

FROM THE BUSH to THE CITY: Resistant Land and Reflective Women in Margaret Atwood's Works

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J. Hillis Miller (1995: 10) has proposed that every narrative without exception, even the most abstract one, 'traces out in its course an arrangement of places, dwellings, and rooms joined by paths and roads', i.e., it develops in space. Literary space unavoidably exists through human involvement, another literary scholar Tom Henighan (1982: 5) emphasises. Henighan maintains that even natural space in literature is always rendered from the human point of view and therefore 'must be understood as the expression of men who occupy a certain place in and have a certain perspective on, the real space of nature' (Henighan 1982: 5). Even if this contention, that strongly evokes the presence of geographical space, would seem to best characterise narrative fiction and maybe not hold the same degree of validity as regards short lyric poetry, the oeuvre of several poets will still encourage space-oriented readings.

One of such authors is certainly Margaret Atwood, whose writings, regardless of genre, are pervaded by a concern for Canadian identity and who is a justly acclaimed figurehead in constructing the Canadian literary space. The present article will concentrate on the 19th century English settlers' process of adaptation to the Canadian natural space as presented in Atwood's collection of poetry *The Journals of Susanna Moodie*. This sequence of poems has been inspired by the autobiographical writings of a historical 19th century woman and ends with a vision of 20th century Toronto, given from her posthumous perspective. In addition, the contemporary Toronto as it emerges in Atwood's novels set in this city will be observed, with a particular emphasis on the treatment of nature in the city.

In the following discussion, creation of the sense of space and place appears as an important issue. Yi-Fu Tuan distinguishes between space and place on the basis of principles that are also shared by Pauli Tapani Karjalainen, as well as several other scholars. Space, according to this approach, allows movement,

openness, freedom, but also involves insecurity and threat; place, in contrast, implies pause, stasis and confinement, suggests rest and familiarity (Karjalainen 2000; Tuan 1977). In principle, every location in space can be transformed into place. According to Edward Relph (1976: 8), space is amorphous, intangible, cannot be directly analysed, and thus provides context for places that are nodes of human intentions, understood as centres of meaning. Tuan (1977: 54), for his part, writes: 'Open space has no trodden paths and signposts. It has no fixed pattern of established human meanings ... Enclosed and humanized space is place.'

As Relph (1976: 20) contends in his seminal work *Space and Place*, the city is a place in which human intention is especially conspicuous as it is built almost entirely through human purpose and represents a conscious and large-scale design for human habitation. The emphasis is shared by Karjalainen (1998: 3) who states that cities belong to larger sociospatial systems, characterised by particular 'social, economic and political practices and the power relations emerging from them', which make them conspicuous in literature. According to Karjalainen the image of the city in literature on the one hand encompasses individual feelings and experiences on the scale of the character, narrator and author; yet on the other hand it can be seen as indicative of more general processes operating in society and people's everyday life (Karjalainen 1998: 3).

One characteristic of place is its capability of being described from its visual aspect, that is, landscape. However, if the use of landscape (or cityscape) is generally assumed to lend verisimilitude to novels and poems, this obvious function of mimetic rendering remains in the background in case of Atwood's poetry. The space experiences that we most often meet in her poems are but rarely forwarded as what we could define as landscapes – if we take the position that landscape in arts is the result of imposing a set of internalised aesthetic conventions to the bit of environment with which the beholder is confronted. The critic Jeremy Hooker (1996: 5) reminds us: 'Literary landscapes are products of painted landscapes, landscape gardens, books, and they are aesthetic and social constructs', while Leonard Lutwack (1984: 26) defines a landscape in literature as 'a special ordering of topography, vegetation, animals and manmade constructions in a limited area of the earth's surface', stressing that, as distinguished from natural landforms, it is artfully arranged topography that conforms to painterly norms.

However, even if the focal consciousness of the Susanna Moodie poems does

not verbalise ekphrastic scenes of Canadian nature, the tradition still gets explicit acknowledgement. In full agreement with the mores of the historical period to which her prototype belonged, Atwood's Susanna Moodie is aware of Edmund Burke's concepts of aestheticised landscape – the tradition of perceiving nature in terms of the beautiful, the sublime and the picturesque. In her ground-breaking work on Canadian literature *Survival*, Atwood (1972: 50) says that the historical Moodie's nature writing 'reads like a dictionary of early nineteenth-century Nature adjectives'. In the poems, though, such an attitude towards nature only appears in meta-level representations of verbal or pictorial art created by Atwood's Moodie's public self. Still, the Wordsworthian faith in Nature's guiding power and grandeur is not sustained and Atwood (1972: 51) can detect a dual relationship between the historical Mrs. Moodie and Canadian nature as it appears in her writings. The duality of vision is exposed in the poems.

For instance, the poem 'The Double Voice' first attributes to the persona a genteel voice, trained in the traditional appreciation of art and the natural sublime: 'One had manners / painted in watercolours / used hushed tones when speaking / of mountains or Niagara Falls, / composed uplifting verse / and expended sentiment upon the poor' (Atwood 1970: 42). The public voice that is dealing in expected value judgements and frames nature according to pre-given artistic conventions is undermined by another, private one that is aware of the unadorned processes of life in the bush, as unladylike and improper as they come, thus ignoring not only the naturalised aesthetic expectations in society, but also the unwritten rules of self-censorship a woman should follow. Nature here does not consist of elements of supposedly eternal magnitude that can be observed from a vantage point at a distance, but also of such unpleasant and irritating bodily phenomena in the immediate vicinity as men sweating and mosquitoes biting, to the downright unmentionables like unborn babies festering the mother's body or the raw facts of maggot-ridden animal carcasses.

In another poem 'Later in Belleville: Career' Atwood lets her Susanna Moodie consciously appropriate the conventions not in order to partake in a solemn spiritual union with romanticised nature, but to contribute to the family's livelihood: 'Once by a bitter candle / of oil and braided / rags, I wrote / verses about love and sleighbells / which I exchanged for potatoes; // in the summer I painted butterflies / on a species of white fungus / which were bought by the tourists,

glass- / cased for English parlours' (Atwood 1970: 47). Thus, she explicitly evokes the inauthenticity of the blind following of certain criteria that promote the packaged values of the already existing tourist industry. Reluctantly, Mrs. Moodie is negotiating her own relationship with the new space, which to the very end remains, as one of the poems puts it, 'no place for an English gentleman' (Atwood 1970: 55).

In the first poem of the collection, titled 'Disembarking at Quebec', Atwood's freshly arrived Moodie finds support in listing her meaningful personal belongings in order to construct a defining carapace for herself before asking whether it is actually these objects that 'this space cannot hear' (Atwood 1970: 11). The surrounding environment is presented as a composite of uncountable or plural elements such as vistas, hills, swamps, the sand, the glare of the sun; there is nothing singular or particular in it that could serve as a meaningful node, as a place. Her earlier meanings appear to have no significance in the new environment and thus the poem ends: 'I am a word / in a foreign language' (Atwood 1970: 11). The language metaphor evokes the Saussurean concept of a system of differences that serve in creating separate words, linguistic signs. Susanna Moodie's first experience in Canada is her inability to differentiate and interpret, she is faced with an indecipherable system of signs and appears to be unable to read them. And, as she is attributing meaning-making agency to her surroundings, it turns out that the local environment may lack the devices to distinguish her from her background ('The moving water will not show me / my reflection. // The rocks ignore.' – Atwood 1970: 11) or at least to find a meaning for her who comes from another system of signs, from a different language.

In the poem 'Paths and Thingscape' that is set at a later time when the settlers have already built their homes in the new land, Susanna Moodie is aware, firstly, of the trails left in the woods by the aboriginal people by bending the trees that show the directions. These results of human intentions are one with nonhuman space, the forest: 'Those who went ahead / of us in the forest / bent the early trees / so that they grew to signals: // the trail was not / among the trees but / the threes' (Atwood 1970: 20). There are indeed, no trodden paths as Tuan said of open space, yet the space still contains established human meanings that Susanna Moodie attempts to recapture.

Although the poem represents this unstructured environment as possibly dangerous and opposed to the persona, the author nevertheless does not make

her character objectify space by posing the latter as the Other, a potential enemy to be fought and overcome. Rather, the poem involves an attempt to adopt a sparing attitude towards space, to meet and understand it on its own terms, so that by acquiring meanings it could be divided into humanised units, places. 'The petals of the fire- / weed fall where they fall // I am watched like an invader / who knows hostility but / not where / The day shrinks back from me // When will be / that union and each / thing (bits / of surface broken by my foot / step) will without moving move / around me / into its place' (Atwood 1970: 21). Again, the reader meets a plurality of the intertwined, dispersed environment that the persona wishes to transform into particular things that hopefully will form an order – a set of humanised places – some time later.

Yet this poem already contains a definite place – the implicit hut, the doorway of which has been crossed to enter the undivided natural space: 'In the morning I advance / through the doorway: the sun / on the bark, the inter- / twisted branches, here / a blue movement in the leaves, dispersed / calls / no trails; rocks / and grey tufts of moss' (Atwood 1970: 21). A building created for the purpose of dwelling can be considered a place *par excellence*, offering rest and shelter. The threshold forms a boundary that divides the space of the poem into two sub-spaces. According to Yuri Lotman (1990: 103) one of the main characteristics of a boundary is its untransgressibility, so that the structures of the subspaces turn out to be clearly different from each other. Lotman's example describes a fairy tale that is, just like the Moodie poem, strictly divided into the home or the house on the one hand and the forest on the other hand, with a clear-cut boundary between them. The characters from the forest cannot enter the house but belong to the space allotted to them – it is only in the forest that weird and supernatural events can take place.

This fairy-tale dualism is even more tellingly evoked in the poem 'The Wereman' in which the husband walks in the frosted field and, after entering the forest, is blotted out; he does not belong to the wife's world any more: 'Unheld by my sight / what does he change into / what other shape / blends with the under- / growth, wavers across the pools / is camouflaged from the listening / swamp animals' (Atwood 1970: 19). Again, the poem touches upon the unknowability of wild nature, yet it seems that what is manifested even more suggestively is the social and spatial confinement of a woman in the stasis of a controlled place in comparison with the man's range of mobility in space over which she has no con-

trol. It is not Susanna Moodie herself that can initiate movement either into or in her new country; rather, she is just bundled up and taken into a new location despite her faint protests: 'He wrote, We are leaving. I said / I have no clothes / left I can wear. // The snow came. The sleigh was a relief; / its track lengthened behind; / pushing me towards the city' (Atwood 1970: 27.) Thus for her, the unknown, potentially challenging environment outside the privacy of her home may be what is conventionally called the wilderness, but it may also be the city, where she arrives as unprepared and as little on her own initiative.

Already on arriving in Canada, Susanna Moodie contemplates the reality of wilderness, recognising it as a relativist cultural construct: 'Whether the wilderness is / real or not / depends on who lives there' (Atwood 1970: 13). Her posthumous thoughts in one of the final poems titled 'Alternate thoughts from underground' labels city-dwelling Canadians 'the invaders of those for whom / shelter was wood, fire was terror and sacred' (Atwood 1970: 57), realising the environment's dwelling place quality for the First Nations that the transplanting of the European-style living environments has erased. The term 'wilderness' itself with its load of connotations of savagery and otherness is used in an unexpectedly sparing way, and finally it appears that it is first and foremost 20th century Toronto that is described as 'an unexplored / wilderness of wires' (Atwood 1970: 60), resorting to the traditional – and evaluative – trope of the wilderness city that has been discussed in depth by, e.g., Arnold Berleant (2000: 30) who finds that the use of the metaphor turns the city into 'an ominous place, evoking a feeling of apprehension'.

Posthumously, the already interred Moodie prays for the disappearance of the city: 'O topple this glass pride, fireless // rivetted Babylon' (Atwood 1970: 57). While still alive, she had noticed the newness of the streets and the harbour (Atwood 1970: 50); the relatively recent emergence of Toronto on the shore of Lake Ontario holds no promise of being the start of a continuing, everlasting city. As Atwood herself has said in an interview, the Canadian cities do not seem to be built in a way that would make them permanent: '...in Canada you have a landscape in which the human artifacts somehow don't grow out of a base. They're like little toy towns. They're perched on top of the land. And therefore transient: you feel they could just slide off.' (Ingersoll 1990: 92.) Thus it appears that although the technological wilderness city has acquired a quality of place-ness that manifests itself in particular placenames, such as St. Clair Avenue in

the poem 'A Bus along St. Clair: December', that may evoke feelings of recognition and thus verisimilitude in the reader, it could easily disappear again, leaving its place to the forest. In the context of Atwood's Moodie poems the latter seems to be a kind of wilderness that, contrary to that of the city, deserves respect and has the capacity to miraculously regenerate itself: 'Turn, look down: / there is no city; this is the centre of a forest // your place is empty' (Atwood 1970: 61).

When the addressee's place is empty and cannot be visually detected, it can be inquired if it could be thought of as a place at all; or if the undivided space has regained its ground, continuing its existence unstructured by 20th century humans. Otherwise, Tuan (1977: 173) declares the city to be a place (in the sense of a centre of meaning) *par excellence*. The city has many visible symbols, and, in addition, the city itself can be cast as a symbol: 'The traditional city symbolized, first transcendental and man-made order against the chaotic forces of terrestrial and infernal nature. Second, it stood for an ideal human community...' (Tuan 1977: 173.) This is the original symbolic meaning of the city in literature that has inspired such common allegorical interpretations of the city as, for instance, the New Jerusalem, but also Eden. The latter may seem unexpected at first glance, yet several scholars such as Lutwack (1984: 36) recall that the city ideal used to be equated with the garden and seen to represent manmade order as opposed to wild nature. However, in later times the city has rather become associated with inferno (Lutwack 1984: 36). And indeed, according to another prominent tradition of literary city representation, cities have been regarded as negative ever since the times of Genesis, in which Cain appears as the first city-builder as recalled by J. Douglas Porteous (1990: 177). In Anglo-American culture they have been predominantly considered negative for several hundred years; we need only to remind us of Raymond Williams's classic work *The Country and the City*.

Thus there appear to be two main 'schools' of city representation in the Western tradition, both of which are built on binary oppositions. Firstly, there is the garden city as opposed to wilderness, in which the city represents human intention and order and emerges as a place or a set of places contrasted with unstructured surroundings. Secondly, there is the city as opposed to the pastoral countryside, whereas the latter is considered healthier and morally superior to the former. This model often presents the city as a disorienting, potentially dangerous space where unknown terrors lurk in dark alleys. Such a city often tends to emerge in literature as a placeless and inorganic landscape disconnected

from nature (Porteous 1990: 187) and can in its turn be described by the metaphor of wilderness on which no human order has been imposed. The wilderness city at the end of the Susanna Moodie sequence, however, wavers ambivalently between the two. It acquires characteristics by way of contrast with the forest, that lends it a flavour of human purpose and order, yet represents a wilderness. What can be foregrounded as an interesting feature, is the resistance of the original landscape to the city that has been fashioned upon it.

Contemporary Toronto will reoccur in several Atwood's novels: *The Edible Woman*, *Lady Oracle*, *Life before Man*, *Cat's Eye* and *The Robber Bride*. Differently from the treatment of the city in the Moodie poems, here we are dealing with a setting that relies heavily on its definite mimetic features and certainly fulfills the verisimilitude function, tracing particular streets, neighbourhoods and prominent buildings, locating and evaluating them and thus projecting them as places. The set of places comprising the Toronto of Atwood's novels is familiar not only to many readers in the life-world, but also to her protagonists – as a rule they have grown up in Toronto and need not discover nor structure their environment the way the arriving settlers were compelled to do. An exception might be Elaine from *Cat's Eye* who is temporarily returning to Toronto after a prolonged period of absence, yet even she is not convinced she is meeting a new city despite the several changes:

And I can't believe it's changed. Driving in from the airport yesterday in the taxi, past the flat neat factories and warehouses that were once flat neat farms, mile after mile of caution and utilitarianism, and then through the center of the city with the glitz and the European-style awnings and the paving stones, I could see it's still the same. (Atwood 1989: 14.)

Several feminist scholars such as Elizabeth Wilson, Doreen Massey and Christine Wick Sizemore suggest that if male modernist authors – who really made the city a central image in literature – tended to fear it and experience it as a threat to fixed identity, women writers, on the contrary, have met a newfound freedom in the city that is celebrated in their works. As Massey (1994: 180) remarks, it is more difficult to contain women in the private space of the home and submit them to the traditional gender role in a big city than in a smaller community, yet at the same time cities are created to meet male needs (Massey 1994: 233–234). Most public spaces have been designed with first and foremost male consumption in mind, and the modernist observer of the street life, the un-

noticed *flâneur*, is male without exception (Massey 1994). It is precisely with the perception of a man walking alone in the streets that the qualities of the modern city have been associated. This is only to be expected – after all, the very definitions of places ‘inevitably draw on situations that are to the advantage of the particular group defining the place’ to quote Massey (1994: 168). In Atwood’s novels, however, women’s use of much of the city space can be taken for granted. Her female protagonists are independent women whose movement in the city as well as between cities is considerably less hampered than that of their predecessor Susanna Moodie. And Toronto as a living and working environment is presented, with but few exceptions, through women’s eyes.

It has been suggested that one aspect of the city as valued and represented by women writers is the presence of nature. This is what becomes apparent for instance in Sizemore’s (1989) analysis of contemporary British women authors’ representations of London. The elements of city nature noted by Sizemore mostly include different parks and gardens, i.e., *loci amoeni* that form integral parts of the city, linking it to the Edenic Ur-image. Based on this – admittedly limited and arbitrary – evidence we could assume that from among the two traditional views women might be more likely to opt for the model of the city as a garden. And indeed, in Atwood’s Toronto novels there is but a single character who longs for the pastoral countryside contrasted with the city – significantly, this is one of Atwood’s few male focal consciousnesses, Nate from *Life before Man*:

He’d like to be able to take Lesje somewhere, out into the country, the country which surely lies all around, though he can’t remember the last time he was there. But how would they get there? A bus, a walk along some uncharted and dusty gravel road? Never mind. They could make love, slowly and gently, under some trees or in a field, gold waving over them and the smell of crushed grass. (Atwood 1980: 313.)

In general, Atwood’s Toronto does not seem to be an unfriendly – nor particularly unsafe – environment and it definitely contains its share of benevolent greenery. Trees lining the streets where her characters walk serve as indicators of the passing of the seasons, both visually and via the smells of fresh or fallen leaves. One of the recurrent locations in Atwood’s Toronto is Queen’s Park, usually serving as a place of relaxation, contemplation and calm: this is where Nate goes jogging, where his wife Elizabeth would sit down and smell the autumn leaves, and where Marian of *The Edible Woman* comes looking for peace and quiet:

She was near the round concrete pool that had a fountain in the summers but would be empty of water now, gradually filling instead with snow. She stopped to listen to the distant sound of the city, which seemed to be moving in a circle around her; she felt quite safe. [---] But she wanted to stand for only one more minute with the snow sifting down here in this island, this calm open eye of silence. (Atwood 1991a: 175.)

At the same time the park is an integral part of the city, it is enclosed by the city, has been planted and tended by the same intentions that have created the streets and buildings around it.

There are other conscious attempts to green the city such as the planting of flowerbeds in the office neighbourhoods. Although these are not flourishing, they still demonstrate the planners' wish to integrate at least some vegetation with the concrete as in the description of otherwise not particularly pedestrian-friendly office district in *The Robber Bride*: 'One clunky block of sterile brick and glass and then another one, no sidewalk interest, though they keep trying to tart things up with those constipated little flower beds.' (Atwood 1993: 87.) The Edenic in a nutshell, however, can be found not in public spaces but in private gardens. It is in a garden where we first meet the protagonist's pregnant friend Grace in *The Edible Woman*, which seems to be a fairly conventional ecofeminist trope, relating to one another woman's body, fertility, soil and vegetation – although the sarcastic Marian does not exactly idealise her friend's condition that reminds her of 'a boa constrictor that has swallowed a watermelon' or 'a strange vegetable growth, a bulbous tuber' (Atwood 1991a: 25). In addition to this narrow back garden where cicadas sing monotonously in the summer heat, there are fashionable, artistic gardens tended by Japanese minimalist specialists like that of Roz in *The Robber Bride*, and there are also those that run wild and are used to grow kitchen vegetables like Charis's garden at her Island home, a borderland between the city and non-city described in the same novel. Unkempt gardens can be invaded by wildlife, its sudden appearance recalling the possibility of the return of nature to the spaces cultivated by humans. Tony in *The Robber Bride*

...unlocks the back door and creeps out into the yard, into its flora of dry thistles and tree trunks and unpruned shrubs, its fauna of mice. Raccoons are regulars; squirrels make untidy nests in the branches. Once they had a skunk back here, hunting for grubs, rolling up what vestiges of turf remain; once a chipmunk, miraculous survival of the neighbourhood gamut of cats. (Atwood 1993: 191.)

Yet most importantly, there are natural places in the city that do not invade, but rather resist it – and have been resisting it for decades. These are the geographic formations that precede the city and have actually determined the human intentions that have given it its shape. In Atwood's Toronto, such a feature is the ravine that appears prominently in *The Edible Woman*, *Lady Oracle* and *The Cat's Eye*. Actually, the ravine can be regarded not so much as a place but rather as an extension of undivided and uncontrolled space around which the controlling human mind has created places. The parkway at its bottom implies movement, borderlessness that contrasts with the containment and stability usually associated with place. And, what is more, in the ravine where the vegetation grows wild, the social rules at work in the orderly and therefore safe city do not seem to hold. It is supposed to be an unsafe place for women; wild nature and warnings of sexual predators traditionally go hand in hand.

Wilson (1992: 157) has suggested that the city in itself has been seen as 'a realm of uncontrolled and chaotic sexual licence' in which women have had to be carefully controlled to avoid any risks that might otherwise befall them, but in Atwood's Toronto it is particularly the sites that contain their share of nature that are deemed dangerous by the public opinion. Tony's husband, for instance, considers even their animal-haunted back garden a possibly dangerous place at night, thus conforming to the social pattern of the husband being the first instance of regulating a woman's movements with reference to her safety described by Gill Valentine (in Tüür 2001: 91). In *Lady Oracle* the main character's mother lectures her about the terrors of the ravine, 'My mother was terrified of this ravine: it crawled with vines and weedy undergrowth, it was dense with willow trees and bushes, behind every one of which she pictured a lurking pervert, an old derelict rendered insane by rubbing alcohol, a child molester or worse' (Atwood 1991b: 54); in *Cat's Eye* the ravine is cast in the papers as an actual site of sexual crime: 'A girl is found murdered, down in the ravine. Not in the ravine near our house, but a larger branch of it, farther south, past the brickworks, where the Don River, willow-bordered, junk-strewn and dingy, winds sluggishly towards the lake' (Atwood 1989: 259). Atwood's women protagonists, however, do not take the accepted social judgement at face value – her female characters tend to defy myths that demonise wildness and/or wilderness.

The Edible Woman turns the ravine into a habitual hangout of a rather unconventional graduate student Duncan who comments that in the summer there are

even too many people around: kids playing and drunks, i.e. not fully socialised members of the city community who are not aware of or do not care about the terrifying ravine construct. In *Lady Oracle* the ravine contains a fairly harmless exhibitionist who exposes himself from behind a bunch of daffodils and may even save the narrator when other girls have tied her up and left behind. However, both in *Lady Oracle* as well as in *Cat's Eye* supposed friends turn into foes in the ravine – the friends of the adolescent protagonists leave them behind in the ravine in a helpless state, either tied up with their Brownie ties or sunk through thin ice. At the same time, the threats posed by the ravine do not originate from nature, but from human activities. It seems that the socially constructed image of the place unleashes vicious impulses even in young girls who abandon their niceness in this disorderly non-city – if it is expected that violence should happen in the ravine, it is legitimate to make it happen.

Such a prominent, defiant and certainly not garden-like element of nature in the city that becomes a central image in several novels once again shows Atwood as an author whom it is difficult to catch reproducing conventional constructions of space in literature. Referring to Karjalainen's idea quoted above according to which the images of the city in literature are indicative of experiences on the scale of the character, narrator and author, both the contemplations of the nature of wilderness as opposed to and integrated in the city, as well as questioning of the contemporary myths and traditions of representation related to it, demonstrate the independent inquiry on the part of Atwood's character narrators into their surroundings and into the ways of seeing the latter they are expected to internalise. The internalised beliefs in their turn reproduce behaviour patterns in certain spaces. The city of Toronto, a given as it ostensibly is, interacts with the natural space that preceded it and has shaped it in ways that blur the rigidity of the dualistic models of city representation. At the same time social processes and power relationships, especially as concerns gender-related issues, such as women's mobility and containment in space, are touched upon in different contexts. All this foregrounds quite a few facets of human involvement with urban or wild place and space both in life world as well as in literature.

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Metsa rüpest linna: maa vastupanu ja naiste vaatlused

Margaret Atwoodi loomingus

Kokkuvõte

Margaret Atwoodi peetakse õigustatult üheks teerajajaks Kanada kirjandusruumi loomisel. Käesoleva artikli esimeses pooles vaadeldakse, kuidas Atwood oma luulekogus pealkirjaga *Susanna Moodie päevikud* kirjeldab 19. sajandi inglise ümberasujate kohanemist Kanada loodusruumiga. Kogumiku luuletused on ajendatud 19. sajandil elanud sellenimelise naise autobiograafilistest kirjutistest, ent kogu lõpeb visiooniga 20. sajandi Torontost, mille Atwoodi fiktsionaalne Moodie esitab postuumsest perspektiivist. Sellest lähtuvalt heidetakse artikli teise pooles pilk ka nüüdisaegse Toronto kujutamisele Atwoodi loomingus, eelkõige romaanides *Söödav naine*, *Emand Oraakel* ja *Kassisilm*, keskendudes looduse käsitlemisele linnas.

Läänelik kirjandustraditsioon tundub linna kujutamisel rakendavat peamiselt kahte laadi, mis mõlemad põhinevad binaarsetel opositsioonidel: linn kui inimitahet kehastav korrastatud aed, vastandatuna korrastamata metsikule loodusele; ja linn kui loodusest ära lõigatud paheline ruum, mis vastandub pastoraalsele maaelule. Kõnnumaa metafooride abil esitatud linn Susanna Moodie luuletsükli lõpus paigutub ambivalentse kahe mudeli vahele: selle eripära tuleneb kontrastist ümbritseva metsaga, mis viitab inimitahelisele korrastatusele, ent samas on linn esitatud ähvardava loodusega seonduvate metafooride abil. Eriti huvitavaks jooneks on linnaeelse maastiku ning metsa vastupanu sellele ehitatud linnale.

Kuigi Atwoodi romaanides ilmneb linn pigem aiatüüpi korrastatud keskkonnana, sisaldavad ka tema proosatekstit maastiku allumatust. Kõige iseloomulikult esindavad seda Torontot lõhestavad jäärakud, mida üldsus peab ohtlikeks ja kuritegelikeks kohtadeks ning kus tegelaste käitumine võib selliseid kogukonna poolt sisimas võetud veendumusi tõepoolest ootamatult peegeldama hakata. Vaadeldud luule- ja proosateoste peategelased aga eelistavad iseseisvust nii linna- kui looduskeskkonnaga suhestumisel ning väldivad tavapäraseid hoia- kuid nende tõlgendamisel, mis väljendub ka naiste traditsiooniliselt piiratud ruumikasutuse teadvustamises ja küsimärgi alla seadmises.