special issue

BODIES OF CANADA

Conceptualizations of Canadian Space
and the Rhetoric of Gender

C-OR(P)GANISMES DU CANADA

Conceptualisations de l'espace canadien
et la rhétorique du genre

Guest-Editors / Editeurs Invités
Zuzanna Szatanik and Michał Krzykawski

TENDERNESS OF SPACE
AND OUTLANDISH WOMEN:
The Tenderness of the Wolves and *The Outlander*

The novels *The Tenderness of Wolves* (2006) by the Scottish author Stef Penney and *The Outlander* (2007) by the Canadian author Gil Adamson belong to the same genre of popular literature which functions according to the formula 'crime–investigation–resolution'. However, within the relative generic constriction Penney and Adamson also problematize the traditionally accepted binary oppositions of civilization vs. nature; savage/Native man vs. civilized /white man; and man vs. woman. By setting their novels on the Canadian frontier of the late 19th and the very beginning of the 20th centuries, Penney and Adamson concentrate on the marginal characters of settler society, their place in and outside the society. Furthermore, the authors underscore the open Canadian spaces not as a void or an absence—as these spaces have been traditionally and stereotypically perceived in Western European male-dominated culture[1]—but as spaces

Vanja Polic
University of Zagreb
Croatia

---

1. The phrase 'stereotypical perceptions of Canadian space' used in this article refers to the common practice of colonial and to some extent post-colonial writing to perceive the colonies as empty land. Historically, in the white male Western European gaze, the newly discovered territories were perceived as *terra nullius*, as land to be discovered, conquered and settled by the Europeans, according to the so-called doctrine of imperialism introduced as early as the first half of the 16th century (Riendeau 2000: 22). For literary perception of Canada as a vast and empty space despite the presence of settlers and First Nations, see, for example, N. Frye's notion of 'garrison mentality', or M. Atwood's *Survival*. These two concepts provide good examples of widely known and often

saturated with meaning by/for the other, the meaning which to women protagonists offers an opportunity for both physical and psychological survival and, consequently, a chance to find their own place in Canadian space. In this sense, the novels undertake a dialogue with the 19th-century Eurocentric settler History, 'self-consciously seek[ing] to reconstruct it, to see /reconstruct what came before it' (Hutcheon, 1995: 131) from the marginalized woman's point of view, while staying within their generic framework. That 'loyalty' to the genre, it must be stressed at the very beginning, is by no means to the detriment of crime fiction, for Todorov claimed that great pieces of generic (popular) literature are precisely those which do not transgress the rules of the genre but conform to them (2000: 121). Therefore, the aim of this article is to show how both Penney and Adamson, while firmly situating their novels in the crime fiction genre, rework a set of binary oppositions traditionally established by the white European colonizing male culture.

The foreground in both novels is the crime of murder—in *The Tenderness of Wolves* the protagonist, Mrs. Ross searches for her neighbour's murderer across northern Ontario in order to exculpate her adopted son Francis who has gone missing at the time of the murder and is therefore the prime suspect. In *The Outlander*, on the other hand,

(ab)used terms and (mis)conceptions used with regard to Canada. Also, M. Seifert catalogues quite a number of stereotypes or auto and hetero images of Canada (2007: 113-117). Some of these are also foregrounded in the novels here analysed: they are perhaps best depicted by the famous quotation of Voltaire's disappointed description of Canada in *Candide* as 'a few acres of snow', or a more recent one of 'Canada as winter'. This latter one is a paraphrase of R. Carrier's answer to the perpetual question 'what is Canadian'. Carrier claims that this question 'brings winter and the north wind howling into my mind, along with snow and ice. For isn't it true that our harsh climate is the main factor in defining the nature of a Canadian? Haven't these climactic elements achieved the status of gods in our mythology'? (Carrier in Van Herk, 2009: 10). And while Canadian literature and poststructural and postcolonial theories have certainly moved away from such notions, in popular literature certain stereotypes persist, some of which are specific auto and hetero images about the landscape/climate in Canada.

the murderess is known from the beginning: it is the protagonist, Mary Boulton, a young woman who has killed her abusive gambling husband and now flees across the Alberta /Manitoba region from the posse consisting of her brothers-in-law. Broadly speaking, the act of crime in modern societies is seen as the breaching of the 'supposedly universal social and moral order', the transgressing of 'one of the frontiers of the society' (Palmer, 1991: 133). In other words, it signifies a radical break in the social order, aberrance from the permissible, revealing that the society's harmony is just an illusion, and consequently that that which society has sought to keep outside its borders has seeped back in. In *The Tenderness of Wolves* the search for the murderer aims at restoring the social order based on the higher principles of truth and justice, and not on the rule of man which is in the novel represented by wilful and cruel behaviour of Mackinley, a Hudson Bay Company chief investigator who has legal jurisdiction over criminal matters.[2] In *The Outlander*, however, the murder (and not the punishment of the murderer) is revealed as the only means of survival for the heroine and therefore the beginning of her quest for personal freedom, as well as the regaining of psychical equilibrium. Even though *The Outlander* is told from the point of view of the murderer, it obeys the generic rules of plot development from the consequence (murder) towards the cause (reasons for it), except that in this case 'the investigation' revolves around Mary Boulton's lapses in memory in an attempt to reconstruct the past events which eventually led her to kill her husband. Predictably, it turns out that the real criminal was her husband, and to a significantly lesser degree Mary herself for perpetrating the crime.

Therefore, in both novels, true to the schematic requirements of the crime fiction genre, the murder committed

Vanja Polic
University of Zagreb
Croatia

2. It is interesting to note that in this legal representative another 'border', 'frontier' is broken: instead of upholding the law, Mackinley tailors the law to favour his own personal ambitions. This brings to mind G. Whitlock's claim that 'on these frontiers outlaws and sheriffs are not in predictable and fixed opposition but related and interdependent, mixed in hybrid forms which confuse the rule of Law' (1995: 349).

functions as the main motivator for the investigative events that unfold, the events that in their backdrop reveal the stereotypical perceptions of Canadian space reworked in these novels to accommodate the development of female protagonists. The traditional and stereotypical images of Canada are thus deconstructed from their self-explanatory status to reveal that both the space and woman are first marked by the white European man as empty spaces, blank slates (*tabulae rasae*) in order to be used by him as sites of inscription. In other words, woman and space are in both novels shown to be a construct which is, instead of being univocally inscribed by the 'Author', alternatively composed as *bricolage* by a 'scriptor', and semantically imbued in different ways by the (implied) reader.

There, of course, exists an analogy between the body of text and the body of colony. Traditionally perceived as the creator of the text, the Author exists before it, 'thinks, suffers, lives for it, is in the same relation of antecedence to his work as a father to his child' (Barthes, 2001: 1468). Analogously, the new territories 'discovered' by Europeans were pronounced an 'empty space', an abstraction on the map that needs to be claimed and defined, socially constructed through exploration and settlement. The new territories, or settler colonies in the case of Canada, were according to the white male European dominant discourse not only 'discovered' but 'invented', made real by the European presence. By copying the European model of society, the patriarchal societal order attempted to ensure its continuance in the New World; within it there was a designated place for women. And such was the official societal order in Canada at the turn of the 19th century, as portrayed and consequently questioned in the novels here analysed.

Conversely, with the advent of postmodernism and the opening of space to alternative voices and histories, a host of divergent stories come to light, permeating the contemporary culture to such an extent that these alternative stories—in the form of historical meta/fictions, historical biographies, fictional biographies etc.—now 'regularly' appear

in the corpus of popular, generic literature. To use Barthes's famous phrase, the text (and by analogy, woman's body and colonial body) now becomes 'a tissue of quotations drawn from innumerable centres of culture', it becomes a site of multi-dimensional writings which all coexist, blending and clashing (Barthes, 2001: 1468), opening themselves up to various readings. Thus, just as there no longer exists one authoritative reading of a textual body, or one authoritative inscription of the colony/colonial body, in the same way the body is no longer written or bounded by one dominant discourse, one authorial voice, but is shown to be socially constructed depending on a context: it 'is eternally written *here* and *now*' (italics in the original) (Barthes, 2001: 1468). Text/body (body as text) is compiled by a 'scriptor', a narrative instance which 'traces a field without origin—or, which, at least, has no other origin than language itself, language which ceaselessly calls into question all origins' (Barthes, 2001: 1468). The meaning(s) of the text now need(s) to be 'disentangled', not 'deciphered' (Barthes, 2001: 1469), and in this sense the heroines of *The Tenderness of Wolves* and *The Outlander* are represented as the (implied) readers who learn to read the texts of their own identities as well as the text of Canadian landscape in which they are situated. Even within generic fiction of these two novels, the female protagonists are no longer subject to 'thingification' (Césaire in Loomba 2005: 114) by the dominant male European colonizing discourse, but become subjects in their own right, empowered by the fact that they possess agency, the ability and power to act on their own.

To show how this power to act independently develops in the novels it is worth mentioning briefly the basic postulates of the crime fiction, which contain a specific narrative scheme for construction of, in our case, the stories of female identity. According to Todorov's analysis of the typology of detective fiction—one of the most prominent subgenres of crime fiction—at the base of detective fiction lies duality, the existence of two stories: the story of the crime which ends by the time the second story, the story of detection,

Vanja Polic
University of Zagreb
Croatia

begins (Todorov, 2000: 122). The second story gradually restores 'fragments of the "lost" narrative of murder' (Palmer, 1991: 131). Analogously, in both of the novels analysed here, the plots unwind in two narrative strands: the first story, given in the form of analeptic fragments to emphasize the heroines' fragmented identities, tells of the heroines' pasts which are cut off from them by the act of relocation or, more precisely, dislocation even before the murder—usually the key disruptor of the crime fiction genre—has occurred. The second story, the one in the present discursive moment, is triggered by the act of murder and, apart from primarily being the story of investigation, at the same time represents the quest for and a subsequent re/discovery of the protagonists' identities.

Hence, it is worth looking into the female pre-histories, especially since both Mrs. Ross and Mary Boulton share very similar backgrounds and face the same struggle of re-building their sense of self. As children, both protagonists suffered from severe panic attacks (Mrs. Ross) or hallucinations (Mary Boulton), both were brought up according to the Victorian etiquette in relatively wealthy urban families (Mrs. Ross was raised in Edinburgh, Scotland, while Mary Boulton was brought up in Copperfield, probably in Nova Scotia), but never felt part of the 'refined' society (Mrs. Ross at some point admits that she preferred being admitted to the asylum than discussing embroidery and latest Edinburgh fashions). Both women were, after they were married, relocated to the Canadian backwoods where again, they had trouble fitting in. Both still suffer from depression, in the case of Mrs. Ross, and post-partum depression with occasional hallucinations exacerbated by the loss of a child, in the case of Mary Boulton. The novels, in fact, revolve around the women's in/ability to cope with the backwoods society, and around their sense of alienation and non-belonging, as well as with empty spaces and an utter sense of dislocation and existence in a vacuum, both spatial and psychological, which all contribute to the protagonists' sense of a lost identity.

Thus, both protagonists feel doubly marginalized: not only as individuals, but also as members of a settler society with

strictly defined roles for women into which the heroines obviously do not fit. Furthermore, Canada is in both novels depicted as a country consisting of the backwoods in which only tough men can survive, 'Canada as a country of men and for men' (Seifert, 2007: 115), where 'what passes for heroics in a softer world are everyday chores here' (Penney, 2007: 24). It is a strongly gendered place where women are invisible even though they have to be as tough as men to survive: Mrs. Ross says as much regarding Mrs. Pretty, her neighbour: 'sometimes I think she is the perfect model of a backwoods pioneer, being an inveterate survivor, tough, unimaginative and unscrupulous' (Penney, 2007: 142).[3] In the context of the novel, Mrs. Pretty's 'adapted-ness' serves as yet another reminder of Mrs. Ross's incompetence to adapt, conform and survive according to the settler standards.

There is another related point in *The Tenderness of Wolves*, and it concerns the way a woman's body was constructed in a settler colony by the imperial discourse. After admitting that she lost her only child to the backwoods, and that she adopted a son who is as inept at fitting in as she is, Mrs. Ross reports that Mrs. Pretty holds her 'lack of living natural children as a sign of failure to do my immigrant duty, which is, apparently, to raise a workforce large enough to run a farm without hiring outside help' (Penney, 2007: 20). According to the dominant colonial ideology, the ideal of a settler woman lies in her physicality. A woman's body is the site of power discourse indirectly connected to the colonial appropriation of the body of colonial territory: it is seen as a reproductive subject, as a 'womb of empire' whose function was to populate the colony with white settlers, thus enabling the empire

*Vanja Polic
University of Zagreb
Croatia*

3. This description, in fact, is very similar to the descriptions of settlers that S. Moodie gives in her canonical pioneer memoir *Roughing It in the Bush, or, Life in Canada* (1852), for example in the sketch 'Our First Settlement, and the Borrowing System' where Yankee neighbours display all the characteristics described in the quotation above. It seems that toughness, lack of imagination and lack of scruple are the prerequisites of survival.

to claim the territory as its own (Whitlock, 1995: 352).[4] Another famous instance of the imperial allegory concerns the identification of the colony with the female body and a woman's position in society. In the words of W. H. New, '[a]llegory of Canada as a feminized, passive, empty space that "waits" for the colonizing European male to "win her", make "her" replete, and precipitate her into "history"' (New, 2002: 17). This imperial allegory, continues New, is present in many of the 20th-century Canadian literary texts and documents, rewriting the relationship between the British Empire and the Canadian nation, preserving the 'imperial allegory's appropriation of gendered relations to questions of nation' (New, 2002: 17).

Continuing her musings on large bush families, Mrs. Ross makes a wider observation which reveals another stereotypical representation of Canada as a void, emptiness, black hole of the land. Large offspring is 'a common response in such a vast, underpopulated country. I sometimes think that the settlers reproduce so heroically as a terrified response to the size and emptiness of the land, as though they could hope to fill it with their offspring' (Penney, 2007: 20–21). Thus the procreation is seen not only as a duty towards one's own nation, but also as a very personal response to the enormity of the land. Accordingly, the Canadian body of land is seen in the novel as a vast expanse, empty plain, a void which suffocates with its vacuity. It is also described as inhuman, yet possessing human traits: 'if this land has a character, it is sullen, indifferent, hostile' (Penney, 2007: 138). It is constantly constructed as inimical, and the leitmotifs in both novels are 'the suffocating silence of the place', 'the indifferent, mocking voice of the forest' (Penney, 2007: 10). The setting /space in *The Tenderness of Wolves* and *The Outlander* is never neutral or observed objectively, it is never shown as 'an empty stage before actors enter it', but is always

---

4. P. Hulme has written the famous essay about the status of woman and gender in early colonial discourse, 'Polytropic Man: Tropes of Sexuality and Mobility in Early Colonial Discourse'. A. Loomba also mentions the analogy between the body of colony and the body of woman (2005: 68).

'the projected space of the mind's eye' (Chatman, 1989: 138). In other words, the space in these novels is highly subjectively construed, always described through the eyes of the protagonists, in their gaze. It is the human imagination that socially construes the space, humanizes it, personifies it, and writes into it in order to be able to understand it (New 2002: 606), because living in such an empty space is like living in an asylum. It is, in fact, Mrs. Ross who, travelling across the Canadian Shield notices that it is a plain open space without a mark on it, its vastness and emptiness is compared to insanity (Penney, 2007: 194). She feels mounting panic that Canada is 'too big, too empty for humans' (Penney, 2007: 191), and it is the feeling that has persisted with her ever since she disembarked to Canada.

Mrs. Ross also finds time to tell a brief history of her arrival to Canada some twelve years earlier, remembering how she thought that because the immigrants were so 'crammed into the hold of a ship' she imagined 'there couldn't possibly be room in the New World for all these people'. However, they scattered from 'the landing stages at Halifax and Montreal like tributaries of a river, and disappeared, every one, into the wilderness. The land swallowed us up and was hungry for more' (Penney, 2007: 9). In building the image of Canada, Mrs. Ross also describes how the land was won from forest by clearing it, how attempts were made to make it feel more familiar by naming different settlements either after animals native to the territory or after the places Scottish immigrants left behind (Penney, 2007: 9). Thus Mrs. Ross repeats the story of the attempts at prevailing over the overall settler feeling of dislocation through naming the foreign space and turning it into place (Ashcroft et al., 2000: 177-178). In yet another instance, Mrs. Ross also comments how another location was called Horsehead Bluff, adding that it was 'so named, with that refreshing Canadian lack of imagination, because it resembles a horse's head' (Penney, 2007: 11). Probably the worst part of the human relationship to space, as portrayed by these two works of crime fiction, lies in the fact that space (Canadian landscape) is represented as always present, indifferent,

Vanja Polic
University of Zagreb
Croatia

eventually unconquerable both physically and mentally. It can never be adequately grasped or described, it requires humans to adjust to it, and not to shape it to their own will.

Dislocation, as a consequence of voluntary or involuntary migration to a new locale, becomes most obvious precisely in these attempts to convert an uncolonized space into a colonized place, to exert control over it via language. However, the inadequacy of language to describe the experience of a new place results in the immigrants' feeling of alienation to a new colonial space (Ashcroft, et al., 1989: 9–10). And in *The Tenderness of Wolves*, despite the fact that the land is symbolically conquered through the use of familiar notions in place names as well as literally claimed through cultivation, the feeling of alienation still lingers in Mrs. Ross. At the beginning of the novel she is in stale-mate transitional phase from dislocation to adaptation and it is only her journey through the expanses of northern Canada that will get her to move from the spiritual dullness, and enable her to overcome her fear of the vastness of the land. The need for a situation, placement, anchoring, the need to stay integrated, not to lose herself and dissipate in the spatial void is testified in the novel by the great attention that Mrs. Ross pays to geographic details, and detailed records of the landscape. It is, in fact, with great detail and apparently realistic geographic location that Penney builds the Canadian locale on the north shore of Georgian Bay where the Scottish settlements in the novel are situated. By keeping track of the landscape, she hopes to keep track of herself. When she is forced to leave the relative security of Dove River, she also needs to overcome her panic of the open spaces and come to terms with their ultimate unknowableness: the decision to go on the journey represents the decisive point for her regeneration and re/invention in relation to Canada.

In *The Outlander*, the displacement is described graphically, with two references to maps and mapping. Thus mapping and cartography are not used to help in the process of domestication (Van Herk 2002: 82), but are instead used to underline the sense of not-belonging. In the first instance, as Mary Boul-

ton runs through the Rocky Mountains forest without a clear sense of direction, she remembers looking at her husband's map of the North American continent hanging on the cabin wall: 'Each American state had been filled in with a different colour, all of them tidied together like a box of sweets' (Adamson, 2009: 68). As a sheer contrast to the US, 'Canada itself was a broad emptiness of circumscribed territories each holding its name and nothing more. Assiniboa. Keewatin. Alberta. Coloured pink, like all things British' (Adamson, 2009: 68).[5] In the same way in which she is lost in the forest, Mary Boulton felt lost looking at the map. 'Without cities or borders, no line to indicate where she had come from or where she was, the widow had stared at Canada and seen it as others did. An attic. A vacancy. A hole in the world.' (Adamson, 2009: 69). The image of Canada represented in this way cradles at its centre the feeling of alienation that the European settler can feel in the backwoods, a sense of displacement and a feeling of existing in nothingness. To underline the emptiness that is Canada, the US states are coloured, 'tidied', explored, known, everything that Canada is not. Another stereotype appears here, that of Canada as 'America's empty attic and cold kingdom' (Seifert, 2007: 113). The fact that the names of the Canadian territories, the only thing 'existing' in the blank space of the map are mostly Native American names, further underlines a sense of a lack of knowledge about the land as well as its strangeness, mystery.

However, another issue is introduced here: Mary Boulton cannot locate herself on the map, neither her hometown nor her present bush abode. She cannot read this map, she lacks the reading skills to decipher the geographical map that has turned space into such an abstraction that it is impossible to connect the image with the referent (Ashcroft et al., 2000: 178), and in this way she is doubly lost: lost in space and lost in language. This is an important instance in the novel

Vanja Polic
University of Zagreb
Croatia

---

5. The District of Keewatin was a territory of Canada and later an administrative district of the Northwest Territories, while the District of Assiniboia was a name used to describe the Red River Colony, mainly for official purposes, between 1812 and 1869.

because it underlines that she as 'the other' is not given the necessary skills that belong to the male colonizer's world where mapping and cartography represent another relevant tool for the appropriation of new lands. Ashcroft et al. also speak of the interconnection of place and its location in language for the settlers, of 'the lack of fit between the language available and the place experienced' (2000: 181), and this notion is relevant for another parallel between the body of colony and the woman, but this time as imposed by the white European male who 'owns' them: the Canadian provinces remain unnamed, and analogously the woman is not given the 'language' to orient herself in space. In both cases the dominant language of European civilization is inadequate to describe (in the case of land) or to explain (to the woman) the realities of place to the non-dominant member of Canadian society.

Furthermore, mapping serves to inscribe emptiness[6] and goes hand in hand with naming, both being 'a primary colonizing process because [they] appropriate, define and capture the place in language' (Ashcroft, et al., 2000: 182). Maps in a colonial discourse serve to textualize the spatial reality of the other, to 'renam[e] spaces in a symbolic and literal act of mastery and control' (Ashcroft, et al., 2000: 31–32). Furthermore, by looking at the map, the widow sees it as others do, an empty space. Ambiguously, this 'sight' underscores not only Mary Boulton's existence in the bush, in an absence of civilization to which she was brought after marriage, but also the fact that maps are always drawn ideologically, that 'real space' is encoded and textualised, abstracted into them. The allegorization of space, but to a certain extent the fictionalization of space as well, is defined by maps, as is its arrangement, its 'bringing it to order'. 'Maps claim to be objective and scientific, but in fact they select what they record and preset it in specific ways' (Loomba 2005: 69) depending on the historical context and dominant (colonialist) ideology. One such tactic is the deliberate decision to orientate maps according to the

6. To paraphrase the title of S. Ryan's article 'Inscribing the Emptiness: Cartography, Exploration and the Construction of Australia" in C. Tiffin and A. Lawson (eds), *DeScribing Empire, Postcolonialism and Textuality.*

North-South axis (Ashcroft, et al., 2000: 33), an abstraction unconnected to the real space, the fact which is commented in *The Outlander* as well. As she wanders the forest, wondering which way to go, Mary Boulton asks herself 'was north up? In fact, the widow did not know which territory she might be in or whether she had passed into another world' (Adamson, 2009: 68). In yet another reversal, Mary Boulton is now as lost in the forest as she felt lost by looking at the geographical map.

There is another instance of mapping from which Mary Boulton is excluded again due to her illiteracy, ignorance of the language of the mapping code. As she wanders through the forest, exhausted, she remembers the geographical map and at the same time becomes aware of the nature's map: the forest is criss-crossed, charted by numerous foot-prints and paw-prints of various animals, by the 'animal paths, itineraries, wandering lines of habit she had not perceived before', by 'rivulets and whorls where mice scurried round rocks and tree trunks' and where there were suddenly discernible 'wider, subtler erosions, where hooves and bellies had drifted and where soft lips had torn away leaves' (Adamson, 2009: 67). Mary Boulton decides to follow this other natural map, haphazardly riding further into the forest. Thus landscape is represented as a text that Mary Boulton does not know how to read (yet), but at the same time as text which also offers an alternative possibility of being read despite ignorance in the white male language of cartography. This text of place shows 'intermingling lines of connection which shape shifting patterns of de- and reterritorialization' (Huggan 1995: 409), in this way engaging itself in 'a more wide-ranging deconstruction of Western signifying systems' (409), showing itself as an 'open' instead of a 'closed' space-construct (409), as the white male European colonizers would have it. Hence, the landscape Mary Boulton travels, and analogously the Canadian Shield that Mrs. Ross travels across, open themselves to a new kind of decentralized mapmaking.

Connected to the notion of an enclosed, safe place that the colonizer strives for in an attempt to 'make order out of cha-

Vanja Polic
University of Zagreb
Croatia

os' in the new territories are utopian notions of creating, in a New World, a humane, pristine place, a community which resembles the primitive communities, pure from base human drives and emotions, a better place as might have been envisioned by the first European settlers. Over and again in *The Tenderness of Wolves* the Himmelvanger ('the fields of heaven') community and Caulfield are imagined as model societies which are invariably revealed as identical to other, 'common' communities. Himmelvanger is imagined and established as a model religious Norwegian commune in which adultery and potentially lethal cowardice occur practically in plain sight; the township of Caulfield is similarly projected as an idyllic small town which will provide escape from the vices of a city, a chance for a new start, but in which, nevertheless, a grisly murder takes place. In other words, in *The Tenderness of Wolves* these places are only projected as havens which can provide a sense of belonging; they are mentally and ideologically constructed in an effort to garrison off all that is morally wrong, and as such they represent 'attempts to fix the meaning of places', to create 'singular, fixed and static identities for places', and consequently to interpret them 'as bounded enclosed spaces defined through counterposition against the Other who is outside' (Massey, 2007: 168). Such interpretations or constructs would, ideally, provide the means for a stable identity to its inhabitants. Notwithstanding such projections, both Himmelvanger and Caulfield are found to be nothing more than the place identical on the outside as well as on the inside. The frontier between what is 'in' and perceived as safe on the one hand, and what is 'out' and perceived as dangerous/deviant on the other, is exposed as a fictional one. In other words, in these crime fiction novels one can just as easily perish within the borders of security since it is not nature (in the sense of landscape and environment) that people need to fear, but human nature itself.

Thus, the binary opposition of nature versus culture remains the basis for the cast of characters in *The Tenderness of Wolves* as well as in *The Outlander*. However, within these firmly set extremes or binary oppositions (established

by the white European settlers) between the inside and out-side, enclosure and the wilderness, civilization and nature, in both novels there exists a whole range of episodic charac-ters who reveal different levels of adaptation to landscape, ranging from the characters reflecting utter identity and men-tal disintegration to those representing a sense of 'placement', 'situation' and a retrieval of a satisfactory identity which enables survival. This range of characters projects the possible fates for the heroines, and while in *The Tenderness of Wolves* the emphasis is more on the different degrees of in/abil-ity to adapt to the landscape, in *The Outlander*, on the other hand, the stress is more on the degrees of in/ability to adapt to the society of the times.

In *The Tenderness of Wolves* these episodic characters are distributed on the scale of successful or unsuccessful adap-tation to the environment. There are those who have adapted well to Canada, but did so within the garrison and in controlled circumstances, so to speak: Mrs. Pretty the veteran farmer settler is one example, and the cultivated and upper class Knox family who has left town and moved to the 'country' in order to lead a more morally sound life is the other. On the opposite end of the scale are the Hudson Bay Company representa-tives of the Hanover House Company trading post in the far north, who have gone native, become bushed in the way that confirms the white man's worst fear. Living in isolation from the white Western/settler society, in an area called Starva-tion Country, they have reverted to a bestial state. They have survived the Canadian landscape physically, but not mentally.

Perhaps the most moving character can be found on the ex-treme, destructive end of the adaptation scale: it is a new Scottish immigrant Donald Moody, employed by the Hudson Bay Company, and assisting with the murder investigation. He represents the archetypal victim and the 'failed sacrifice' of the 'reluctant immigrant'–a victim of Canada and nature, a settler failure (Atwood 1972: 34–39). Donald 'nurtures a growing hatred for this landscape that is quite unlike any-thing he encountered before. People aren't meant to be here' (Penney, 2007: 139). He suffers from bloody frostbites;

Vanja Polic
University of Zagreb
Croatia

his glasses, without which he cannot see, are constantly frozen over, further impeding his vision. The kind of adventurous and career life he sought in Canada (to escape from the domineering father) turns out to be a soap bubble, and the image of Canada as 'an adventurous testing ground for male protagonists wishing to flee the constraints' (Seifert, 2007: 114) of the Old World turns out in his case to be grossly fabricated. The tests of endurance the individual is subjected to in Canada are not glorious exploits, but everyday survival in harsh climate; and while it is true that there is 'danger (as advertised), [...] it is the danger of frostbite or exposure rather than unarmed combat with wild animals or war with hostile natives' (Penney, 2007: 27). In the end Donald Moody dies, his death futile in the larger development of events in the novel, his life unrealised.

In *The Outlander*, as was already mentioned, greater attention is paid to that group of characters which fails to adapt to societal norms rather than to landscape, which in one way or another does not fit 'the norm' of the European civilization. As a model example of nonconformity, there is in this novel what one could term an enclave, a utopian community of a different kind, situated in the mining town of Frank.[7] Based only partially on a real town, this imagined, emplotted community uncannily reminds of a side-show by the white dominant cultural standards: it is populated by miners (who are there to provide a specific 'realistic' backdrop), but also by a dwarf; by an Italian giant; by a priest who is trying to build a church from the profit he makes by smuggling horses stolen by the Native peoples; and by a lunatic 'rider of the Apocalypse' who is, as it turns out, a Mountie bushed but also a life-long friend of the priest. When the crazed widow Mary Boulton joins them—she is to be the only woman there—the circus can be said to be complete. All of these people are misfits, rejects, 'outlaws' from society, never quite innocent

7. Frank was the site of the famous Turtle Mountain landslide, when in 1903 ca 90 million tonnes of limestone from the Turtle Mountain (southern Rocky Mountains of Canada) crashed onto the mining town of Frank, Alberta ('Frank Slide' 2010).

before the law; they exist on the very fringe if not outright beyond it in an atmosphere that reminds more of a fairy-tale than of a *sensu stricto* crime fiction narrative. Significantly, after the landslide only the 'freaks' survive; the priest with all of his eccentric humanity perishes as a symbol of the futile hero, 'a casual incident of death', for his death does not save his 'congregation' (Atwood, 1972: 170). The surviving side-show members scatter, some moving to the North, to Yukon (Adamson, 2009: 386), to the still mythical and unexplored place where there is still freedom for the unusual. Interestingly, the American Wild West myth by the end of the 19th century relocated geographically to become the Wild North myth, particularly after the 1897 Yukon Gold Rush (Seifert, 2007: 114). And since the myth of the Wild North was never demystified, but remains in the collective conscious that utopian place of a nostalgic other world, the outcasts can move to this mythical place in order to escape the ever-expanding Western civilization.

Related to this issue is another binary opposition, that of nature versus civilization. On the pole of nature are those male characters who are at one with nature, who epitomize it and are counterpointed to the white European settlers. Their common trait in both *The Tenderness of Wolves* and *The Outlander* is that they are, in the gaze of white male European settler, 'savage' men who have renounced the white society and live according to nature's laws. They are the archetypal 'natural' man who has 'gone native' not, however, in the sense of becoming insane due to overexposure to wild nature as the notion is commonly perceived by the white European colonizer (Ashcroft et al. 2000: 115), but in the sense of a man who, having renounced the white European-based civilization for all its negative aspects, has adapted to nature and found a satisfying way to live in it. To a white 'civilized' person, such men are 'other', an aberration from the norm, they have become part of the hostile nature and as such should be treated with mistrust, garrisoned off like the rest of landscape which, in effect, functions as the other in relation to the European colonizer.

Vanja Polic
University of Zagreb
Croatia

Thus, both novels propose the 'fetish' of 'the noble savage' (White 1985: 183–196): a white wild-man in the case of *The Outlander*, or a 'half-breed' in the case of *The Tenderness of Wolves*. It is the 18th-century construct of a man who lives on the very margins of the white society if not outright beyond them, and who offers a happy alternative to the 'civilized', settler white man, showing that 'true humanity [is] realizable outside the confines either of the Church or of a "civilization" generally defined as Christian' (White 1985: 186). Both novels use this binary opposition between the 'civilized' and 'savage' man to show that there is no ideological 'distinction between the presumed types of humanity on a manifestly qualitative grounds' (White in Loomba 2005: 103). In other words, both novels reveal that this binary opposition, set up in a traditional colonizer discourse as the strengthening of the norm /al through othering and difference, is in fact not valid.

In *The Tenderness of Wolves* Mrs. Ross's 'helper' (to use the *terminus technicus* from A. J. Greimas's actantial model) is William Parker, a half-breed whose father was a tracker and a voyageur for the Hudson Bay Company, as was he until an earlier incident, related to the murder, alienated him from the Company life. Since he is also interested in finding the true murderer—he being suspected of having committed the crime as well as Mrs. Ross's son—Mrs. Ross and Parker join forces. It is this joint journey that will prove to be a revelatory journey, the identity quest, for Mrs. Ross. In *The Outlander* William Moreland, an actual historical person known as the Ridgerunner,[8] served as the model for the character of the man gone native.

8. Real-life William Moreland (1900–1963?) was a rather unique figure who lived in the Idaho area of the Rockies, occasionally working for various logging companies and other seasonal jobs usually away from any kind of settlements. He became famous and legendary for his ability to cross vast distances of rugged and unapproachable terrain in a single day and to avoid being captured by misleading his trackers off his trail (some of his strategies included running backwards many miles to throw the trackers off his trail). The authorities more or less tolerated his eccentricity—living in the forests and taking from logging cabins what he needed—but he did spend some years in a mental institution, after which he again returned to the mountains (Moreland 2010).

In the novel the Ridgerunner takes on the role of Mary Boulton's helper, saving her life in the forest and teaching her how to survive in it. It is Moreland who will eventually prove to be Mary's match, both as an outcast and as a person who has learned to subdue the hallucinatory voices he also hears, helping her to defragment herself and find the identity she feels most comfortable with.

In other words, since these men are fully adapted to living in the Canadian landscape, and are at the same time unconventional and not bound to white settler and patriarchal society, they can offer the heroines auxiliary support in the process of passage from dislocation in that society to adaptation ('placedness', situation) and subsequent identity recovery outside it. The binary opposition of civilization versus nature is thus upheld in the novels, showing that its invalidation, in the time frame that the novels set up, is possible only on an individual basis, by shedding the preconceived society-imposed images of nature and woman. The pivotal moment of revelation in both *The Tenderness of Wolves* and *The Outlander* regarding space and female protagonists occurs when both women finally become able to read landscape, and consequently to accept it. For Mrs. Ross this occurs the moment when she realizes she enjoys the landscape, thus overcoming her feeling of panic at the sight of Canadian Shield which is 'too big, too empty for humans' (Penney, 2007: 191) and replacing it with the realization of another kind: 'I realise that the plain is beautiful. The brightness makes my eyes water, and I am dazzled, not just physically, but awed by this enormous, empty purity' (Penney, 2007: 193). For Mary Boulton, on the other hand, the transformation occurs in the Rocky Mountains where she undergoes a spiritual and physical survival training. What is more, she adapts so well that she adopts the forest as her home. To put it very simply, once

Vanja Polic
University of Zagreb
Croatia

Adamson uses all of the known circumstances of the Ridgerunner's life (letting him tell the story of his life to the widow [Adamson, 2009: 88-94])—his self-proclaimed outcast-ness from society and his unison with nature—but she antedates him by 35 years, making him a 35-year-old in 1903.

she has learned how to read the text of landscape, it becomes more familiar than human society.

Eventually, the protagonists in both novels, Mrs. Ross in *The Tenderness of Wolves* and Mary Boulton in *The Outlander*, having experienced both poles of civilization and nature, make an informed choice about their lives: Mrs. Ross will return to Dove River on the north shore of Georgian Bay to live with her husband, whereas Mary Boulton will renounce civilization and live in the forest-region of southern Canadian and northern US Rockies with the Ridgerunner, the naturalized/'native' man. Both novels, hence, end with alternative solutions to the 'either: or' equation by proposing that survival does not have to be a choice of one end of the binary opposition, but that it can be a compromise between both. In *The Outlander*, it is true, the ending is a somewhat fairy-tale one, with Mary Boulton deciding to stay in the wilderness with the Ridgerunner and renouncing human society altogether, but in *The Tenderness of Wolves* a more realistic ending opens a possibility for Mrs. Ross to reconstruct and rebuild her settler life. Thus the body of Canada and a female body come to a kind of compromise, and by understanding the former, the latter can accept both itself and the landscape, and consequently reconstitute her own identity of a Canadian woman of a different kind.

In conclusion, both novels, while structurally firmly within the crime fiction genre, show the potential for serious addressing of some of the patriarchal and Euro- and Amero-centric stereotypes about the constitution of space and womanhood, which can frequently be found in popular literature.

WORKS CITED

Adamson, G. (2007) *The Outlander*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing.

Ashcroft, B., Griffiths, G., and Tiffin, H. (1989) *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and practice in post-colonial literatures*. London and New York: Routledge.

—————— (2000) *Postcolonial Terms: The Key Concepts*. London & New York: Routledge.

Atwood, M. (1972) *Survival, A Thematic Guide to Canadian Literature*. Toronto: Anansi.

Barthes, R. (2001) 'The Death of the Author', in V. B. Leitch (gen. ed) *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*. New York & London: W.W. Norton & Company, 1466–1470.

Chatman, S. (1989) *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press.

Slide, F. (2010) www.thecanadianencyclopedia.com accessed 07.07.2010.

Hutcheon, L. (1995) 'Circling the Downspout of Empire', in B. Ashcroft, G. Griffiths, H. Tiffin (eds) *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*. London and New York: Routledge, 130–135.

Huggan, G. (1995) 'Decolonizing the Map', in B. Ashcroft, G. Griffiths, H. Tiffin (eds) *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*. London and New York: Routledge, 407–411.

Loomba, A. (2005) *Colonialism/Postcolonialism*. London & New York: Routledge.

Massey, D. (2007) *Space, Place and Gender*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Moodie, S. (1989) *Roughing it in the Bush; or, Life in Canada*. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Inc.

New, W. H. (ed) (2002) *Encyclopedia of Literature in Canada*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Palmer, J. (1991) *Potboilers: Methods, concepts and case studies in popular fiction*. London & New York: Routledge.

Penney, S. (2006) *The Tenderness of Wolves*. London: Quercus.

Riendeau, R. (2000) *A Brief History of Canada*. Allston: Fitzhenry & Whiteside.

Vanja Polic
University of Zagreb
Croatia

Seifert, M. (2007) 'Canada', in Beller, M. and Leerssen, J. (eds) *Imagology: The Cultural Construction And Literary Representation of National Characters: A Critical Survey*. Amsterdam & New York: Rodopi B. V., 113–117.

Moreland (2010) http://www.summitpost.org/area/range/288752/Mallard-Larkins-Pioneer-Area.html#chapter_14 accessed 07.07.2010.

Todorov, T. (2000) 'Typology of Detective Fiction', in M. McQuillan (ed) *The Narrative Reader*. London & New York: Routledge, 120–128.

Van Herk, A. (2009) 'Pretending to Europe', in *Imaginative Spaces: Canada in the European Mind, Europe in the Canadian Mind*. Proceedings from the 4th International Conference of Central European Canadianists. Brno: Masaryk University, 9–15.

—————— (2002) 'Pioneers and Settlers', in King, B. (ed) *New National and Post-Colonial Literatures: An Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, Clarendon Paperbacks, 81–101.

White, H. (1985) *Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Whitlock, G. (1995) 'Outlaws of the Text', in Ashcroft, B., Griffiths, G., Tiffin, H. (eds) *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*. London and New York: Routledge, 349–352.