life or to achieve the figurative survival and regain life as a full-value human being.

Vision imagery in *Surfacing* acquires the greatest significance at the end of the novel. However, when we look at the structure of the story, it is the end that is predominantly connected with the protagonist's survival and therefore the vision imagery is given the importance in the survival process and should not be overlooked.

Becoming a trickster and gaining vision as parts of the survival process in *Surfacing*

Surfacing was published in the same year as Margaret Atwood's *Survival* and its influence on the novel is undeniable. It explicitly works with victimization theory broadly discussed in *Survival* and thus enables to trace down the survival process the main character undergoes.

22 Howells, "Introduction," 5.

23 Wilson, "Blindness," 178.

24 Wilson, "Blindness," 178.

25 Wilson, "Blindness," 178.

26 Davies, "Margaret Atwood's Female Bodies," 64.

Surfacing is a story of a nameless narrator who returns to her birthplace in Quebec to look for her father who went missing under mysterious circumstances. Coming from the city to Canadian wilderness, she brings along three friends; a married couple, Anna and David, and her lover Joe. In the run of several days in her father's hut right in the heart of savage surroundings, the narrator has to face the traumatic memory of having undergone an abortion she did not want and find a way how to fight effectively the victim role she had put herself in and consequently to achieve her figurative survival.

In *Survival*, when identifying the portrayal of Nature as the monster as one of the key themes, Atwood mentioned that in Canadian literature, "Nature is often depicted as unanswering or actively hostile to man"²⁷ and that "as a whole, Nature cannot be trusted, some dirty trick is always expected."²⁸ Therefore Nature is in works of Canadian authors often depicted as the entity that makes people its victims and very often it is also the killer, since "death by Nature is an event of startling frequency."²⁹ In *Surfacing* however, Atwood reverses this Nature = killer pattern. Nature is not the one who is after one's neck here, this time the role is taken over by civilization, represented by man. This reversed pattern is reflected in narrator's approach to civilization and nature as she remembers the "survival manuals...always carry matches and you will not starve, in a snowstorm dig a hole, avoid unclassified mushrooms, your hands and feet are the most important, if they freeze you're finished."³⁰ She knows how to survive face to face with Nature. On the other hand, she adds that all that information about survival in the wilderness that she possesses is "worthless knowledge,"³¹ for she should have known the stories from "pulp magazines such as cautionary tales about maidens who give in and get punished with mongoloid infants, fractured spines, dead mothers or men stolen by their best friends"³² – those "would have been more practical."³³ The narrator thusly claims that it is not Nature but civilization that represents an obstacle to her survival.

The narrator is accompanied by a feeling of displacement – after having arrived to the village she grew up in, she feels as a stranger there as she cannot speak proper French and local people exclude her from their community by mocking her accent. When she fails to find her father, she tries to find excuses to return back to the city, where there is electricity and distraction for she is used to it now and filling the time without it is an effort.³⁴ Here we might find a hint that the narrator is different from other city people, as she points out the fact that she is used to electricity and distraction *now*, implying that before she was not and that it took some effort and even transformation on her part to become a proper city person like everybody else. Still, when she remembers her life back in the city, she admits that despite the effort, she never really fitted in there either. She never knew what dress to wear to a business meeting, and if she put it on, it felt strapped to her, like an aqualung or an extra, artificial limb.³⁵ The formal city clothes function as a metaphor for her role of a city person. Her being part of life in city is a mere

27 Atwood, *Survival*, 59.

28 Atwood, *Survival*, 59.

29 Atwood, *Survival*, 66.

30 Margaret Atwood, *Surfacing* (London: Virago Press, 2008), 42.

31 Atwood, *Surfacing*, 42.

32 Atwood, *Surfacing*, 42.

33 Atwood, *Surfacing*, 42.

34 Atwood, *Surfacing*, 45.

35 Atwood, *Surfacing*, 46.

mask she got used to wearing. Still it hangs on her like an unnecessary, extra addition and is by no means part of her true self.

The more information the narrator releases about herself, the more she acknowledges the core of her natural identity – that she "didn't like bathrooms, they were too hard and white"³⁶ and the white zero-mouthed toilets in their clean tiled cubicles were what used to bother her most about the cities.³⁷ When she was a child, her mother had to force her to behave properly, she had to explain to her why it was necessary for her to "learn to be polite; civilized."³⁸ To the narrator, the civilized behavior did not come naturally, the civilization remains her potential enemy and victimizing force.

When affronted with unrestrained wilderness rather than the city's civilizing influence, the narrator's problems with being a truly civilized human begin to reemerge. When she ponders the editor's selection of the fairy tales for the book she is supposed to provide the illustrations for, she considers it too meek and it makes her think of a myth local people believe in – that when you don't attend the church, you will change into a wolf,³⁹ therefore if you do not accept the rules of civilization and its manifestations, such as church, you will become an animal, a savage, a true part of nature. The narrator mentions other fairy-tales she knows in which "they do it the other way round, the animals are human inside and they take their fur skins off as easily as getting undressed."⁴⁰ Here she might be hinting on the dual nature of some people, on their half-human, half-animal essence that is inherent to some forms of a trickster entity.

The trickster nature of the narrator herself is foreshadowed at the beginning of the novel, when her friend Anna tries to foretell her future by reading her palm and says that the narrator must have a twin as certain lines on her palm are doubled.⁴¹ The narrator does not have a twin though; the duality that manifests on her palm is contained inside her single person and refers to her trickster self. As a trickster possesses no concrete form and is merely an "inchoate being of undetermined proportions,"⁴² it is liable to change its shape and one manifestation of that can be changing from a human to an animal and back again. This transformation is what happens to the narrator when she experiences an act of victimization from the side of the society. She becomes a trickster entity to fight for her survival.

The experience that triggered the narrator's trickster transformation is the unwanted and deeply traumatic abortion of her child. She identifies that particular moment of distinction when she looks at the old photographs from her childhood and teenage years and remarks "I must have been all right then; but after that I'd allowed myself to be cut in two."⁴³ She sees the act of abortion as the act when she became two halves, each of them incomplete. She is trying to escape the trauma by shutting it out of her conscious memory and pretending that she once had a husband and a living child. The true memory of having had a married lover and being forced to an abortion of his child surfaces slowly, cutting her in two, making her a dual-natured creature.

36 Atwood, *Surfacing*, 65.

37 Atwood, *Surfacing*, 111.

38 Atwood, *Surfacing*, 65.

39 Atwood, *Surfacing*, 50.

40 Atwood, *Surfacing*, 50.

41 Atwood, *Surfacing*, 2.

42 Radin, "Prefatory Note," xiv.

43 Atwood, *Surfacing*, 102.

The transformation of the narrator from a human into an animal is gradual. At the beginning, she merely differs from her friends as she possesses the ability to understand nature, she knows how to behave in it, how to provide food for yourself, how to kill a fish for example. Later, after her transformation had started, her approach to other animals changes and she refuses to kill another fish and when she talks about it, she refers to killing it as to a "murder and to dead fish as a cadaver,"⁴⁴ not carcass. The narrator at this point sees herself more as a part of the animal world than the human world and commences to behave accordingly.

In the course of the novel, the narrator's animal self is getting stronger and her human self keeps diminishing. She is losing touch with human language, she feels she couldn't use it because it wasn't hers,⁴⁵ as well as her voice wasn't hers, for it came from someone dressed as her, imitating her.⁴⁶ She feels she is becoming somebody else. She keeps forgetting human communication, she has difficulties to remember the correct words and phrases. When she is informed about the death of her father, she must assure herself that she used the correct expressions when talking to the messenger and that she behaved as the situation required – "that was what they were called, the arrangements."⁴⁷ Also her disdain for people and their imperfections grows stronger. She abhors lying because "the animals don't lie."⁴⁸ Animals also do not have names, for names are the manifestation of civilization and when Joe and her friends try to call her with hers, she comments "too late, I no longer have a name."⁴⁹ This moment can be interpreted as the final turning point when her animal part finally took over her ever diminishing human one, as when she reprobrates her name, she loses her human identity.

The transformation does not take place only in the narrator's mind. Certain traits of it can be found also in connection with her physical appearance. When she is standing in the lake and her body is partly in the water and partly over the surface, she is watching her reflection and her feet down through the water - white as fishflesh on the sand till finally being in the air is more painful than being in the water and she bends and pushes herself reluctantly into the lake.⁵⁰ Her standing in the water that divides her body into two halves can be interpreted as a symbol of her dual nature - her fishflesh-white legs are those of an animal, the upper part that remains over the surface is still human. She dives in because it becomes unbearable to be on the air – which can be seen as a final act to complete her transformation and become an animal completely. Later in the novel, when the narrator notices her legs again, she refers to them as "tentacled feet"⁵¹ which again emphasizes the idea of an animal transformation. Her transformation is also noticed by Anne, who, when seeing the narrator's inability to behave in a human way, says "she really is inhuman,"⁵² which emphasizes the fact that the narrator has already managed to keep her human self at bay.

As a part of nature, as an animal, the narrator quickly loses the ability to behave in a human way. When she learns about her father's death, she cannot mourn him as

she is expected and she knows that her friends are avoiding her because they find her behavior inappropriate; they think she should be filled with death, she should be mourning. Her feelings are different, though, she feels that "nothing has died, everything is alive, everything is waiting to become alive."⁵³ She now sees the world around her through the eyes of an animal for whom death is a natural part of a cycle of life, not something to feel devastated about. She no longer carries that death around inside her as a cyst, a tumor.⁵⁴ Her animal transformation liberates her, it enables her to escape the guilt she feels for having aborted her baby.

The narrator's behavior in her surroundings soon becomes that of an animal, too. She strips off her clothes, she runs away into the wilderness, she avoids the places where humans might be present and she feels uneasy in places marked with human presence, such as buildings. When she gets out of the cabin, she uses window, not door and the moment she gets out at once the fear leaves her like a hand lifting from her throat.⁵⁵ She soon learns to listen to her newly acquired instincts that will tell her what is allowed.⁵⁶ Later she refers to the cabin where her father lived as to a cage, wooden rectangle she is not allowed to go back into.⁵⁷ She starts living outside, feeding herself on wild berries and roots as "tin cans and jars are forbidden, they are glass and metal"⁵⁸ – everything what has been produced by humans and what might remind her of her human life is forbidden. She keeps hiding from people who came to look for her, she considers them hunters, the representatives of harmful civilization, who would like to catch her.⁵⁹ At this point her transformation from human into an animal is finished.

The narrator's dual, trickster nature is linked with the second part of the survival process – gaining vision. She must heal her blindness to her own role in her extramarital love affair and to the consequent abortion and accept the consequences of her own actions. In order to achieve her figurative survival she must gain vision and unite her split selves into one again.

To manifest the process of the narrator's gaining vision, Atwood uses the motif of mirrors as mediators of narrator's reality. Mirrors are supposed to show her her true face, the reality as it is. They duplicate her image, duplicate the reality and demonstrate it plainly in front of her to see. If she could look at it and accept it, her blindness would be healed, for she would see herself, with all the blame and guilt and she would know that she herself played an important part in her own victimizing experience. Instead, she is avoiding mirrors and as the narrative proceeds, she becomes afraid of them and stops looking into them completely.

The narrator avoids being reflected in any kind of mirrors or reflecting devices - when the narrator's lover Joe and her friend David make a movie about their journey to the wilderness, they include a footage of each of them, except the narrator,⁶⁰ as she strictly refuses to be a part of it. When already rid of her human identity, she demonstrates an animal fear of the camera (part of which is mirror lens), which results in destroying it together with the films.

44 Atwood, *Surfacing*, 114.

45 Atwood, *Surfacing*, 100.

46 Atwood, *Surfacing*, 101.

47 Atwood, *Surfacing*, 151.

48 Atwood, *Surfacing*, 147.

49 Atwood, *Surfacing*, 162.

50 Atwood, *Surfacing*, 69.

51 Atwood, *Surfacing*, 155.

52 Atwood, *Surfacing*, 148.

53 Atwood, *Surfacing*, 153.

54 Atwood, *Surfacing*, 139.

55 Atwood, *Surfacing*, 169.

56 Atwood, *Surfacing*, 170.

57 Atwood, *Surfacing*, 172.

58 Atwood, *Surfacing*, 172.

59 Atwood, *Surfacing*, 162.

60 Atwood, *Surfacing*, 158.

The narrator's fear of mirrors intensifies as her transformations into an animal nears the end. Then, when she is looking in the mirror at "her distorted glass face,"⁶¹ the mirror is showing her distorted image, her deformed, split trickster self. She mentions that the reflection is intruding between her eyes and vision⁶² and refuses to look into the mirror again; she reverses it so it faces the wall.⁶³ But she does not see that it is her distorted, trickster self that is in the way of her vision, that she must become one again and stop being a trickster in order to gain vision and thus survive.

Gaining the vision as a means of the narrator's survival is intertwined with her animal transformation; one cannot go without the other. Even though the narrator's transformation is caused by her trying to escape the responsibility and guilt, it is necessary for her to undergo it because only this way she will gain the vision that will make her see her role in the process of victimization and thus free her. Only as an animal, the narrator experiences the moment when the power flowed into her eyes⁶⁴ and she was suddenly able to see not only the true core of her friend David (she "could see into him, he was an imposter, a pastiche, layers of political handbills, pages from magazines, affiches,"⁶⁵) but also her own, unbiased reality. The moment her transformation into an animal is complete, she starts healing her blindness and her split self starts uniting again.

The process of uniting the narrator's split self and therefore healing her blindness reaches its climax when she can feel her lost child surfacing within her, forgiving her... its eyes and teeth phosphorescent; the two halves clasp, interlocking like fingers, it buds, it sends out fronds.⁶⁶ In this moment the two halves of the narrator unite again and she can see everything, understand everything. Also the light coming out of the child's eyes can be interpreted as a potential symbol of vision she gains at that moment.

In conclusion, the narrator, possessing vision and having united herself is no longer afraid of mirrors. She turns it back to face the room and she can see "a creature neither animal nor human."⁶⁷ She does not see herself as a distorted image anymore, she is no longer a trickster and instead she is a perfect, united blend, a "natural woman, state of nature."⁶⁸ She is also no longer a victim for she knows that "this above all, to refuse to be a victim... give up the old belief that I am powerless and because of it nothing I can do will ever hurt anyone."⁶⁹ She is giving up her convenient notion of innocence that was supposed to shelter her from responsibility. She knows that it was not the doctors or not only her lover who victimized her, but also herself. It is "because she resolves not to be a victim that she appears to be...a seer and a survivor."⁷⁰ Only through a rebirth, she can accept her own guilty cruelties⁷¹ and stand face to face to who she really is and thus survive as a complete, full-value human being.

61 Atwood, *Surfacing*, 169.

62 Atwood, *Surfacing*, 169.

63 Atwood, *Surfacing*, 169.

64 Atwood, *Surfacing*, 146.

65 Atwood, *Surfacing*, 146.

66 Atwood, *Surfacing*, 155.

67 Atwood, *Surfacing*, 184.

68 Atwood, *Surfacing*, 184.

69 Atwood, *Surfacing*, 185.

70 Wilson, "Blindness," 181.

71 Shannon Hengen, "Margaret Atwood and Environmentalism," in *The Cambridge Companion to Margaret Atwood*, ed. Coral Ann Howells (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 80.

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