

FOLKLORE, POPULAR CULTURE & INDIVIDUATION IN "SURFACING" AND "THE DIVINERS"

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C ONTEMPORARY CANADIAN FICTION includes a number of works which reject modern technology and turn to some form of knowledge which might be described as traditional or primitive. In a review of a prime example, *Surfacing*, Bruce King states, "The search for roots in the past and some better life in contrast to modern urban civilization is widespread at present and the novel may be said to record an extreme representation of the new romanticism and a critique of it."¹ Clara Thomas suggests something similar in an article on a comparable work, *The Diviners*: "The passing on of an authentic heritage of their people is a central preoccupation of writers of today, particularly of writers of the post-colonial nations."²

This similarity between the two novels, however, hides certain important, although perhaps subtle, distinctions. In each novel, the central character, the narrator, is a woman going through a search for identity, what Jung referred to as individuation, "becoming one's own self."³ Each is inspired by a mystical, non- or even pre-rational knowledge, removed from contemporary technology. In *Surfacing*, however, the only such knowledge is found in a distant past and in isolation. In *The Diviners*, there is a feeling that while the quest for identity requires an exploration of the past it must also be shaped by the present and by those a sociologist would call the "significant others," parents, children, lovers, and friends.

Elsewhere I have observed that the search for self often takes the form of an interest in folklore,⁴ a diffuse assemblage of what could be defined as "The traditional beliefs, legends, and customs, current among the common people."⁵ Contemporary folklorists would see this definition as far too limiting but it fits common usage. Thus Folklore is the knowledge of pre-industrial people regardless of ethnic group.⁶

This interpretation leaves a rather large part of culture which is neither elite nor folk. In "A Theory of Mass Culture," Dwight Macdonald gives this a name:

"It is sometimes called 'Popular Culture,' but I think 'Mass Culture' a more accurate term, since its distinctive mark is that it is solely and directly an article for mass consumption, like chewing gum."⁷ Macdonald suggests that this mass culture is produced either through debasing and bowdlerizing "High Culture" or through bleeding the life out of folk art: "Folk Art was the people's own institution, their private little garden walled off from the great formal park of their masters' High Culture. But Mass Culture breaks down the wall, integrating the masses into a debased form of High Culture and thus becoming an instrument of political domination."⁸

One need not assess the accuracy of Macdonald's comment on the political value of mass culture to observe that he is clearly wrong in asserting that it provided the first crack in the masonry. A glance at Bartok or Brontë reveals how the private little garden could get into the park. A number of folklorists have found large areas of park in the garden. Macdonald does an important job in attempting to define mass culture but the result is oversimplified.

The best assessment of folk and mass culture which I have seen is provided by Peter Narvaez in his "Country Music in Diffusion: Juxtaposition and Syncretism in the Popular Music of Newfoundland." He states, "If folklore is understood as 'artistic communication in small groups,' I submit that popular culture might well be considered artistic communication in mass society, and that both of these concepts may be comprehended as polar types spanned by a lengthy and complex continuum."⁹

Of course, this continuum is undefinable. Throughout it there are anomalies, as when a famous recording star appears at a house party and performs a song which would appear to be identical to that heard in mass media. The text is the same, the performer is the same, the context is different.

Perhaps a further distinction might be of value. Ray B. Browne sees four types of culture: elite, mass, folk, and popular. He says of the last of these, "Popular Culture is all those elements of life which are not narrowly intellectual or creatively elitist and which are generally though not necessarily disseminated through the mass media."¹⁰ The problem with this definition, as with Browne's article as a whole, is that the line between mass and popular remains vague.

For this reason I would suggest a simple division between popular and mass culture, by providing some definitions which keep to the spirit of that given by Narvaez but with a few more discriminations. Thus what Narvaez terms popular culture I would return to Macdonald's term, mass culture. Mass culture is that disseminated through the mass media. Popular culture, then, is that which, while not disseminated through the mass media, is shaped by it and by contemporary life in general. It sits on the continuum between the traditional material usually considered to be folklore and mass culture. Thus, to return to the hypothetical singer at the house party, if he is singing Mahler, it is elite culture. If he is singing

“Barbara Allen,” it is folk culture, part of a long-standing oral tradition. If he is singing “Hey Jude,” it is popular culture. One could of course argue that his recordings of “Barbara Allen” and Mahler are mass culture in context but that would muddy waters which are at present as clear as they are likely to become.

THIS PLETHORA OF DEFINITIONS has led away from *Surfacing* and *The Diviners* but it can be of direct value in exploring the attitudes of the narrators and, by implication, of the authors. For example, photography might be seen as mass culture but it is also, in some contexts, popular culture. The latter can be seen in both *Surfacing* and *The Diviners*, where Atwood’s narrator and Morag Gunn seek definitions of themselves through photographs kept over the years. Their actions suit recent studies by folklorists and anthropologists who have looked at how the family album fits into small group culture. Pauline Greenhill states, “Family photographs derive meaning from the context in which they are found. They are icons of family members and symbolic of the family as a continuing unit with a past and with connections to the community. They are an ethnography, created by the family for presentation to others, but also for the confirmation of the family’s personal identity.”¹¹

Both Atwood and Laurence recognize the necessity of viewer participation in the creation of those icons in the photographs. In *The Diviners*, Morag writes of the various resonances she receives from her family snapshots and her own creative interpretation: “I keep the snapshots not for what they show but for what is hidden in them.”¹² In *Surfacing*, the narrator states, “I was in most of the pictures, shut in behind the paper; or not me but the missing part of me.”¹³

For both characters, thus, the concern is not for the artefact but for the identity hidden behind the artefact. Paul Byers observes, “The most important characteristic of still photography is its susceptibility to individual control; each person involved with the still photograph has his own hand on his own semantic tuning-knob.”¹⁴ From this Byers deduces that “the photograph contains information but no meaning.”¹⁵

Both novels seem to understand the need to impose a meaning but they also recognize the danger in the process and the danger in photography in general. The narrator of *Surfacing* reacts to the strange stiffness of the photos of her ancestors: “maybe they thought their souls were being stolen, as the Indians did.” In *The Diviners*, Jules is similarly uncomfortable about being photographed: “Maybe I’m superstitious. Or maybe it’s the same as I can’t make up songs about myself. Maybe I don’t want to see what I look like. I’m going on okay this way. Let’s not get fancy about it.”

It is tempting to believe that Jules is just reflecting the familiar anecdote about the primitive who won’t have his picture taken. This interpretation seems facile

and even racist but other parts of the novel support it. At the beginning, Morag asserts how often she has attempted to rid herself of the old photos: "I've kept them, of course, because something in me doesn't want to lose them, or perhaps doesn't dare. Perhaps they're my totems, or contain a portion of my spirit." One of the reasons why Jules's process of individuation seems much less complete than that of Morag is that he recognizes his heritage yet is unable to recognize himself, as in his refusal to write his own song. Here he again rejects introspection although a few pages before he has shown how his copy of a five-year-old photograph of his daughter, Pique, has provided an essential connection for him. An interesting comment on Jules is made in the infant Pique's reaction to having her picture taken: "Her large dark eyes look openly and with trust at the person behind the camera, namely her mother."

In *Surfacing*, the central photograph is one of the narrator's mother, feeding the blue jays. The image proves to be, like Morag's, a totem, but it is far from the trusting Pique in Morag's snap: "Sun sifting around her through the pines, her eyes looking straight at the camera, frightened, receding into the shadows of her head like a skull's, a trick of the light." One is reminded of the narrator's own experience: "I used to hate standing still, waiting for the click," and the fearful reaction of Marian in *The Edible Woman* when she is being shot by the devouring Peter: "What's the matter with me?" she said to herself. "It's only a camera."¹⁶

In *Surfacing*, the photograph is useful to the narrator as an aide memoire for an image of her mother, which later turns into an essential vision, but photography is always something to be feared. On the other hand, in *The Diviners*, the photograph is a minor yet worthy part of the structure of self. It is important to use the photographs as part of the process of self-discovering and of socialization, to remind Morag and, in connection with Pique, Jules, of who the group is, a central purpose in family photos, as noted above by Greenhill.¹⁷ This distinction between the two novels may appear subtle but it is maintained throughout them in the presentation of popular culture.

The photographs in *The Diviners* are thematically suitable but unrepresentative as, regardless of the filmic techniques which have often been noted, *The Diviners* is much more concerned with narrative than with image. This is as it should be, given that Morag is a novelist.¹⁸ Thus whereas there is a significant folklore-like visual image in Dan McRaith's painting, the central references are to Christie's tales and Jules's songs.

In analyzing Christie's tales, Clara Thomas comes to the following conclusion: "Like all folk-literature, these stories, in the beginning, are orally transmitted; only *some* folk-literature, however, moves into the category of myth, and this depends on the need and belief of the listener."¹⁹ In this context, Thomas seems to be using the word myth in a sense similar to that found in Northrop Frye: "In

every age there is a structure of ideas, images, beliefs, assumptions, anxieties, and hopes which express the view of man's situation and destiny generally held at that time. I call this structure a mythology, and its units myths."²⁰

For Morag, however, Thomas's distinction doesn't seem to work. Perhaps it is simply because her "need and belief" are wide-ranging but much of the folk, popular, and even mass culture which she contacts becomes a part of the myth of identity to which she refers when she states, "The myths are my reality." The apparently folkloric material given her by Jules and Christie²¹ is incorporated but so, too, is the very individual creation by Pique.

At a very early age Morag had accepted some myths of mass and popular culture. She recalls "the invisible creatures who inhabited the place with her." At this point they had the same value in her imagination that later Christie's character of Piper Gunn and still later her own novelistic creations come to have. Yet they are neither figures of ancient oral tradition nor products of her own imagination. They are presentations from the mass media, the radio, which were taken and reshaped by Morag.²²

The process of adaptation continues in all the songs which appear in the novel. Morag and her friend, Ella, use "There'll be a change in the weather" as a theme song, something which somehow speaks directly to them: "They know it from one another's writing." At Prin's funeral, "Jerusalem the golden" has a similar resonance, as a comment on Prin, and on Morag's own life.

Thus it would seem that various aspects of popular narrative have value in Morag's "myths." There is no essential distinction between a major aspect of oral tradition, such as the ancestral story of Piper Gunn, and a popular song. The difference is rather one of degree. The radio songs and Christie's tales act in the same way but the tales are much more important.

Pique also finds some answers in the songs around her but in her case they are the works of contemporary singer-songwriters: "the records of Baez and Dylan and Cohen and Joni Mitchell and Buffy Sainte-Marie and James Taylor and Bruce Cockburn. . . ." There seems the same value for her in these songs that Morag has found in Jules's songs and Christie's tales, but they have no pretense to represent oral tradition: "it is the solitary singers, singing their own songs, who really absorb her."

PIQUE IS A VERY POSITIVE FIGURE, the heir to Christie's oral tradition, Jules's oral tradition, and Morag's writing. In *Surfacing* the one character who demonstrates an interest in music is Anna, who is completely negative, only of value as an example of how a woman can be completely destroyed by contemporary society: "a seamed and folded imitation of a maga-

zine picture that is itself an imitation of a woman who is also an imitation, the original nowhere. . . ." Her reading is limited to pulp detective novels, distinguishable only by quantity: "she was on her fourth or fifth paperback." Her music is similarly without substance: "Earlier she was singing, House of the Rising Sun and Lili Marlene, both of them several times, trying to make her voice go throaty and deep, but it came out like a hoarse child's." "When she was in the middle of St. Louis Blues he began to whistle and she stopped." "She combs her hair in front of the mirror, light ends, dark roots, humming to herself, You Are My Sunshine. . . ." Later in the novel she sings "The White Cliffs of Dover." There is little point to her choices other than obvious irony as in such an unhappy person singing "You Are My Sunshine." Instead, she presents popular song as something homogenized, all pabulum for the mass mind, with no distinction between urban blues, folk song, cabaret, and Vera Lynn.

To emphasize narrative items in *Surfacing*, however, is as unrepresentative as to emphasize the photographs in *The Diviners*. Just as *The Diviners* is a story about a writer which is structured around various narratives, so *Surfacing* is a story about an artist which is structured around various visual images. The novel begins with a series of pictures that she encounters as she drives to her father's cabin. All of them present a culture decayed by the effect of North American mass development.

There is little to distinguish between the images which are part of the individual expression of the local populace and those which represent only mass culture. The narrator clearly rejects the Niagara Falls cushion and the Sunday school religious pictures and romance comic books. But there is a similarly negative reaction to Bottle Villa, "a preposterous monument," the paintings on the rocks: "THÉ SALADA, BLUE MOON COTTAGES 1/2 MILE, QUÉBEC LIBRE, FUCK YOU, BUVEZ COCA COLA GLACÉ, JESUS SAVES" and to the anthropomorphized moose: "the three stuffed moose on a platform near the pumps: they're dressed in human clothes and wired standing up on their hind legs, a father moose with a trench coat and a pipe in his mouth, a mother moose in a print dress and flowered hat and a little boy moose in short pants, a striped jersey and a baseball cap, waving an American flag."

Given the novel's anti-Americanism and pro-wildlife stance the abhorrence of the moose doesn't seem surprising but folklorists or anthropologists would tend to make a clear distinction between the mass-manufactured "store cushion," which represents simply the acquisition of an object, and the popular culture moose which, bizarre as they may be, show a significant artistic involvement by the person presenting the display. To the narrator they are much the same, a part of the pernicious situation reflected in the following assessment of the local people: "I'm annoyed with them for looking so much like carvings, the habitant kind they sell in tourist handcraft shops; but of course it's the other way around, it's

the carvings that look like them." Mass culture perverts the perceptions of both the narrator and the local inhabitants. The result is a local culture in which individual expression is no better than the mass culture which is seeping in.

A slight variation on this situation is found in the scrapbooks from the narrator's childhood. As Russell Brown notes, the scrapbooks are part of Atwood's rejection, in *The Edible Woman* and elsewhere, "of the mythologies of our present society,"²³ a telling comment in light of Frye's definition above. Atwood makes a clear distinction between the scrapbook which contains the narrator's childhood portrait of God with horns, what proves to be a visionary insight for her, and another, more properly socialized, set of images, of Easter eggs and rabbits. As Brown observes, "we recognize these Easter fantasies as part of a general modern abandonment of religious stories for secular fables that will turn sacred holidays into occasions for commerce."²⁴

The next stage of the scrapbooks shows a complete acceptance of this commercial culture, with a series of pictures much like that presented by Anna above. The narrator states,

I searched through it carefully, looking for something I could recognize as myself, where I had come from or gone wrong; but there were no drawings at all, just illustrations cut from magazines and pasted in. They were ladies, all kinds: holding up cans of cleanser, knitting, smiling, modelling toeless high heels and nylons with dark seams and pillbox hats and veils.

As an illustrator, the narrator continues the commercializing process. She discusses at length how she has constantly created illustrations which fit not what she perceives as a child's taste ("I said children liked being frightened") but rather the publisher's views of what will sell. The narratives, in this case called *Quebec Folk Tales*, are similarly lifeless and commercial. The results of her efforts become not figures from Grimm but unattractive aspects of mass culture. A bird looks like "a fire insurance trademark," the princess is an "emaciated fashion-model," and the king is "a football player." The latter comment should remind one of the very negative portrait of the Americanized Canadians in the canoe and Anna's similar, and similarly evil, husband, David. Their point of contact is their devotion to the New York Mets baseball team. Clearly, mass leisure isn't any better than the mass media.

The narrator's reaction to folklore as represented in the novel is ambivalent. She cannot accept that these tales are other than bowdlerized. As well, she cannot think of anything akin to the tales as a natural part of the local folklore:

It's hard to believe that anyone here, even the grandmothers, ever knew these stories: this isn't a country of princesses, The Fountain of Youth and The Castle of the Seven Splendours don't belong here. They must have told stories about something as they sat around the kitchen range at night: bewitched dogs and

malevolent trees perhaps, and the magic powers of rival political candidates, whose effigies in straw they burned during elections.

Carole Gerson has noted that "the narrator is in fact asking French Canada to fit the conventions used by William Kirby, Susan Frances Harrison and Duncan Campbell Scott."²⁵ I think a more precise assessment might be that she presents the conventional Quebecois as a possibility but a tenuous one. Her perceptions of Quebec are limited by a combination of the quaint habitant, an image which might have been folkloric but has become kitsch, and "QUÉBEC LIBRE, FUCK YOU," a mindless popular reflection of the mass media.

The novel leaves no doubt that the Indian rock paintings are the true source of vision. They are like the narrator's childhood painting of God, a pointer. Her father realized that it would be possible to go straight to the source and even avoid the mediation of the image: "He had discovered new places, new oracles, they were things he was seeing the way I had seen, true vision; at the end, after failure of logic." Thus it is only with the native vision, the indigenous people, that an answer can be found. One would assume from the comments on the bowdlerized folk tales that an accurate image of Quebec folklore might provide some insights but none of the narrator's experience show such a process.

There are a number of other images that reflect the split between the natural life and mass culture. Many are associated with the different themes of the novel, such as fertility. At the beginning of the novel, the narrator deludes everyone, including herself, about her pregnancy and abortion. As she experiences a psychological transformation through the Indian paintings she seeks a fertility transformation through an animal-like mating with her lover, Joe, earlier described as "like the buffalo on the U.S. nickel," and then an animal-like birth: "it will be covered with shining fur, a god, I will never teach it any words."

The opposition to such fertility is once again connected to images of popular culture. David recalls the "old and shoddy" joke of the national flag, "Nine beavers pissing on a frog." Much later he provides a further development: "That's what they should've put on the flag instead of a maple leaf, a split beaver; I'd salute that." It is the same process as the abortion experienced by the narrator, a removal of the potentially fertile parts to suit the evils of civilization, in this case a sexist and anti-animal joke.

The remnants on the abandoned tugboat, presented on the same page, follow the same theme. The men on the tugboat left pictures of genitalia:

I was shocked, not by those parts of the body, we'd been told about those, but that they should be cut off like that from the bodies that ought to have gone with them, as though they could detach themselves and crawl around on their own like snails.

I'd forgotten about that; but of course they were magic drawings like the ones in caves. You draw on the wall what's important to you, what you're hunting.

In the careful scientific analysis of the rock paintings, Dr. Robin M. Grove (a nature name which hides an un-naturelike dissection) states,

In treatment they are reminiscent, with their elongated limbs and extreme distortion, of the drawings of children. The static rigidity is in marked contrast to the rock paintings of other cultures, most notably the European cave paintings.

From the above features we may deduce that the creators of the paintings were interested exclusively in symbolic content, at the expense of expressiveness and form.

A number of elements can be deduced from this passage. Most obviously, if these images are the source of truth and European traditions are not, even in the original folktales, then it is not surprising that they should be different from European cave paintings. Secondly, that they should be child-like suits the connection made to the narrator's childhood drawing of God.

More important, perhaps, is the comment on their static and symbolic nature. Bruce King refers in passing to "the flat style of the book [which] makes us aware of the narrator's lack of involvement with others. . . ." ²⁶ The comment by Grove should help us to recognize that more than just an aspect of the narrator's personality, the novel's unexpressive symbolism presents a further image. It is the one possible contemporary example which can follow in the tradition of the Indian paintings.

NO ASPECT OF POPULAR CULTURE, mass culture, or European folklore can fit that position. Neither is modern elite lore or technology a possibility. The narrator's mother, her ancestral aid in her search, provides a clear opposition to the latter: "She hated hospitals and doctors; she must have been afraid they would experiment on her. . . ." Her father's absolute devotion to reason is also rejected. In fact, his scientific approach apparently contributes to his death. The narrator refers to him "collecting them with his camera." She realizes, "I had the proof now, indisputable, of sanity and therefore of death." When she is notified that his body has been found, David states, "he had a camera around his neck, big one, they think the weight kept him down or he would've been found sooner."

Photographic images give few answers in *Surfacing* but here the whole technology associated with photography is opposed. It is part of a scientific need to collect and destroy and destroy and collect, as in her brother's laboratory or even the photographs in her high school hygiene book:

That was in the green book at high school, *Your Health*, along with the photographs of cretins and people with thyroid deficiencies, the crippled and deformed, the examples, with black oblongs across their eyes like condemned criminals: the only pictures of naked bodies it was judged proper for us to see. The rest were

diagrams, transparencies with labels and arrows, the ovaries purple sea creatures, the womb a pear.

The photograph is rejected only partly because it is an arm of popular culture and an extension of defertilizing deforming science. It is also seen as an attempt at maintaining control over the spirit rather than submitting to it. Susan Sontag notes that "the camera is the ideal arm of consciousness in its acquisitive mood. To photograph is to appropriate the thing photographed. It means putting oneself into a certain relation to the world that feels like knowledge — and, therefore, like power."²⁷ On the other hand, *Surfacing's* narrator, without camera, gives herself up wholly to the power of the gods themselves.

The Diviners, with the possible exception of Jules, does not present the photograph as a force of contemporary science. The camera is accepted as an aid to possession in a much more positive sense. Morag possesses her parents and Jules possesses Pique in extensions of family memory rather than as assertions of technological control. *The Diviners* shows the photograph as a useful adjunct to the accumulation of tradition. In *Surfacing* the contributions of photography are few, the dangers many.

Yet the reaction in *The Diviners* to technology in general, and to academic scholarship, is similar. The stories told by Christie and Jules are of much more value to Morag than established historical fact. Her husband, Brooke, represents the sterility of academic life and the sterility of modern cosmopolitan life in Toronto. A-Okay Smith, former teacher of computer programming and now back-to-the-lander, finds his background makes it difficult to comprehend the actions of Royland, the diviner: "A-Okay, ex-science man, groping, wondering about all this procedure."

High technology and academic scholarship, the pinnacle of the "progress" of civilization, are not acceptable in either novel. Well beneath the pinnacle, however, the responses differ. The rejection of popular culture and mass culture in *Surfacing* is quite complete. I have already noted a number of ways in which popular culture is accepted in *The Diviners*, from the photographs through Pique's interest in popular songs. One of the most interesting examples is Fan Brady, the stripper.

Fan is unattractive, particularly physically, and there is no suggestion that Morag or Laurence considers stripping to be the optimum vocation but neither is Fan nor her life style simply dismissed. She has an indomitable will to survive and even succeed: "Fan is tough in the spirit, wiry and wary in the soul." Like Christie and Jules she represents someone who fights through no matter what the situation. Rather than rejecting her debased status, she attempts to turn her little bit of popular culture into an "Art." One is reminded of Jules who is unable to reconcile the folk culture of his songs and the popular culture context, the bar, in which he must perform. Yet even he had the possibility of finding a popular

culture setting in which he could have communicated his art: "Lotsa new places now, and they don't think you're some kind of nut if you sing your own songs sometimes, but most of those places, they're for the kids, and they want young singers."

Jules's most important role in the novel, however, is not as a professional performer. At one point he says, "I'm the *shaman*, eh?" He is likened to the "divining" tradition which includes Royland, Christie, Pique, and Morag. He might seem part of the great old cliché of the savage Indian who provides the interloper with a connection to the land. Traditionally the white is a male and the Indian a delicate yet intrepid maiden²⁸ but in contemporary terms switching sexes seems quite appropriate. And in perfect Indian maiden style, Jules dies tragically before the end of the novel.

Jules's death might link the novel to *Surfacing*, in which the Indians are also dead. A major difference, however, is that the Indians in the latter are well dead before the novel begins. All that is left is the rock paintings. The Indians are shamans but never humans.

If one can divide the two, Jules represents Indian as ethnic minority rather than as noble savage. This could be part of the reason why he is Métis rather than full-blood. His traditions are pre-eminent over Christie's only because of length of tenure. He offers not a mystical tie to the land but a mystical tie to the roots of tradition which lie behind everyone. His insights are to be distinguished not from Pique's songs or even from Fan Brady but from the aridity of contemporary high culture as represented by Brooke.

The various narratives of *The Diviners*, including Morag's novels, present a possibility of continuing the "myths" established in folklore. In *Surfacing*, the rejection of popular culture and mass culture extends to the point where there is no inkling of such a possibility. Beyond the Indian paintings, the visionary images are only the God painted in early childhood and perhaps the novel itself.

One possible reason for this difference is the distinction between the narrators. In their processes of individuation, Morag and the narrator of *Surfacing* each begin in a state of confused identity²⁹ and slowly clarify it. At the end of the novels, each has reached a state of heightened awareness, although there remains an ambivalence: "How far could anyone see into the river? Not far." "I tense forward, towards the demands and questions, though my feet do not move yet."

Still, there is a clear division. It has been noted that *Surfacing* is not expressive but its narration is expressionistic. Reality is distorted to suit the vision of the narrator, a technique which suits a novel in which *all* discovery is internal. The narrator and, I think, Atwood, comment disparagingly on those young people who attempt total rejection of their parents. However, for the narrator her parents are not a social presence but an aid to her internal, mystical vision. They are not that different from the long dead Indians. On the other hand, Morag's

narrative remains within the bounds of realism. Similarly her individuation is never divorced from her socialization. Her various shamans are living humans with whom she must function. The insights provided by Christie and Jules cannot be divided from the torment caused by their socially unacceptable lifestyles and difficult personalities.

As noted by various critics, both novels represent a rejection of the achievements of contemporary civilization and a turn to primitive traditions. However, *The Diviners* is also willing to accept a good part of contemporary popular culture, that aspect of our society which is at least partly shaped by the mass media but which seems to mean so much to the general populace. In *Surfacing*, the rejection of elite culture is linked to the rejection of all aspects of contemporary life, most emphatically including popular culture and mass culture.

The Diviners suggests that whereas it is necessary to be selective, some aspects of contemporary popular culture must be accepted if the members of that society are to be accepted. It is all very well to reject our technocratic age and accept what King calls that "search for authenticity" and "rediscovery of the past" but if it does not include a recognition of the ways that the culture of the people continue in the present, then there is no possible social referent. In *Surfacing* the individual, without science, without elite culture, without popular culture, without mass culture, is left in insularity. The narrator's attempt to define self while refuting Donne's dictum that "No man is an island" leaves her clinging to small rocks of a barely remembered and unadapted past.

NOTES

- ¹ Bruce King, "Margaret Atwood's *Surfacing*," *Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, 12 (August 1977), 26.
- ² Clara Thomas, "The Chariot of Ossian: Myth and Manitoba in *The Diviners*," *Journal of Canadian Studies*, 13 (Fall 1978), 62.
- ³ C. G. Jung, "The Relations Between the Ego and the Unconscious," *The Portable Jung*, ed. Joseph Campbell (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1976), p. 121.
- ⁴ "Folklore in the Canadian Novel," forthcoming in *Canadian Folklore*.
- ⁵ "Folklore," *The Compact Edition of the Oxford English Dictionary*.
- ⁶ A universally acceptable definition of folklore is probably impossible. A widely-used one is that quoted by Narvaez (note 8), that folklore is "artistic communication in small groups," Dan Ben-Amos, "Toward a Definition of Folklore in Context," *Journal of American Folklore*, 84 (January-March 1971), 13. An example of how wide the field can become is provided by the following: "The discipline of 'Folklore' analyses the transmission (the underlying causes and accompanying processes) of cultural values, their concrete manifestations and subjectifications, and aims at contributing to the solution of socio-cultural problems," *Falkensteiner Protokolle*, ed. Wolfgang Brückner (Frankfurt, 1970) (translation provided by Professor Rolf W. Brednich). For the purposes of the present paper the Ben-Amos definition might be suitable but it is important to distinguish between contemporary and traditional "artistic communication."

- ⁷ Dwight Macdonald, "A Theory of Mass Culture," in *Mass Culture: The Popular Arts in America*, ed. Bernard Rosenberg and David Manning White (Glencoe, Ill.: The Free Press, 1957), p. 59.
- ⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 60.
- ⁹ Peter Narvaez, "Country Music in Diffusion: Juxtaposition and Syncretism in the Popular Music of Newfoundland," *Journal of Country Music*, 7 (1978), 93.
- ¹⁰ Ray B. Browne, "Popular Culture: Notes Toward a Definition," in *Popular Culture and Curricula*, ed. Ray B. Browne and Ronald J. Ambrosetti (Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green Univ. Popular Press, 1972), p. 11.
- ¹¹ Pauline Greenhill, "Record, Communication, Entertainment: A Functional Study of Two Family Photograph Collections in St. John's, Newfoundland." Unpublished M.A. thesis, Memorial Univ. of Newfoundland, 1981, p. 82.
- ¹² Margaret Laurence, *The Diviners* (Toronto: Bantam, 1975), p. 6. All subsequent references are to this edition.
- ¹³ Margaret Atwood, *Surfacing* (Don Mills, Ont.: Paperjacks, 1973), p. 108. All subsequent references are to this edition.
- ¹⁴ Paul Byers, "Cameras Don't Take Pictures," *Columbia University Forum*, 9 (Winter 1966), 30.
- ¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 31.
- ¹⁶ Margaret Atwood, *The Edible Woman* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1973), p. 232.
- ¹⁷ See also Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1977), pp. 8-9.
- ¹⁸ Various critics have examined the relationship between Morag's own fiction and *The Diviners*. The most detailed study is probably Ildiko de Papp Carrington, "'Tales in the Telling': *The Diviners* as Fiction about Fiction," *Essays on Canadian Writing*, 9 (Winter 1977/78), 154-69. Two other articles which look more broadly at the use of narratives in *The Diviners* are Barbara Hehner, "River of Now and Then: Margaret Laurence's Narratives," *Canadian Literature*, no. 74 (Autumn 1977), pp. 40-57; and Michel Fabre, "Words and the World: 'The Diviners' as an Exploration of the Book of Life," *Canadian Literature*, no. 93 (Summer 1982), pp. 60-78. Clara Thomas (see note 2 above) should also be noted.
- ¹⁹ Clara Thomas, p. 57.
- ²⁰ Northrop Frye, *The Modern Century* (Toronto: Oxford Univ. Press, 1969), pp. 105-06.
- ²¹ In a very perceptive paper, Laurel Doucette has pointed to a number of ways in which Laurence's "folklore" is implausible when compared to the experience of folklorists in the field, particularly in the context which she creates. Still, there can be little question that Laurence's intent is to create something which looks like folklore. Doucette's paper, given to the meeting of the Folklore Studies Association of Canada, at Halifax in 1981, is unpublished but an abstract is given in the *Bulletin of the Folklore Studies Association of Canada*, 5 (May 1981), 13.
- ²² The article by Narvaez noted above examines how radio songs were adapted for personal use by a singer of country music in Buchans, Newfoundland.
- ²³ Russell M. Brown, "Atwood's Sacred Wells," *Essay on Canadian Writing*, 17 (Spring 1980), 32.

- ²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 28.
- ²⁵ Carole Gerson, "Margaret Atwood and Quebec: A Footnote on *Surfacing*," *Studies in Canadian Literature*, 1 (Winter 1976), 117.
- ²⁶ King, p. 25.
- ²⁷ Sontag, p. 4.
- ²⁸ There are various nineteenth-century Canadian examples which show the Indian maiden as helpmate to the adventurous white. Among the best known are *Wacousta* by John Richardson, *Tecumseh* by Charles Mair, and *De Roberval* by John Hunter Duvar.
- ²⁹ Some critics have suggested that in fact Morag has already reached a mature understanding at the beginning of the book and she spends the novel recalling how she reached that understanding. One should note, however, that the frame story, what one could call "Morag's present," also begins in confusion, over Pique. Through recollections of what brought her to this stage, and through various experiences in this "present," Morag is able to develop much further. Her increased acceptance of Pique at the end of the novel reflects an increased understanding of herself.

LAGOON

John Marshall

raingear on the porch, bright green
& yellow flaps in the wind
terrorize the gulls who normally
rest patiently for the guts of things

my hands seem so much more red today
they seem to be finally filled with lessons
best learned on the sea, saw whales

again today thought out the intricate
exchange of songs between one ocean
& another, the greater distances

the sun & so on I walk back down
to the shore where the monstrous
washes up, plunge
my own hands in