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MARGARET ATWOOD, SURFACING: SEARCHING FOR ROOTS

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Abstract: *This paper focuses on the main character's quest for identity as she returns both physically and mentally to the Bottle Villa, the place where she lived as a child, which is situated in between the English and French part of Canada. Here, she is appalled by the destruction brought about by the so-called American tourists who kill a heron in order to have fun and decides to undergo a thorough change of her own behaviour for having condoned their act. In complete isolation, away from the noise of the city and the disturbing influence of friends, surrounded only by nature and wilderness, she manages to find her balance and to discover the truth about her father's death. The protagonist cannot identify with her kind mother and seems to be following the rationalist thinking pattern drawn a long time ago by her father although this stunts her evolution. She feels the need for ritual in order to connect with the earth gods and find answers. The ritual the character undergoes involves the use of mushrooms that help her enter a trance during which she establishes connections with both her father and her ancestors. The female character surfaces a stronger person able to understand the decisions she has taken so far and to rediscover her balance and the unity of her body and mind. The analysis will take into account various types of identity: foreign (American), cultural, spiritual and narrative and also the focus on the opposition American – Canadian and French – English culture/ identity. The critics/ theorists consulted include: John Cottingham, Richard Culpeper, René Descartes, Mircea Eliade, Janice Fiamengo, John Rothfork, Madan Sarup, Benedict Spinoza, Hilde Staels, etc.*