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TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|---|-----|
| INTRODUCTION | 6 |
| 1 CANADA’S NATIONAL IDENTITY | 10 |
| 2 THE IDEA OF NORTH IN CANADA | 15 |
| 3 BUSH FLYING IN CANADA | 23 |
| 3.1 TRANSPORTATION AND EARLY AVIATION IN CANADA | 23 |
| 3.2 THE BUSH FLYING PHENOMENON..... | 26 |
| 3.3 DUTIES AND QUALITIES OF A BUSH PILOT | 43 |
| 3.4 BUSH PLANES | 52 |
| 4 BUSH FLYING IN LITERATURE..... | 63 |
| 4.1 BUSH PILOTS’ ADVENTURE NARRATIVES..... | 63 |
| 4.2 <i>INTO THE ABYSS</i> | 73 |
| 4.3 “WALK WELL, MY BROTHER” | 84 |
| 5 BUSH FLYING IN CINEMATIC PRODUCTION | 93 |
| 5.1 <i>THE SNOW WALKER</i> | 93 |
| 5.2 <i>BUSH PILOT</i> | 97 |
| CONCLUSION..... | 101 |
| RESUMÉ | 104 |
| BIBLIOGRAPHY | 110 |
| ANNOTATION | 116 |
| ANOTACE..... | 117 |
| APPENDICES | 118 |

INTRODUCTION

Canada, the second largest country in the world, covers an extensive area of approximately 10 million square kilometres. It comprises 10 semi-autonomous provinces, namely British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, and Newfoundland and Labrador, and 3 territories – Yukon, Northwest Territories and Nunavut, each of them being very unique and diverse. In Canada, there is a significant difference in the density of population. Despite its immense size, less than 40 million people inhabit the country most of whom occupy the borderline area with the United States, making Canada's regions further north sparsely inhabited. The cause of this imbalance seems to be the tundra which occupies a considerable part of the northern areas and whose climatic conditions are hostile and fierce for most of the population. Canada thus represents a northern country whose individual component parts are very distant and distinct from one another. As a result, it is a beautiful and diverse country full of contrasts, not only in terms of its geography and climate. Since the beginning of the formation of Canadian nation, Canada has been torn between two major contrastive cultures, nationalities and histories – the British and the French. Their conflicting relationship plays a major role in the formation of Canada's national identity, a concept that resists a clear and unified definition.

Another aspect essential to the formation of the nation is the north, more specifically the Far North, with which Canada is inherently connected in many respects. First, the country stretches over North America; second, certain parts are situated further north than others. The Canadian north has a very unique and specific geological character which is accompanied by severe winters and living conditions associating the region and its occupants with strength, endurance, and self-reliance. First and foremost, however, Northern Canada is associated with its enormous internal distances. The northern regions stretch to the North Pole and their terrain consists of barrens, tundra, and mountain massifs; in addition, there are boreal forests and countless rivers and lakes. In the past, their remote immensity and inaccessibility made the exploration of their natural resources impossible. For many decades the north was Canada's forgotten and neglected region. As a result, for a long time, it remained as uncharted as the 16th century America, today's the USA. Maps of the northern wilderness either did not exist, or if they did, they were misleading and of no help. Then came the bush plane,

a buzzing dot against the high sky over the forgotten and inaccessible land and changed everything. Uncertainly at first, but with increasing vehemence aircraft started to dominate the transportation and business in the north.

Emerged in the 1920s, bush flying involves flying into remote and undeveloped wilderness areas beyond the treeline, the Barren Lands and even the Arctic; regions that are not served by any other forms of transport, and thus providing no fixed landing strips. In these secluded locations, flying has become the only practical form of year-round access. Unlike conventional aviation, however, bush flying exploits the natural resources such as lakes and rivers and turns them into runways. Although very primitive in its early days, bush flying laid the foundations for modern northern aviation, technology development, and the establishment of supporting infrastructure. Thus, just as the railroad quickly developed a few decades earlier to sustain fast growing cities, the airplanes were penetrating the north. Late 1920s and early 1930s marked a period of Canadian interest in pushing back the northern frontiers and aircraft proved a vital part of this process. It was the interaction and cooperation between the aircraft and the rugged northern environment that gave rise to this unique form of aviation that is still an essential component of Canadian northern transportation. In addition, this new style of aviation brought with itself new technologies designed to suit its specific demands.

This thesis is focused on the examination of an era that has almost disappeared and people whose careers revolved around bush flying. Nicknamed Punch, Doc, Wop and Snow Eagle, most of them flew in open cockpits over the Barrens, boreal forests and mountain ranges with no supportive devices facing the fierce elements of the north. Flying planes named Bellanca, La Vigilance, Norseman or Beaver, those intrepid and enterprising fliers landed on glaciers, muskeg, lakes, and tundra delivering mail, medicine and other supplies required in the remote camps. They were a new breed of airborne pioneers who took to the skies to open the previously unexplored and neglected territories suddenly accessible by bush planes.

There are millions of people who have visited Canada and know a lot about this country, however, only a handful of them has ever heard about the bush flying phenomenon. Although being an integral part of Canadian history and culture and to certain extent having influenced the development of aviation industry, this phenomenon so indigenous to both Canada and Alaska remains widely unknown for non-Canadians. Furthermore, this topic is very often neglected or only briefly mentioned in publications

on Canadian culture and history despite its importance and contribution. Hence this paper is devoted to the bush flying phenomenon. It investigates the genesis of aircraft's functional role in Canada during the formative years following the First World War. Its principal aim is to provide a detailed and comprehensive overview of this academically neglected phenomenon; more specifically, it introduces and examines the phenomenon, its function, development and significance for Canadian economics and geography. Furthermore, the research also explores the impact of bush flying on the development of aviation technology, the bush flying-specific technologies and practices in particular; its influence on the formation of the myth of the North, and it also explores what qualities bush pilots, as men heading towards the severe north where only the fittest survive, had to dispose of and what duties bush operations involved. The secondary objective of this paper is to analyse the portrayal of this phenomenon and the North in both literary non-fiction and fiction and in cinematic production.

Concerning the sources mainly for the theoretical part of this paper, there have been several authors, predominantly Canadian, who dedicated their research to the bush flying phenomenon, thus the literature on this topic, usually in the form of a narrative history, is fairly rich. On the other hand, extensive and specialized academic literature available was found highly scarce. The primary sources of information are printed publications which work with contemporary sources and intercut the accurate historical facts with fragments of real-life stories of bush pilots, and thus combine a history with biography. The sources the authors used range from logbooks, aviation museums, archives, bush flying experts, to correspondence of bush plane manufacturers, fellow authors and, last but not least, personal papers of or interviews with bush pilots themselves. The arguments that are described and conclusions that are drawn are occasionally supported by compiled biographical accounts usually of widely known bush pilots. While this literature may not offer an appropriate critical analysis, it provides essential records of remarkable moments and events in the history and development of Canadian aviation and is based on a fairly extensive research. Apart from these printed publications, the theoretical background of this thesis is also based on several documentary films of Canadian production which deal with the bush flying phenomenon or aviation in Canada in general.

Besides the factual description and examination of this phenomenon based on the above-mentioned sources, 5 literary and 2 cinematic productions have been selected for the analysis of bush flying and the idea of North whose purpose is to explore the way

they depict the myth and the phenomenon, whether their portrayal supports or extends the theoretical basis of this paper and reach, on the basis of this analysis, a conclusion regarding the dangers, duties and responsibilities this job and region involved and the significance of bush flying in various branches.

This paper comprises 2 main parts – a theoretical part which introduces the phenomenon, and practical which analyses it in literary and cinematic production. The first chapter is concerned with the problematic matter of the definition of Canada's national identity whose integral and significant aspect is also the Canadian North. The second chapter defines the area of the geographical north and describes local conditions and terrain. It further explores the origin and development of the myth of the Canadian North and explains the influence of various forms of art and the adventurous stories of bush pilots on its formation. The third chapter is further divided into several subchapters whereas the first one offers a brief overview of means of transport used in Canada with respect to the northern part of country, and the history of and gradual transition to aircraft and its increase in popularity and importance. The following chapters then introduce the bush flying phenomenon and provide a detailed overview of its emergence, development and significance, of the duties it involved and qualities needed in those engaged in it, and of the most common planes used in bush flying, respectively. Regarding the practical and analytical part, it is further divided into 2 sections – one of them analyses the phenomenon and the myth of the North in literature, namely in bush pilots' adventure biographical narratives, in *Into the Abyss* by Carol Shaben and Farley Mowat's short story "Walk Well, My Brother," while the other focuses on the analysis of films called *The Snow Walker* and *Bush Pilot*. The analysis of both sections is further complemented by reviews.

1 CANADA'S NATIONAL IDENTITY

“One disadvantage of living in Canada is that one is continually called upon to make statements about the Canadian identity, and Canadian identity is an eminently exhaustible subject.”¹

The world knows little about Canada, let alone its inhabitants, and often presents a misinterpreted notion of the country, the people, and Canadian identity. When asked to share their image of Canada, non-Canadians define the country geographically and tend to think of it in physical terms. Concerning Canadian nation and identity, they attach labels such as “beaver,” “igloos,” “easily sunburnt,” and “polite” which they think best define Canadian identity. However, to define the nation stretching across six time zones is not an easy task and the question of what it means to be a Canadian has always been a vexed one even for Canadians themselves. They have always been preoccupied with the question of their identity which implies that no simple answer can be provided.

People need a sense of belonging somewhere and thus the quest of designating their identity is vital and national identity is among the most basic and important social identities to be defined. National identity is, however, a very complex and multi-dimensional matter which tends to evoke different responses; nevertheless, generally, it implies a sense of connectedness, groupness and commonality. According to Anthony Smith, national identity includes “a named human population sharing a historic territory, common myths and historical memories, a mass, public culture, a common economy and common legal rights and duties for all members.”² In other words, to define a national identity, all the aspects of living in a particular country need to be taken into account, including the national history of the country, geographical location, cultural interconnection of its inhabitants and the law system.

Canada does not comprise one homogenous culture and has always been on the borderline of three cultures, nationalities and histories – the English, the French and the First Nations. In fact, since its foundation, the country has been a homeland of

¹ John Robert Colombo, *The Northrop Frye Quote Book* (Toronto: Dundurn, 2014), 65.

² Anthony D. Smith, *National Identity*. (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1991), 14, accessed March 25, 2017, <https://books.google.cz/books?id=bEAJbHBIXR8C&pg=PA14&lpg=PA14&dq=national+identity+definition&source=bl&ots=fLqVUo95Hf&sig=Vh7BtvYUnOOm4h3Ubu5BguaMRRw&hl=cs&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwjHv9jN0uDSAhUFhiwKHSJJD8w4ChDoAQgIMAM#v=onepage&q=national%20identity%20definition&f=false>.

numerous First Nations, moreover, it has also become home for multiple ethnic settler groups who speak different languages and keep different traditions³ contributing thus to Canada being considered a multicultural country, but simultaneously making it more difficult to define a Canadian identity. Furthermore, with more and more immigrants coming to the country, the interpretation of national identity has become even harder. Due to the problematic definition of Canadian identity many people have started to doubt the existence of a unified identity of the Canadian nation. One such person is Lorraine Monk who claims that “The search for Canada is a personal journey. The search for a national identity is a journey without an end. It began a long time ago. It will continue into the far distant future.”⁴ Marshall McLuhan is even more direct when saying that “Canada is the only country in the world that knows how to live without an identity.”⁵ As obvious, both Monk and McLuhan are convinced that a Canadian identity does not exist. Yet others still search for common features that would unify Canadian nation. As captured in *Canadian Identity*, a documentary film written by Cathy Miller, some Canadians mention the national symbols, sport, and the national anthem of Canada as sources of unity and common purpose. Others attach values that Canadians are famous for such as independence, friendliness, freedom, respect, equality, and democratic rights to national identity. Another feature Canadians seem to be proud of and perceive it as a major symbol of their national identity is multiculturalism. As Miller states in her documentary, Canada’s large geographic size, French-English relations, multiculturalism and the relatively open immigration policy and the influence of the USA are major issues affecting, be it strengthening, threatening or both, the Canadian identity.⁶

As suggested in Miller’s documentary, Canada seems to suffer from overdeveloped regionalism since the immense size of the country makes it difficult for people from different regions to identify with one another and the local differences seem to be weakening the sense of a single Canadian identity. Another problem is

³ Jitka Nosková, “The Issue of Canadian Identity in British Columbia, Canada” (Bachelor thesis, Palacký University in Olomouc, 2009).

⁴ Lorraine Monk, ed. *Canada, These Things We Hold Dear: An Album of Photographic Memories*. (Toronto: Lorraine Monk Productions Inc., 1999), accessed March 25, 2017, http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/cur/socstud/foundation_gr9/blms/9-1-3b.pdf.

⁵ Marshall McLuhan quoted in Charles Foran, “The Canada Experiment: Is This The World’s First ‘Postnational’ Country?,” *The Guardian*, January 4, 2017, accessed March 25, 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/jan/04/the-canada-experiment-is-this-the-worlds-first-postnational-country>.

⁶ Cathy Miller, dir., *Canadian Identity*. (Burnaby, B.C.: Classroom video, 1991), accessed March 18, 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oc3dMyKcuzs>.

Canada's two official languages which contribute to the bitter division between French and English Canada. Nonetheless, many Canadians perceive this problematic relationship as a central and defining aspect of the Canadian experience. In addition, Canada is a nation of immigrants. The multiculturalism policy implemented by Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau encourages ethnic groups to maintain their cultural heritage as long as they respect Canadian laws and values of freedom and equality. As Miller sees it, on the one hand, multiculturalism has become a source of pride for many Canadians since it promotes tolerance, understanding, and compassion. On the other hand, however, it seems in conflict with the creation of a single unified identity as its very principles discourage people to create one.⁷ Concerning immigration, as Lorraine Mallinder states, owing to Canada's relatively open immigration policy, incoming nations, more than half consisting of Asians and a substantial proportion of Europeans and Latin Americans, have added more than 200 other languages to the mix resulting in one-fifth of the population speaking a native language other than English or French⁸ and thus contributing again to the apparent lack of unity of the nation.

The last issue affecting Canada's national identity is the presence of its dominant neighbour, the USA, which has proved a powerful catalyst for a Canadian identity, as Miller claims. Their boundary has experienced a permeable movement of people, products, and ideas. Due to the military, industrial, technological and economic strength of the United States, Canada was filled with fear of becoming dominated by its neighbour, which led to the establishment of Confederation.⁹ As a Canadian interviewee in Robert Cohen's documentary *Being Canadian* claims, "We've always felt like America's little brother."¹⁰ Frank Bechhofer and David McCrone point out that the national identity of a nation frequently includes comparing themselves with others. Consequently, instead of defining who or what they are and mentioning similarities, nations tend to express their national identity by contrasting it to that of others and thus stating who or what they are not.¹¹ As demonstrated in Miller's documentary, this holds true also for Canadians. Canadians are not oblivious to the influence of the USA on

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Lorraine Mallinder, "What Does It Mean To Be Canadian?," BBC News, last modified May 17, 2012, accessed March 25, 2017, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-radio-and-tv-18086952>.

⁹ Miller, *Canadian Identity*.

¹⁰ Robert Cohen, dir., *Being Canadian*. (USA, 2015), accessed March 18, 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OugmhHXoBBI>.

¹¹ Frank Bechhofer and David McCrone, eds., "Chapter 1," in *National Identity, Nationalism and Constitutional Change* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 6-7, accessed March 3, 2017, http://www.institute-of-governance.ed.ac.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0011/35939/chap1_intro.pdf.

their culture and nation and incline to compare themselves to Americans.¹² Nevertheless, they are proud of being Canadian and their identity is based on how different they are from Americans. The two countries have many common values and the language spoken is almost identical. Therefore, it has been a challenge to Canada to distinguish itself from the United States.

To summarize what has been stated on the subject of Canadian identity so far, Canada has always been struggling to define its national identity and the question of Canadian identity is still a major and important topic for the nation. It seems that the question of Canadian identity itself may have become a part of the identity. The issues tackled above may, on the one hand, seem to be contributing to plurality rather than to a unified national identity, nevertheless, the way Canadians address them becomes a part of their identity and is so indigenous to Canada that it makes it its distinguishing feature. The issues have made Canada what it is today and the understanding of Canadian identity may be marked by a combination of both unity and plurality, together.

Having mentioned many aspects creating Canada and the nation, one vital aspect is still missing – the aspect of north since for many Canadians the idea of North is the locus of their identity. North is frequently cited as a unifying factor of the nation and is a strong symbol of the country. When talking about Canada's identity, it is common to emphasize the northern characteristics of the country since, as Sherrill Grace appositely remarks, "nordicity, after all, is one of the few things most Canadians have in common"¹³ and, as Christy Collis puts it, "Canadians are considered unique as a national culture because of their relationship with the north." Canadians are regarded as a northern nation who is united by nordicity since as Collis suggests, at difficult times Canadians as a nation incline to moderate their restlessness by turning to the North which represents an imagined space that provides them with a feeling of harmonious unified national community.¹⁴ René Hulan claims that the idea of Canadian nordicity surpasses regional or racial specificities within Canada; furthermore, it aims at

¹² Miller, *Canadian Identity*.

¹³ Sherrill E. Grace, *Canada and the Idea of North* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2001), 67.

¹⁴ Christy Collis, "Demythologizing Literature's North," review of *Northern Experience and the Myths of Canadian Culture*, by René Hulan, *Essays on Canadian Writing* 79 (Spring 2003), 155, accessed March 20, 2017, <http://edc-connection.ebscohost.com/c/book-reviews/9899355/demythologizing-literatures-north>.

erasing existing differences and thus generates a single national culture.¹⁵ According to Schafer, the idea of North is such an important and natural part of Canadian identity that when the idea of North is destroyed, the image of the Canadian nation is destroyed as well. In Schafer's formulation, "the idea of North is a Canadian myth, and without a myth a nation dies."¹⁶ Grace opines that Canadians cannot escape the fact that they are shaped and haunted by the ideas of North and keep imagining Canada-as-North.¹⁷

As obvious, the idea of North plays an important role in the lives of Canada's inhabitants and their feeling and understanding of national unity. Next chapter examines the idea, or as Schafer puts it, the "myth," of the North in Canada and how it is created, shaped and invigorated in greater detail.

¹⁵ René Hulan, *Northern Experience and The Myths of Canadian Culture* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2002), 187.

¹⁶ R.M. Schafer, "Program Note" in *On Canadian Music*, 63, quoted in Grace, *Canada and the Idea of North*, 139.

¹⁷ Grace, Introduction to *Canada and the Idea of North*, by Sherrill E. Grace, xii.

2 THE IDEA OF NORTH IN CANADA

*At the end of the earth, it is cold.
At that point where the earth stands still, and time stands still, it is
dark for half the year ...
This is the permanently frozen sea ...*¹⁸

North, not only the ultimate point of orientation to which the needle of a compass always points, it has also been a sought-after destination of adventurers. Just like the needle, people have been powerfully attracted northwards. In general, each person has a unique understanding of what the north is and where it begins and associates various features with their idea of North. Nevertheless, there is a set of common features that people usually attach to the north, “cold,” “far,” “sparsely inhabited,” “unspoiled,” and “harsh” being among them. The same holds true for Canada. Canada, as a whole, is a northern country and the Canadian North has become a subject matter of many discussions. Once considered solely in geographical terms, the North has gained considerable importance. As has been suggested, not only is it perceived as an integral and vital part of Canada and its symbol, but it also is, as it appears, the most important aspect of Canadian identity. Canadian North has become a myth, a mystery which has inspired, not only Canadian, artists of many sorts, be it writers, painters, poets, composers, or film directors. Their artistic pieces then shape and extend the myth of the North in Canada.

Although Canada is regarded as a northern country, there are parts which are situated far more in the north than others, namely Yukon, the Northwest Territories, and Nunavut that are exposed to a cold, cruel and harsh climate, which is, as Frances Abele et al. claim, “the most widely recognized challenge”¹⁹ in the north. Even further north, there is the Canadian Arctic – the section of Canada located north of the Arctic Circle. According to Abele et al., these northern parts together “comprise about half the area of Canada”²⁰ and create severe living conditions. Despite the country’s immense size, most of Canadian population lives within approximately 100 miles of the U.S.-Canada border, leaving the locations remote from the southern metropolitan centres sparsely populated. Carol Shaben states that the north is home to approximately one-tenth of the entire northern population and stretches over an area of almost 4 million square

¹⁸ Richard Phillips, *Canada’s North* (1967), 3, quoted in Grace, *Canada and the Idea of North*, 57.

¹⁹ Frances Abele et al., *Northern Exposure: Peoples, Powers and Prospects in Canada’s North* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2009), 530.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 37.

kilometres; furthermore, it is a land of severe temperatures and hardy inhabitants living fewer than 3 per 100 square kilometres.²¹

Concerning the geographical location of the north, Professor Peter Davidson remarks that the 60th parallel is considered the beginning of the north in Canada and the area stretches all the way to the North Pole. Davidson describes that area as devoid of any vegetation, sparsely settled, barren, with the wind never dying away,²² although a considerable section of the north is formed by boreal forests, rocks and numerous lakes, which stands as evidence of the north being full of contrasts. Each of the regions differs from one another in many ways, and yet together they constitute a unified unit distinct from the southern regions. Grace lists the Shield, which is “an extensive plateau of Precambrian rock,”²³ recessive treeline, and the permafrost²⁴ or areas that cannot be reached by car, train, or boat²⁵ as the lines delineating the north, or rather the Far North. Shaben describes it as either an “unending white wasteland,” or glistening with its countless rivers, lakes and muskeg-swampy basins of water; the mountains covered with glaciers reach heights of nearly 10,000 feet and their cliffs plummet into deep fjords.²⁶ Will Hamley states that in the northern tundra, it rains rarely, snow covers the ground for eight months of the year, with temperatures falling to -30°C in January and on average not exceeding 10°C in the warmest month.²⁷ Hamley also mentions a quite abundant insect population, such as mosquitoes, blackflies, and midges that can be encountered there and a majority of Canadian Native peoples, called First Nations, living in isolated communities scattered over the vast area. Next he claims that surface transportation is severely restricted in the northern regions; there is a limited number of kilometres of both paved and gravel all-weather roads, and a limited number of kilometres of ice roads available in the winter. Owing to this transportation situation, up to half of the local population has no road access, and even though there is a railroad, cargoes of larger proportions must be transported there by ship. During times of ice formation or break-up, people are moved across the territories by air. As Hamley

²¹ Carol Shaben, *Into the Abyss: An Extraordinary True Story* (New York: Grand Central Publishing, 2014), 44.

²² Peter Davidson, “The Idea of North” (paper presented at Gresham College at the annual City of London Festival, London, United Kingdom, June 19, 2009), accessed March 23, 2017, <https://vimeo.com/22213793>.

²³ Will Hamley, “Tourism in the Northwest Territories,” *Geographical Review* 81 (1991): 390-391, accessed December 6, 2016, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/215606>.

²⁴ Grace, *Canada and the Idea of North*, 52.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 230.

²⁶ Shaben, *Into the Abyss*, 48.

²⁷ Hamley, “Tourism in the Northeast Territories,” 391.

remarks, there are several companies in service providing scheduled bush flying service, resulting in each community having an airstrip, and although air travel is expensive, it seems to be, however, the only mode of transportation providing access to those locations.²⁸

It is not surprising that due to the inaccessibility of the north, it was ignored by the government for many years and remained a private domain of the indigenous people and fur traders. With the discovery of its rich mineral deposits and acknowledgement of its potential for industrial production, however, the north gained importance and held a strong position not only in the future development of Canada's economy²⁹ but also in the formation of Canada's national identity. After the recognition of the north's significance, according to Sherrill Grace, "Canadian fascination with the north gives no indication of waning." She explains that the idea of North is present in advertising, postage stamps, exhibitions supported by the state, scenes of lives of the First Nations, and many other spheres³⁰ since it is the most powerful spatial concept Canada has ever had as a nation.

At this point, it seems important to point out that there is not just one north, and this holds true for Canada in particular. So far, this chapter has been concerned with the geographical north in Canada. There is, however, another north, a North with a capital N. This North does not include information about meteorology, treelines, ice storms, or permafrost; to the contrary, this is the mythic and mysterious one. While the geographical north did not resist a clear definition in terms of its boundaries and climate, the North as a myth is a very complex concept. As Grace's apt remark suggests, to say "what North means is to open a veritable Pandora's Box."³¹

First, it is essential to explain how this North upon which Canada's national identity is erected was created. Both Collis and Grace are of the opinion that the North is a mental product, "a set of motivated constructions of a geographical space, and not the actual rocks and ice and towns of the arctic and subarctic regions."³² Louis-Edmond Hamelin even claims that "The North [...] is a passion."³³ Grace states that the

²⁸ Ibid., 392.

²⁹ Nosková, "The Issue of Canadian Identity."

³⁰ Grace, *Canada and the Idea of North*, 74.

³¹ Ibid., 48.

³² Collis, "Demythologizing Literature's North," 156; Grace, Prologue to *Canada and the Idea of North*, by Sherrill E. Grace, 15.

³³ Louis-Edmond Hamelin, *Canadian Nordicity: It's Your North Too* (Montreal: Harvest House, 1979), 9, quoted in Grace, *Canada and the Idea of North*, 45.

aforementioned mental construct can be reached even without physically going to the north,³⁴ which makes the North practically indefinable. As a result, the North could be best characterized as an idea, a myth. Concerning the subject of myth, Richard Slotkin argues that myths are created and recreated through human memory and intention and are altered by human experience and agency.³⁵ In Canada, the myth of the North has been shaped and reinforced by its representations in art. Artists of various fields have always been attracted to the North and therefore have had a major impact on the creation and form of the myth,³⁶ and their works of art have also influenced the perception and impression of the North of Canadian population. Since this mythical North resists a single definition, the artistic representations vary accordingly, and being a rich and mysterious source of inspiration, pieces of arts on the North are abundant as well. Thus, the idea of North is a product of these artistic representations.

The mysterious idea of North has been defined as a human construct and constructed by visual arts, literature, and music, and as such it is full of contradictions. Some artists choose to portray the North as a pleasant and romantic place whereas others perceive it as dangerous and evil, which is also projected in their art. According to Caroline Rosenthal, the North “could turn into a projection space for southern dreams, fantasies, and nightmares.” She adds that this space is either depicted as a vast and hostile northland, or an untouched wilderness, but always “as a land void of people.”³⁷

The idea of North was not, however, constructed on the basis of art at first; what shaped it at the very beginning were real-life adventurous stories. Records of the northern experience in Canada stretch back to the encounters of the First Nations, the explorers, traders, and settlers and it was their narratives upon which the first prospects of the North were built. As Min-hsiou Rachel Hung suggests, one of the most powerful stories that helped shape the mythical idea of North as hostile and assuaging and made

³⁴ Grace, *Canada and the Idea of North*, 40.

³⁵ Richard Slotkin, *Gunfighter Nation: The Myth of the Frontier in Twentieth Century America* (New York: Atheneum, 1992), 25, accessed March 6, 2017, https://books.google.cz/books?id=-9XOsW7YwJ4C&printsec=frontcover&hl=cs&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false.

³⁶ Carl Berger, “The True North Strong and Free,” in *Canadian Culture-An Introductory Reader*, ed. Elspeth Cameron (Toronto: Canadian Scholar’s Press, 1997), 95.

³⁷ Caroline Rosenthal, “Locations of North in Canadian Literature and Culture,” *Zeitschrift für Kanada-Studien* 29.2 (2009): 26, accessed February 26, 2017, http://www.kanada-studien.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/02_Rosenthal_North.pdf.

a huge impact on Canadian writers was the expedition of Captain Sir John Franklin.³⁸ As Margaret Atwood explains, his adventure has inspired plenty of story-tellers and authors to rework it, approach it from various angles and give it a fresh incarnation. Writers have been inspired to create their own version of such deadly adventure.³⁹ Since the whereabouts of the members of Franklin's expedition remained unknown until the second half of the 20th century,⁴⁰ his northern experience has shaped the idea of North as being human-unfriendly and any attempt to reach it might end exactly like that of Franklin's, with getting lost, starvation and eventually, death. In addition, stories of pioneering bush pilots, which are going to be tackled later in this paper, have also contributed to this image of the North.

Concerning the visual arts, William Blair Bruce's 1888 painting originally called *The Phantom Hunter* enjoys, as Grace puts it, "a privileged place in Canada's northern imagination."⁴¹ The painting is regarded as a predominant portrait of the North, depicting a fallen hunter in the snow and dark night sky above⁴² and thus creating a bleak, yet romantic image of the North. Grace claims that Bruce's painting was inspired by a poem by Charles Dawson Shanly called "The Walker of the Snow" (1867), which is based on legends and folktales about a mysterious figure of a "Shadow Hunter."⁴³ As Grace perceives it, the North Shanly portrays is fatally dangerous, alien, isolated, and deadly. It is unreasonable to venture out alone at night into the northern wilderness since no one will be saved out there. Grace concludes that "there is no room to negotiate with the power of the North."⁴⁴ Similar void of human presence and the image of North as barren and empty can be also traced in the paintings of the Group of Seven and their fascination with the North is forever preserved in their artistic pieces. These early twentieth century Canadian landscape painters sought to capture the spirit of the untouched northern wilderness of Canada and painted unpopulated northern landscapes.⁴⁵

³⁸ Min-hsiou Rachel Hung, "Writing Beyond the North? Experiencing the Arctic in Rudy Wiebe's *A Discovery of Strangers*" (Essay, National Chi Nan University, 2008), accessed March 20, 2017, <http://filcccu.ccu.edu.tw/conference/EALA2008/download/C30.pdf>

³⁹ Margaret Atwood, *Strange Things: The Malevolent North in Canadian Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 11.

⁴⁰ L.D. Cross, *Flying on Instinct: Canada's Bush Pilot Pioneers* (Canada: Heritage House Publishing Company Ltd., 2012), 54-55.

⁴¹ Grace, Prologue to *Canada and the Idea of North*, 3.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 3.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁴⁴ Grace, *Canada and the Idea of North*, 114.

⁴⁵ Rosenthal, "Locations of North in Canadian Literature and Culture," 27.

As far as Canadian literature is concerned, it seems that it has concentrated on one area only – the North. Some authors choose to illustrate it as an idealized, spiritual and romantic myth while others portray the North as a lifeless and severe place of death. One of the first pioneering writers who depicted the North in his boys’ adventure novels was, according to Grace, Robert Ballantyne. In his books, he presented the Canadian Northwest as a barren land which white men head towards to seek adventure and prove their masculinity and endurance.⁴⁶ Yet this North is a magnificent and unspoiled place of masculine romance and challenge.⁴⁷ Then, in the first half of the 20th century, non-fiction adventure and exploration books enjoyed great popularity and thus constantly attracted the public eye to the North and contributed to the formation of its image.⁴⁸ As Grace suggests, the most common and persistent story would be a narrative of a white man or boy becoming lost in the Barrens, struggling to survive, facing starvation or even cannibalism, freezing to death or eventually going mad or finding salvation through endurance in the harsh, deadly, cold, hostile, and vast landscape.⁴⁹ Some authors such as Stefansson, however, perceive such stories as exaggerated, claiming that the explorers intentionally described the North as lifeless, harsh and deadly to enhance their reputation⁵⁰ since, as he remarks, “people are willing to believe any horror of the North if it centres around cold and ice.”⁵¹ His point, suggests that the image of North presented in books might have had a great impact on the perception of people who read them. Those literary representations construct the idea of North while, at the same time, refer to a real Arctic experience. The myth of the North, therefore, widens with each literary piece written and expands with every reader reading it and constructing it.

The North has also inspired and penetrated into other artistic spheres, namely Canadian theatre and music. In her book, Sherrill Grace analyses drama; she compares two plays, namely Gwendolyn MacEwen’s *Terror and Erebus* and Geoff Kavanagh’s *Ditch*, and concludes her analysis by stating that both plays illustrate the North as

⁴⁶ Grace, *Canada and the Idea of North*, 172.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 174.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 173.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 169.

⁵⁰ Stefansson, Vilhjalmur. *The Friendly Arctic: The Story of Five Years in Polar Region*. (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1927), 16, accessed March 10, 2017,

<https://archive.org/stream/friendlyarctic017086mbp#page/n0/mode/2up>.

⁵¹ Stefansson, *The Friendly Arctic*, 15.

an extreme place for masculine adventure, yet a place of beauty, freedom and escape.⁵² Moreover, women are not welcomed there and have no place in that world.⁵³ Concerning classical music, Grace states that it depicts the North as cold and icy; as she puts it, “the sounds of freezing rain, brittle ice, and media sound-bites, in the effort “to get to the heart” of what unifies Canada: ice, cold – in short, winter.”⁵⁴ Glenn Gould, on the other hand, finds the North a source of spiritual cleansing and healing; an antidote and form of escapism from the greed of modernity. For him, the North represents a place of escape and dream.⁵⁵ Apparently, the idea of North can be as varied as the people who are fascinated by it and illustrate it in their art.

To conclude, since only a handful of people have ever been to, experienced and returned from the north, its image has been created with the help of art. Whether as a romantic yet mysterious place of adventure or a barren threatening land void of life, Canada has become equated with the North. The North is a symbolic place for Canada since it is right there that the uniqueness of the nation lies, and therefore this characteristic which makes Canadians different from other nations is carefully preserved. Nonetheless, the real geographical north is not as important as the idea of North is. It has attracted a vast number of artists and although the overall image of the Canadian North cannot and should not be built on just a few analysed works of art of Canadian origin, a certain tendency of portraying the North, however, can be traced. Canadian art represents a powerful force in the formation of the North. It tends to depict the Canadian North as rather frozen, alien, silent, deadly, and overwhelming. It has a destructive and fatal charm for male adventurers and tests their strength and competence. It has the power to drive men mad, starve them, freeze them to death and devour them in the end. The North seems inimical to human habitation and people are often either absent or absorbed into it. As a result, to survive in such a hostile environment requires ruthless endurance as well as sufficient internal resources.

Art, the very force that has the power to enrich geographical description of regional landscapes and can tame this North, has represented it in such powerful signs and images that it seems to control and dominate the idea of North Canadians have. Nevertheless, it seems apt to point out the contribution of the stories of bush pilots to this image of North. Bush pilots were the aforementioned adventurers and explorers

⁵² Grace, *Canada and the Idea of North*, 148.

⁵³ Ibid., 145.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 126.

⁵⁵ Peter Davidson, *The Idea of North* (London: Reaktion Books, 2005), 191.

who headed towards the north not only to test their endurance and character in this “female *terra incognita*,”⁵⁶ but also to explore, map, stake claims and make money. They had first-hand experience of the North and their stories, most likely printed in local newspapers, enjoyed popularity and represented a “true” image of the Canadian North.

The bush flying phenomenon goes hand in hand with the idea of Canada’s North. Next chapters are, therefore, focused on the description of the phenomenon and examine whether and to what extent this phenomenon and the analysed literature and film contribute to and reinforce the myth of the North.

⁵⁶ Grace, Prologue to *Canada and the Idea of North*, 16.

3 BUSH FLYING IN CANADA

“Then the bush flier came along and wrought a miracle.”⁵⁷

As has been suggested in the previous chapter, due to the inaccessibility of northern regions, several private airlines provide scheduled bush flights transporting cargo and passengers by air. This chapter consists of several subchapters, each dealing with different topics but together constituting a comprehensive picture of bush flying and thus contributing to the comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon so indigenous to the Canadian north. In the course of the 20th century, the function of bush flying was being altered and gaining importance in various different sectors. The manifestations of the essentiality of different functions of bush flying in practice are occasionally demonstrated on short factual stories of bush pilots. Moreover, the phenomenon is also analysed in relation to the myth of the North. Yet, the next few subchapters provide rather theoretical background of this phenomenon while the chapters following them offer an insight into its practical use.

Before dealing with the bush flying phenomenon, however, it seems essential to briefly describe transportation in Canada and outline the history of aviation.

3.1 TRANSPORTATION AND EARLY AVIATION IN CANADA

Transportation in a country as vast as Canada is vital and cannot be underestimated. The great distances between urban centres, mining sites, farms, and forests require a sufficient system of transportation of both goods and passengers ensured by different means of transport and essential to the country’s economy. In Canada, various means of transport that is used include water, train, car, or plane transportation; moreover, passengers may also choose to travel by a fairly unusual vehicle, such as a snowmobile or dogsled.

Water transportation is the oldest and indigenous means of transport in Canada. Karl Ruppenthal claims that the first settlers explored only those areas that were accessible by water and boats, using canoes as the primary vehicle on lakes and rivers. Nowadays, as Ruppenthal states, generally, bulk commodities such as coal, ore, grain and salt are transported by water over the country. He also divides water transportation into 3 categories: ocean transportation used for export of goods to customers overseas,

⁵⁷ “Canada in the Air,” *The Royal Bank of Canada, Monthly Letter* 61 (1980), accessed March 16, 2017. <http://www.rbc.com/aboutus/letter/march1980.html>.

inland water transportation, which serves to the supply of Canadian regions, and coastal transportation used for the movement of logs, lumber, wood chips and other bulk commodities along the coast.⁵⁸

Many settlements in Canada were established after the construction of railway lines, according to Ruppenthal. In his view, the railway is an efficient means of transport since it is able to haul large quantities of bulk material and passengers over long distances and at relatively low cost. Furthermore, he perceives it as a good way of unifying the nation and opening new areas to settlement. The very first railway line in Canada was constructed in 1836. Then, in the 1850s, railway was built connecting Canada with US railways in New York and Michigan. Ruppenthal further claims that the construction of railway resulted in some provinces, namely British Columbia and Prince Edward Island, joining Canadian confederation.⁵⁹

The construction of roads and motorways, on the other hand, enabled Canadians to access regions that had not been served by railways or boats. The greatest advantage of motor carrier transportation, according to Ruppenthal, is its flexibility – the ability, as he perceives it, to move wherever there is a road or a relatively flat, hard surface.⁶⁰

Nonetheless, Canada is an immense country and concerning its northern regions, the transportation is very limited. As James Montagnes remarks, it is an uninhabited area where almost no rail can be found, only lakes, bush, and rock.⁶¹ As a result, the enormity and diversity of the northern landscape have made transportation a matter of utmost importance. As Shannon Drew argues, aviation, which developed at the turn of the 20th century, formed new transportation linkages and provided access to the hinterland which was critical to economic resources.⁶² The invention of airplane seems to have been created to fit Canada's rugged conditions and Canadians have used it in every possible way and industry, thus having made vital contribution to the world of aviation. They have succeeded in adapting the aircraft to the special transportation needs of the impassable Canadian terrain.⁶³

⁵⁸ Karl M. Ruppenthal, "Transportation," *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, last edited March 4, 2015, accessed March 10, 2017, <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/transportation/>.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ James Montagnes, "Canada's Aerial Conquest," *The North American Review* 229 (1930): 738, accessed March 18, 2017, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25113573>.

⁶² Shannon Drew, "Flying in Ground Proximity: Thirteen Case Studies of Aircraft Flight Routes in Canada 1918-1926 (Master thesis, Charleton University, 2001).

⁶³ "Canada in the Air."

In 1783, lighter-than-air flying began in France where two brothers developed a hot-air balloon and flew it that year. By 1835, as Drew claims, unmanned balloons were highly in use in Canada and improvements to balloon transport continued also into the 20th century. When the lighter-than-air machines were perceived as commonplace, engineers and pilots became interested in constructing heavier-than-air machines, airplanes. According to Drew, the development of successful flying machines depended on engine improvements, and thus improvements in technology made advances in air transportation possible.⁶⁴ The success did not take too long and so in December, 1903, the Wright brothers made a successful flight in the world's first airplane. Then, as Adamski and Fisher state, in the pursuit of a heavier-than-air flying machine, Alexander Graham Bell took the initiative in exploring the practicability of powered flight and thus in 1907 he established the Aerial Experimental Association and developed several aircraft, the first powered heavier-than-air vehicles such as The Red Wing. This aircraft, piloted by F.W. Baldwin, the first Canadian to pilot an airplane, made 2 successful flights before crashing. Another flown airplanes designed by members of the Bell's company included The White Wing, June Bug, and Silver Dart which was used in the first powered heavier-than-air flight in Canada in 1909. Although its air performance was good, it did not withstand the rough landing field in Ontario. Despite this setback, however, aviation attracted more attention, enjoyed the interest of engineers and saw an ambition to experiment. Therefore, in 1910 the first Canadian aircraft engine was constructed by William Wallace Gibson and Charles K. Hamilton's biplane completed British Columbia's first flight. The following year, McCurdy made the longest overwater flight to that date from Key West to Havana.⁶⁵

Along with experiments, exhibition flying at fairs and other public events became popular. Moreover, due to the popularity of aerial displays of the first aviators among people, barnstorming was born. However, as Drew remarks, since the nature of the early flights was still rather experimental, half of the machines flown in Canada between the years 1910 and 1912 crashed.⁶⁶ Thus, as Drew claims, from 1903 until the advent of the First World War, aviation was in a developmental and experimental stage and the primary goal of the early pilots was to become airborne, remain aloft and return

⁶⁴ Drew, "Flying in Ground Proximity."

⁶⁵ Barbara K. Adamski and Richard Fisher, "Aviation," *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, last edited March 2015, accessed March 10, 2017, <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/aviation/>.

⁶⁶ Drew, "Flying in Ground Proximity."

alive. The declaration of the World War I in 1914, however, altered the developmental path of aviation technology and flying suddenly developed into a very serious business. Aviation in Canada became driven by military necessity and the aircraft was transformed from a spectacle to a weapon of war. Drew explains that any but military flying was not allowed in the country.⁶⁷ Many young Canadians enlisted in the British services and comprised a large proportion of its air combat squadron. As a result, Canadians became experts in the art of flying, gained flying experience in every possible theatre of war and some were honoured as aerial warriors for their exploits.⁶⁸

By the time the war ended, people had recognized the potential of this new mode of transportation for civil aviation. The post-war era also marked the first attempts to cross the Atlantic Ocean, the first trans-Canada flights and the beginnings of commercial aviation in Canada. As stated in “Canada in the Air,” “aerial wizardry and daredevil acts took precedence over aeronautical science.”⁶⁹

In summary, aviation was essential to the development of northern Canada. Since the roads and railways are scarce up there and the forests, mountains and muskeg impenetrable to other forms of land travel apart from snowmobiles or dog-sledge, the opening of the Canadian north would have been impossible. Thusly, bush flying was born and made great improvements in terms of adaptation to the gigantic, frigid and hostile country. Carol Shaben states that nowadays, commuter operations ensured by those small bush planes represent a lifeline for residents in isolated, northern communities, especially in this country characterized by rugged, remote terrain. Such passenger service connects thousands of people to cultural centres and ensures medical support and supplies.⁷⁰

3.2 THE BUSH FLYING PHENOMENON

“Once you have tasted flight, you will forever walk the earth with your eyes turned skyward, for there you have been, and there you will always long to return.”⁷¹

In Canada, the word “bush” has been used since the 19th century to describe the hostile remote wilderness area beyond the clearings and settlements. As L.D. Cross claims, “In

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ “Canada in the Air.”

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Shaben, Introduction to *Into the Abyss*, 5-6.

⁷¹ Leonardo Da Vinci quoted in Shaben, *Into the Abyss*, 37.

20th-century Canada, any sparsely settled region outside the narrow band of development near the US border was called the boonies, the backcountry or the bush.”⁷² The term bush flying then denotes flight operations carried out in such remote regions. However, it was not until the advent of the World War I that the first bush pilots emerged in Canada. Until the beginning of the 20th century, registered professional pilots were scarce in Canada and so was aircraft. At that time, flying represented a novelty and rare pastime of the wealthy and daring. It was in the Great War where the bush pilot phenomenon was born. In order to avoid the hazards of trench life as a soldier, many young Canadian men enlisted into Britain’s Royal Flying Corps resulting in one-third of the British Air Service being composed of Canadian pilots who had volunteered to serve the king and the empire at the end of the war in 1918.⁷³ After the signing of the armistice with Germany in 1918, those military pilots who survived the war returned to Canada looking for job opportunities to use their flying expertise in civilian life and these veterans of aerial combat were to become pioneers as bush pilots.⁷⁴ Many former soldiers found employment or continued their careers in the military; for others, however, returning and adjusting to civilian life was not interesting or exciting at all at first, let alone easy. As stated in *Double Heritage*, a documentary film directed by Richard Gilbert, war-trained Canadian pilots who returned home from the World War I found out that city flying would not pay.⁷⁵ In addition, as Cross explains, although surplus training aircraft were plentiful, cheap and readily available, most aviators were skilled pilots, not mechanics and thus maintenance of the aircraft was problematic and crashes were frequent. Moreover, directly after the war the Canadian government was disinterested in maintaining a permanent military air force, The Royal Canadian Naval Air Service (RCNAS), which was too costly, and thus disbanded that military branch.⁷⁶ The war was a matter of the past and since it was problematic to create a policy to govern the field of aviation, there was no need for an air force. In order to remember and share their experience, the International Air Force Club was formed in 1923 in Vancouver where former pilots would gather and share stories about their flying days and give lectures and presentations.⁷⁷ In 1923,

⁷² Cross, *Flying on Instinct*, 33.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 9.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 10.

⁷⁵ Richard Gilbert, dir., *Double Heritage* (Ottawa: National Film Board of Canada, 1959), accessed November 10, 2016. http://www.nfb.ca/film/double_heritage/.

⁷⁶ Cross, *Flying on Instinct*, 10.

⁷⁷ Peter Boer, *Bush Pilots: Daredevils of the Wilderness* (Canada: Folklore publishing, 2004), 87.

however, Canadian Air Force (CAF) was re-established as a “flying militia” and in 1924 the prefix “Royal” was added again to the CAF and so The Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF) became a permanent branch of Canada’s defence forces and a training centre was established where first pilot officers were being graduated.⁷⁸

Those pilots who were truly passionate about flying and wanted to fly for the sake of flying persevered and in the early 1920s, a new breed of pioneer emerged: the bush pilot, and the years immediately following the war could be called the “cradle of bush flying.” In the remote Canadian north, lack of roads resulted in a different type of transportation of necessities such as food, medicine and building material being established. With aircraft and pilots willing to fly into these remote areas being available, bush flying filled this transportation void. According to Peter Boer, those exceptionally brave and skilled men flew the war-surplus aircraft deep into the wild Canadian north, delivering supplies, machinery, food and medicine to inhabitants living in isolated camps and communities, operating mainly in the provinces of Ontario and Québec. During such operations the main base was a water reservoir, a lake for instance, suitable for the, at first, very primitive aircraft to land and take-off. In addition to these activities, their task was also to map previously unexplored territories, including rivers, lakes and other natural parts of the landscape in the northern reaches.⁷⁹ As Cross states, the southern Canadian boundary was linked by roads and railways and coastal transportation by boat while the boreal Canadian Shield and the Arctic tundra areas still remained uncharted and unexplored and could be accessed only by canoe, horseback or dogsled.⁸⁰ As Cross puts it, “bush planes would become the 20th-century equivalent of the fur-trade voyageur’s canoes.”⁸¹ Moreover, flying in the southern bush had become commonplace around 1920s and thus aviation companies looked further north, well into the Arctic Circle. It is right here where the Canadian obsession with the north can be traced since something new was being attempted in the 1920s – an exploration of the north from the air. According to *Double Heritage*, the new Canadian Air Force was tasked with aerial survey of Canada. It was the greatest air survey in the world, and, what is more, bush pilots came to know the difficulties of their trade.⁸² As Cross explains, during this survey, pilots were supposed to fly a continuous

⁷⁸ Gilbert, *Double Heritage*.

⁷⁹ Boer, *Bush Pilots.*, 168-169.

⁸⁰ Cross, *Flying on Instinct*, 33.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 33.

⁸² Gilbert, *Double Heritage*.

line, avoiding any deviation from the course, over uncharted areas while a photographer was tasked with taking multiple overlapping photos that were to be pieced together in a topographical map by cartographers.⁸³ Furthermore, as Thomas A. Lawrence in a short documentary *Aviators of Hudson Strait* remarks, since it was a visual reconnaissance, the pilots had to stay below clouds or fog to be of any use.⁸⁴

In 1926, as a part of the aerial survey, as stated in *Double Heritage*, one expedition was heading to Hudson Strait to study ice conditions, navigation problems, and test the possibilities of establishing air bases in the Far North.⁸⁵ Another purpose of the expedition, as stated in *Aviators of Hudson Strait*, was to determine the possible length of annual navigation season for ocean going freighters, to set the time of their arrival in the summer and departure in the autumn. Moreover, the study of the ice conditions was essential as well since a railway was being built through Manitoba north to Hudson Bay. Due to the lack of landing strips and supporting services for larger aircraft in those remote arctic areas and because it was too costly and laborious to provide them, only small bush planes were to be used in this expedition. Each such aircraft was equipped with 2 magnetic compasses neither of which agreed with the other due to the high magnetic content in that area. Thus, pilots were forced to rely on maps; the maps were, however, naval and made as early as in 1837. Moreover, the communication was limited as well since the planes were provided only with a transmitter which enabled 2 methods of communication – sending messages using a Morse code or orally. No messages, however, could be sent back to pilots and whether the message from the air was delivered or not was also uncertain.⁸⁶

When flying the patrols and charting the ice, the plane crew consisted of a pilot, a mechanic who also took photographs and an Inuit who had some knowledge of travelling over open ice and surviving in case of an accident. In addition, the Inuit also provided the men of the expedition with clothing items suitable for local weather conditions, such as mukluks and mittens.⁸⁷ According to a short documentary film directed by Bill Roozeboom called *A Northern Challenge*, the Native people at every

⁸³ Cross, *Flying on Instinct*, 38.

⁸⁴ William Weintraub, dir. *Aviators of Hudson Strait* (Ottawa: National Film Board of Canada, 1973), accessed December 28, 2016, http://www.nfb.ca/film/aviators_of_hudson_strait/.

⁸⁵ Gilbert, *Double Heritage*.

⁸⁶ Weintraub, *Aviators of Hudson Strait*.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

base were also hired to do manual jobs or operate machines⁸⁸ and in return, the airmen looked after them.⁸⁹

As stated in *Aviators of Hudson Strait*, the expedition was successful. During the 14 months the crew managed to fly 227 patrols, took over 2000 aerial photographs and gathered information essential to the future of navigation in Hudson Strait.⁹⁰ Indeed, this information did prove important since there still remained plenty of outposts and Inuit dwellings scattered across the arctic regions of the country that had to be supplied.⁹¹ Thus, though many decades later, in 1969 precisely, it was decided that new airfields and bases would be built in the arctic regions. They would be integrated into the system of already existing airstrips and would serve as links to northern communities, new resource locations and a source of facilities for search and rescue organization. There were less than 7 airfields with a year-round transport capacity in the arctic region before the new construction program was launched, and after the completion of the construction, there would be 5 more.⁹² As a result, the outposts would slowly turn into growing and prosperous communities.

Unlike these days when flight training is available to obtain a pilot's licence and certification, pioneer pilots had no bush-flying instructions. The only flying skills they had were those they gained during their military service in the war and so the only thing they could do was to adapt their skills to the new environment and learn on the go. If they succeeded, they survived. Those who did manage to get airborne and fly, however, had to face the dangers of weather and uncertain navigation. Due to the lack of high quality maps, weather reports and accurate compasses, pilots flew using visual flight rules, in other words, they followed ground reference markers such as the course of rivers and avoided obstacles like mountains, clouds and other aircraft.⁹³ Another problem pilots had to face when flying was the fact that prepared landing strips were unknown in the early years of bush flying.⁹⁴ Moreover, bush flying involved operation in all, and often severe, weather conditions and terrain – over desert, tundra, mountain

⁸⁸ Bill Roozeboom, dir., *A Northern Challenge* (North Vancouver: Bill Roozeboom Productions Ltd., National Film Board of Canada, 1973), accessed December 28, 2016.
http://www.nfb.ca/film/northern_challenge/.

⁸⁹ Weintraub, *Aviators of Hudson Strait*.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Gilbert, *Double Heritage*.

⁹² Roozeboom, *A Northern Challenge*.

⁹³ Cross, *Flying on Instinct*, 34.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 58.

ranges, forested areas, water reservoirs, and snow and ice.⁹⁵ In addition, during the first years of bush flying, the pilot, engineer and passengers all sat in open-cockpit planes and therefore had to face rain, snow and skin-searing cold.⁹⁶ As a result of these harsh conditions, although plenty of pilots lived long, productive lives, many others died strapped into the seats of their aircraft. According to Boer, in the early years of bush flying, pilots over the age of 30 were scarce. The causes could have been manifold, starting from limited instrumentation, unpredictable and fierce weather in the north, through the lack of parachutes to no wireless radio aboard planes. Furthermore, planes that were in operation were built to fly, not to withstand a crash or the rigors of Canada's north.⁹⁷ In addition, pilots were faced with malfunctioning equipment very often, moreover, they had to stay in primitive and completely isolated living quarters on their journeys and all of this for relatively low wages. Nevertheless, flying was their passion and money had little to do with their overall happiness.⁹⁸

As it may seem, aviation in the north could be dangerous and challenging, however, not impossible. With the establishment of fuel caches at distant points and operating on floats in summer, and skis after freeze up in winter, the isolation of the northern part of the country was becoming a matter of the past. Veteran war pilots were very aware of the potential the airplane might have in opening up some of the most remote regions of Canada to the rest of the world as well as in making profit in moving men and supplies quickly to those isolated snowed-in parts.⁹⁹ Thus, flying to the north for just the thrill of flying into remote areas gradually transformed into flying for profit with the result of flying hours and amount of freight carried increasing. In the 1920s, apart from delivering supplies to remote outposts, one of the branches of industry in which the potential of bush flying was recognized was mail service. Using planes to deliver mail to remote regions proved a good decision, drastically reducing the amount of time of delivering a letter and packages than using rail or truck.¹⁰⁰ In January 1930, Prairie Air Mail Service was established¹⁰¹ and the first load of airmail was delivered to Cameron Bay in 1932.¹⁰² Another activity in which the use of bush planes became popular in mid-1920s were seal hunts. "The plane would fly over the icepack, looking

⁹⁵ Ibid., 33.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 20.

⁹⁷ Boer, *Bush Pilots*, 11.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 7.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 73.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 42.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 57.

¹⁰² Ibid., 51.

for the main seal herd, then return to the ship and direct the fleet towards its location,”¹⁰³ Boer describes. Nonetheless, mail service and seal hunts were not the only branches in which the potential of bush planes was recognized.

Apart from aerial mapping and photography and forest surveying, bush flying proved to be useful also during gold rush and mineral mining in Canada. In the Roaring Twenties, the cheerless and savage land of the north was brimming with mineral deposits, such as oil, gold, silver and other precious minerals and thus bush planes and pilots were in high demand.¹⁰⁴ As the human need for these resources grew, the minerals became increasingly important to both aviation and Canada’s future. For instance, in 1926, gold was discovered at Red Lake in the Canadian Shield. Both dogsled and bush planes were used to carry the freight over the frozen wilderness, however, in one hour, a plane covered an area that would otherwise take 12 days to travel by land.¹⁰⁵ On the other hand, Alberta was teeming with oil that bubbled from the ground. It was, however, difficult to get at it. There were no problems moving men and equipment by steamboat in summer, but winter transportation was problematic. Imperial Oil decided that planes were the answer.¹⁰⁶ Thus, as stated in *Double Heritage*, since large companies were interested in new ways to make mining faster and more economic, days of the lone prospector were numbered.¹⁰⁷ According to George Venne, a current prospector pilot interviewed in a documentary film called *Bush Pilot – Into the Wild Blue Yonder* directed by Bruno Boulianne, bush aviation was a great way to analyse the ground and find mineral deposits since from above, pilots see things that strike their eyes and that would normally be invisible from the ground, such as totally green lakes, a trace of rust or a white-quartz place which are good indicators of mineral deposits in his view.¹⁰⁸ Consequently, as their usefulness and popularity was increasing, planes and commercial services in general soon dominated northern transportation in the late 1920s.¹⁰⁹ During 1926 and 1927, it was possible to make up to 10 trips a day carrying a total of 260 passengers.¹¹⁰ The mechanization and modernization of industry

¹⁰³ Ibid., 160.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 90-91.

¹⁰⁵ Cross, *Flying on Instinct*, 23.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 71.

¹⁰⁷ Gilbert, *Double Heritage*.

¹⁰⁸ George Venne quoted in Bruno Boulianne, dir., *Bush Pilots – Into the Wild Blue Yonder* (Ottawa: National Board film of Canada, 2000), accessed December 27, 2016, http://www.nfb.ca/film/bush_pilot_into_wild_blue/.

¹⁰⁹ Boer, *Bush Pilots*, 88.

¹¹⁰ Cross, *Flying on Instinct*, 26.

produced machines that made getting at minerals easier; nonetheless the machines themselves were large and far too heavy to be transported by land vehicles. Thus, the plane proved an effective tool in their transportation again.¹¹¹ According to a short documentary film called *Bush Pilot: Reflections on a Canadian Myth* directed by Norma Bailey and Bob Lower, the period of the mineral rush in Canadian north meant golden but solid days for bush pilots. Prospectors went into the bush by the planeload together with camp supplies and other equipment and soon there were not enough planes to do all the work.¹¹² Towards the end of the 1920s, the north was beginning to swell with mining engineers, surveyors, prospectors, huskies, oil barrels and everything that bush pilots in their planes could carry across the Canadian Shield. They could also fly food to residents marooned by floods or canisters of oxygen to a farmer with pneumonia.¹¹³ Flying locations continued to expand, supplying freight and personnel to communities, mining sites and dam construction sites.

Another task which was assigned to bush pilots and their bush planes were medical and rescue operations. During such operations, an experienced pilot had to pick up a patient and deliver him to a hospital as quickly as possible.¹¹⁴ According to Cross, in the late 1920s and through the 1930s, such medical evacuation (medevac) flights became commonplace. The longest emergency medical flight lasted from November 27 to December 20, 1939, when a bush pilot returned from the Northwest Territories with a man with gangrenous hands. The very first air ambulance for civilians in North America was established by Saskatchewan government after the World War II especially to serve remote northern communities.¹¹⁵ As stated in *Wings of Mercy*, a documentary directed by Evelyn and Lawrence Cherry, to thousands of people in rural Saskatchewan the air ambulance meant the difference between life and death. Flying over the northern bush covering 800 miles by air from the south to the north, the flights were operated as a public service.¹¹⁶ Chris Templeton, a former bush plane electrician, describes the nature of some medical flights as follows:

They always took an aircraft electrician on medevac flights out in case of electrical power failure in the air. Some of the patients were flown out in iron

¹¹¹ Boer, *Bush Pilots*, 120.

¹¹² Norma Bailey and Bob Lower, dir., *Bush Pilot: Reflections on a Canadian Myth* (Ottawa: National Film Board of Canada, 1980), accessed January 30, 2017, http://www.nfb.ca/film/bush_pilot/.

¹¹³ Cross, *Flying on Instinct*, 74.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 49.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 111.

¹¹⁶ Evelyn Cherry and Lawrence Cherry, dir., *Wings of Mercy* (Ottawa: National Film Board of Canada, 1947), accessed December 15, 2016. http://www.nfb.ca/film/wings_of_mercy/.

lungs, big cumbersome things that could only fit into some of the larger aircraft such as the Cansos and Dakotas. The iron lungs were operated electrically, so our job was to ensure that electrical power was uninterrupted. Some medevacs involved bringing our premature babies in incubators.¹¹⁷

The nature of medical flights described by Templeton implies first, how useful and vital those, although still very primitive, bush planes proved to be in the lives of local people, and second, that northern concepts of speed and distance were gradually transformed since pilots managed to transport ill or severely injured patients from secluded areas to hospitals just in time to save them, something that would not be possible without planes. As stated in *Wings of Mercy*, the plane was able to deliver a patient from a remote lumber camp or an isolated farm to a hospital within an hour or less; any other transportation would take days.¹¹⁸ In order to prevent the changing air pressure from affecting the patient, the pilots flew their planes in 1,000 feet or less.¹¹⁹ In *Wings of Mercy*, it is demonstrated what an example air rescue looked like in the past. If there was a person who suddenly became ill or was injured, the air ambulance was called and the plane was up in the air within 15 minutes. Even though the pilots were given the location of the person in need of a medical help, people present at the scene would make fire so that it was easier for the pilots to spot the exact place. Sometimes, however, it was not easy to find a good place for landing due to plenty of bushes and lack of pastures.¹²⁰ Nevertheless, overall it took much shorter time to transport the patient to medical care than it would take a horse cart.

Another interesting medical rescue operation is mentioned in another short documentary film called *Canada Vignettes: Wop May* directed by Blake James, concerning a famous former bush pilot Wop May's mercy flight and his overwhelming story of delivering emergency serum to an isolated village. In a nutshell, on January 1, 1929, in a small village of Little Red River, situated 550 miles northwest of Edmonton, an epidemic of diphtheria had broken out having already taken one life. It was a highly contagious illness and the village was desperately in need of antitoxin delivered as quickly as possible from Edmonton, otherwise the entire settlement would perish. Wop May and his mechanic Vic Horner agreed without hesitation to fly the serum there. Despite the odds being against them since the only plane available was Avro Avian, an open cockpit

¹¹⁷ Chris Templeton quoted in Shirlee Smith Matheson, *Flying the Frontiers: A Half-million Hours of Aviation Adventure* (Saskatoon: Firth House Ltd., 1994), 177.

¹¹⁸ Cherry and Cherry, *Wings of Mercy*.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

biplane in which they would have to sit exposed to freezing temperatures, they took on the mission. In order to keep it warm, the serum was wrapped in blankets and stored next to a small charcoal heater under their feet, with chances of fire being high. In spite of ferocious headwind, zero visibility, and their faces bleeding, they were flying over the wilderness with only one objective on their minds – to save the colony. Residents tracking the progress of the mercy flight by radio hastily prepared landing strips for the plane to land on in case they would need to stop to refuel the plane. Flying on instinct and nerve, on the second day, May sighed in relief as Fort Vermillion came into view. There, Dr Hamman was waiting for them and the life-saving serum. Thus, despite being almost frozen to death and bleeding openly from their faces, they managed to safely deliver the serum and so to save the settlement.¹²¹

Bill Roozeboom claims that in the later years of bush flying, the plane was replaced by the helicopter which proved to be, as he puts it, the only practical type of aircraft which could be used to pick up and rescue survivors at a crash site due to its ability to land anywhere. He further states that before performing the actual rescue, helicopters were first loaded on board of a long-range aircraft, such as the Hercules, and then flown to the airstrip nearest the suspected crash site. Upon arriving, the helicopter was reassembled while the Hercules searched for the missing plane. Once located, the helicopter arrived at the crash site and rescued the survivors. He also mentions that Canada is responsible for search and rescue over the whole country and its adjacent waters bestowed by an International Civil Aviation Agreement.¹²² Therefore, if a plane is reported missing, the search and rescue team is ordered into immediate action.

In the late 1920s and early 1930s, according to *Double Heritage*, cities were enjoying new leisure-time activity, namely sport flying. At first, a few flying clubs governmentally supported were in operation, however, by 1929, 16 such clubs had been established counting 2,400 members, including women pilots as well, who logged over 8,000 hours in the air. As aviation and sport flying flourished, flying fashion and costumes were of high importance. Many of those young pilots would later be promoted to a more serious level of flying, to the business of war.¹²³ There was, however, yet another period to come first.

¹²¹ Blake James, dir., *Canada Vignettes: Wop May* (Ottawa: National Film Board of Canada, 1979), accessed December 16, 2016, http://www.nfb.ca/film/wop_may/.

¹²² Roozeboom, *A Northern Challenge*.

¹²³ Gilbert, *Double Heritage*.

While the bush flying industry and aviation in general was booming in the 1920s, in the early 1930s, with the advent of the Great Depression, the need for pilots rapidly decreased. Canadian government was forced to drastically reduce government spending and thus lost interest in funding airmail or airfreight companies. William March claims that “almost overnight, the RCAF was reduced in size by one-fifth and its budget halved,” and civil flight operations were to change into military ones.¹²⁴ As a result, pilots found themselves standing in long unemployment lines, looking for any kind of work.¹²⁵ According to Ronald A. Keith, life was tough for pilots in that period. The prairie air-mail contracts were cancelled by the government resulting in aircraft rotting in hangars and pilots with hundreds of hour’s flying experience selling vacuum cleaners and life insurance.¹²⁶ Nevertheless, as soon as the Great Depression became subsiding, the government was once again interested in reaching distant communities using faster and cheaper ways to do so. Although the train proved speedy enough, Canada’s most remote regions in the north were not linked by rail lines and so bush planes were to be highly used again.¹²⁷ In 1937, the federal government made a decision that Canada was in need of a nationwide air carrier otherwise two US airlines could expand into Canada. Thus, Trans-Canada Airlines (TCA) was established¹²⁸ as the only scheduled coast-to-coast passenger service in Canada.¹²⁹ Later that year, Canadian Airways and Canadian Pacific Airlines were put into operation as well.¹³⁰

William March states that due to the outbreak of the Second World War, aviation schools were built across the country and the RCAF was rapidly expanded. A large portion of the airmen served in Home War Establishment, some airmen were engaged in combating German submarines in the Atlantic while others helped the US forces remove Japanese forces from islands in Alaska. Moreover, there were a total of 48 RCAF squadrons serving all over Europe and a vast majority of Canadians served in RAF organization.¹³¹ When the World War II ended, skilled and experienced pilots who were able to survive in the bush were still in high demand in the mining industry since

¹²⁴ William March, “Royal Canadian Air Force,” *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, last edited March 2015, accessed 29.12. 2016, <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/royal-canadian-air-force/>.

¹²⁵ Boer, *Bush Pilots*, 129.

¹²⁶ Ronald A. Keith, ed., *Bush Pilot with a Briefcase: The Incredible Story of Aviation Pioneer Grant McConachie* (Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre Ltd., 1972), 43.

¹²⁷ Boer, *Bush Pilots*, 138.

¹²⁸ Cross, *Flying on Instinct*, 86.

¹²⁹ Boer, *Bush Pilots*, 180.

¹³⁰ Gilbert, *Double Heritage*.

¹³¹ March, “Royal Canadian Air Force.”

Canada's mining companies penetrated farther and farther north into the barrens in the pursuit of finding minerals and precious metals, such as diamonds, uranium and gold. The local tundra could not withstand heavy road traffic, thus no roads were built in those areas and so the airplane remained the quickest and most efficient way of travelling and getting supplies from place to place.¹³²

There was yet another sphere which made the use of bush planes. According to Cross, there was an idea of using airplanes to spot and suppress forest fires long before they became huge devastating infernos¹³³ and thus in the early 1940s, a Saskatchewan Smoke Jumpers program was established in Canada studying the methods of forest-fire suppression practiced in the USA.¹³⁴ The organization later established its base in La Ronge, housing smoke jumpers in "the barracks", a special living quarters equipped with a room for parachute packing and a tower for parachutes to air and dry. As Shirlee Smith Matheson describes, "the cry of "Jump Fire!" over the speakers became a familiar sound which brought the inhabitants to immediate action."¹³⁵ The aircraft carried a jump master, 4 smoke jumpers, and a pilot.¹³⁶ The early years of fire-fighting were, however, rather experimental and highly dangerous for both pilots and smoke jumpers.¹³⁷ Before the introduction of helicopters which would later deliver and pick up the ground firefighters, smoke jumpers were forced to walk out to a lake from the site of their drop-off with all their equipment.¹³⁸ That might have been the reason why smoke jumpers qualification included "tough medical examination, being between 22 and 32 years of age, weighing 170 to 180 pounds, and being temperamentally stable."¹³⁹ When smoke was reported, smoke jumpers were immediately transported to the location trying to extinguish or contain the fire until the arrival of regular firefighters. They did so by being dropped from airplanes and parachuting down the fire site. The crews that arrived later set up a base by the nearest lake or water reservoir.¹⁴⁰ When helicopters became a part of bush flying, even more areas could be assessed and specific tasks could be assigned since helicopters could land and take off in remote northern communities

¹³² Boer, *Bush Pilots*, 197.

¹³³ Cross, *Flying on Instinct*, 18.

¹³⁴ Matheson, *Flying the Frontiers*, 92.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 92-93.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 94.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 165.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 99.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 92-93.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 92-93.

which were not accessible even by aircraft. The role of fire detection was better suited for helicopters as they could hover over the fire and give accurate information.

The list of spheres in which bush flying found its purpose seems endless. Matheson briefly mentions another task in which bush planes proved useful and which provided some bush pilots with at least minimal income especially when the unemployment was high or the demand for air-mail was on the decrease. It was spruce budworm spraying. Spruce trees were affected by this insect and aerial spraying proved an effective tool in the combat against it. Nevertheless, they did not spray near towns, but rather stayed in the wilderness areas.¹⁴¹ C. G. Ballentine talks about another minor sphere in which he was employed as a bush pilot, namely fisheries patrol. The air crew's task, in brief, was, in cooperation with a service vessel, to ensure that the regulations are not violated during the fishing season.¹⁴² As Ballentine describes, the air patrol focused mainly on net users. If a net was too long, set in a prohibited area, or when fishing season was over, they landed and the person responsible for it was arrested.¹⁴³ He believes that the air patrol was effective due to its relative speed and mobility. As he explains, the inspector's boats were not faster than the fish boats, and thus making it difficult to catch the culprit. With the help of the faster airplane, however, the inspector could easily surround the fishing boat and arrest its users.¹⁴⁴ These, however, were merely minor services that bush pilots practised occasionally and not on a regular and nationwide basis. They are mentioned just to illustrate how flexible bush flying and pilots proved to be.

It is also essential to mention that bush pilots have played a major role, both positive and negative, in the lives of Canadian Native tribes living in remote settlements. Bailey and Lower's documentary film briefly summarizes the trading history with the Native tribes. More than 300 years ago, Scottish fur traders made the Native tribes in Canada forever dependant on the products of Europe by supplying them with iron tools in order to make their lives easier. These days, those communities are still dependant on the weekly visits by bush pilots, nevertheless, instead of iron tools, blankets, guns or axes, the cargo of the modern voyageurs include lumber, frozen meat, fresh vegetables, civil servants, and disposable diapers; or put simply, goods that is not

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 160.

¹⁴² C.G. Ballentine quoted in William J. Wheeler, *Skippers of the Sky: The Early Years of Bush Flying* (Calgary: Fifth House Ltd., 2000), 82.

¹⁴³ Ibid., 93.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 94.

available to them in their area and which is taken for granted in the south. In those isolated communities, the oldest trading takes place. It is a trade which involves a high degree of mutual respect and understanding on the sides of both parties and it might take a lifetime to pilots to adapt to North and its people. Today, however, the trade is more oriented on the pursuit of wealth. As is it mentioned in the documentary, on eastern lakes of Manitoba, for instance, wild rice is harvested by the Natives and bush pilots go there to purchase as much of their rice as possible for southern dealers.¹⁴⁵ This exactly is the bush pilot's traditional role – the go-between. They represent the southern society who goes to the north to meet its tribes, to adopt their rules and at the same time persuade them to give up their wealth in exchange for southern goods. According to *A Northern Challenge*, the lives of the “caribou people”, as they are called, have changed dramatically. Once nomadic, if given a choice, however, just a handful of the Native people would return to the hardships and insecurity of the past. To the contrary, a vast majority of them welcome the new security brought by airstrips and bush flying and successfully adapt to the new lifestyle. Although they try to preserve their culture and art, they are aware of being part of the 20th century and adjust their lives accordingly.¹⁴⁶

Nonetheless, there are also people aware of the negative impact of white civilization on the Natives. Sherrill Grace, for instance, talks about a loss of the languages, stories and the overall culture of the First Nations due to the enforced acculturation,¹⁴⁷ not to mention white culture influences such as thievery, adultery and tuberculosis.¹⁴⁸ Weldy Phipps, a former bush pilot, is also of the opinion that the Inuit culture has been nearly destroyed. As he puts it, “the government made a big mistake when they thought they were going to educate them [young children] and they'd be getting university degrees.”¹⁴⁹ Not only did not they use the knowledge they gained at those schools in practice, it also seemed preposterous to force the parents and their children, those close-knit families, apart.¹⁵⁰ Thusly, on the one hand, bush pilots opened the north up and brought civilized manners to the Inuit tribes, but, on the other hand, their actions

¹⁴⁵ Bailey and Lower, *Reflections on a Canadian Myth*.

¹⁴⁶ Roozeboom, *A Northern Challenge*.

¹⁴⁷ Grace, *Canada and the Idea of North*, 243.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 77.

¹⁴⁹ Weldy Phipps quoted in Matheson, *Flying the Frontiers*, 36.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 36-37.

could be viewed as exploitation of both mineral resources of the north and its indigenous peoples.

Although the range of usefulness of bush planes was very wide and bush pilots flew to various areas, was it to deliver mining equipment, mail, tobacco, food or other supplies, in the vast area of Canada's north, there still remained myriad of unmapped, sparsely inhabited and unexplored regions. As suggested in *Double Heritage*, beyond tree lines and tundra, there was yet another north, a completely different one, a storm-swept white arctic one.¹⁵¹ *A Northern Challenge* describes in a nutshell the almost untouched and unseen area of the Canadian Arctic. It is, as Roozeboom claims, composed of 3 separate and different regions. The first one he calls the subarctic, or tundra, where stunted trees and shrubs, muskeg and permafrost can be found. It is the lower region lying just above the Canadian provinces. The second is The Barrens of north-eastern continental Canada, a low-arctic treeless region. The third high-arctic region covers Canada's arctic islands and an area of 500 miles of the geographic North Pole.¹⁵² Surprisingly or not, based on Roozeboom's description, the greatest challenge that the early bush pilots or photographers had to face was not the limited equipment of the planes they flew but the immense size of the country. According to Richardson, the Canadian north of the 1920s was crucible, treacherous, and "larger than life."¹⁵³ As Cross states, even by the advent of the World War II in 1939, a large area behind the 57th parallel was still uncharted and no reliable mapping of the Barren Lands had been done.¹⁵⁴

There had been many attempts to cross the arctic region on foot or sled, but they often ended in starvation, or even cannibalism. According to Boer, the Barren Lands were empty, inhospitable with no traces of any form of life – just 400 miles of rock and tundra. When going up north, trees, rivers and streams slowly became sparser until there were none, the sky and land gradually melted at the horizon until it was difficult to distinguish the sky from the ground and there was not a single hill, only flat rock.¹⁵⁵ Flying further north was too risky as well in those days since pilots were still using nothing more than their handmade maps as landing strips were still unknown and

¹⁵¹ Gilbert, *Double Heritage*.

¹⁵² Roozeboom, *A Northern Challenge*.

¹⁵³ Richardson quoted in Bailey and Lower, *Reflections on a Canadian Myth*.

¹⁵⁴ Cross, *Flying on Instinct*, 38.

¹⁵⁵ Boer, *Bush Pilots*, 45-46.

a compass didn't prove very useful in those remote Arctic areas in the north.¹⁵⁶ As Cross explains, sometimes pilots sketched what they saw and then used these maps as they were the only rudimentary charts available to them. Cross further explains that they would pick out landmarks when flying somewhere and then try to find them in reverse order on their way back.¹⁵⁷ As Boer puts it, during such flights "pilots flew into regions of Canada that had rarely seen a human footstep, let alone an airplane."¹⁵⁸ In the wild secluded areas of the Canadian north, bush pilots were at the mercy of unforeseen circumstances and unpredictable weather and their survival depended on their endurance and skills.¹⁵⁹ George Venne knows from his own experience what trouble pilots might get in due to cloudy weather and how important their instinct and skills are:

Once, as a young pilot, I was going to Val d'Or. The weather was overcast. At one point, approaching Val d'Or, the clouds were very low in the sky. I decided to carry on, (...) I suddenly lost my way. I did a 360 but I couldn't see it. So I went back towards Val d'Or, northwards. I decided to go over the clouds, hoping they weren't thick since I couldn't see a thing. At around 3,000 feet, I broke through above the clouds. (...) I decided if, in 5 minutes, I saw no opening, I'd try to go through the clouds. I was prepared to die. It's fairly dangerous, not knowing where you are, what's under you. Then I saw light to the left. It looked like a lake but it was shrouded with clouds. When I approached, it was a lake. I went full flap and landed there. I was pretty glad not to wreck the plane or get hurt.¹⁶⁰

As it follows from Venne's experience, with no air-traffic controller to assign routes and altitudes, pilots were up in the skies completely on their own.¹⁶¹ Furthermore, as Boer states, time seemed to disappear in the skies and those isolated places. Days and nights blended into each other and it was difficult to mark the passing of each hour. It was not the perpetual light and darkness or freezing winds in those areas that could drive the hardest of men insane, the worst of all was solitude that the men faced there.¹⁶²

As William Wheeler states, in the 1950s, the Canadian government set up a scheme to complete the coverage of the unmapped areas of mainland Canada. As he explains, most regions of the country were well covered from a map standpoint from previous aerial surveys; however, there still remained great blank areas especially in

¹⁵⁶ Cross, *Flying on Instinct*, 58.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 34.

¹⁵⁸ Boer, *Bush Pilots*, 161.

¹⁵⁹ Cross, *Flying on Instinct*, 92.

¹⁶⁰ Venne quoted in Boulianne, *Into the Wild Blue Yonder*.

¹⁶¹ Cross, *Flying on Instinct*, 34.

¹⁶² Boer, *Bush Pilots*, 62.

northwest British Columbia, the Northwest Territories, and northern Quebec which were to be tackled first.¹⁶³ Therefore, in summer 1958, approximately 24,000 square miles of geological mapping were covered taking 300 hours of flying time in order to complete the geological survey of Canada.¹⁶⁴ Robert H. Fowler, a former pilot, describes the process of aerial mapping as follows, “To maintain a consistent scale between pictures taken on different flights, it was important that each flight be flown at exactly the same height above the ground.”¹⁶⁵

Surprisingly, winter was not the only season that could bring unexpected challenges to bush pilots. In summer, there was a danger of thick fogs or heavy rains that would sweep in quickly. In such conditions, pilots had to make a decision whether to descend so that the ground remained visible, but by doing so risking a crash into a hill or a mountain, or, on the other hand, to climb above the clouds but at the same time lose visibility and risk becoming lost. Furthermore, even the finest flying weather conditions could prove dangerous. The surface of mirror-smooth lakes perfectly reflecting the sky could make pilots disoriented, making them unable to distinguish the water from the sky and thus difficult to judge how high they are above the lake’s surface.¹⁶⁶ Apart from winter and summer, the “changeover” seasons, spring and autumn, were also challenging. With the ice melting in spring and water freezing in autumn, pilots had to decide whether they would need wheels, floats or skis. Moreover, very often what was suitable for a take-off in one location proved inappropriate during landing in a different location. Granular old snow could suddenly break under the weight of the plane causing it stuck while new snow tended to hid obstacles such as rocks or fallen trees. Both situations could cause a crash and if pilots did survive such a crash, they had to repair their plane on the spot thousands of miles from help.¹⁶⁷

In some regions, other airborne hazards were “no-see-um,” numerous, voracious and extremely irritating mini-mosquitoes, and the horsefly.¹⁶⁸ As bush pilot Wahlroth describes, in some areas horsefly were about the size of lean bumblebees. Upon approach, at approximately 200 feet above the water surface, it was important to close the windows, take a head net and gloves on, and tuck trousers into boot tops. The insects drumming heavily on the fuselage could be heard inside the cockpit. Directly

¹⁶³ Wheeler, *Skippers of the Sky*, 158.

¹⁶⁴ Matheson, *Flying the Frontiers*, 26.

¹⁶⁵ Robert H. Fowler quoted in Wheeler, *Skippers of the Sky*, 163.

¹⁶⁶ Cross, *Flying on Instinct*, 40-41.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 41.

¹⁶⁸ Wheeler, *Skippers of the Sky*, 99.

after unloading the plane, the interior was closed and sprayed to keep it habitable. As Wahlroth states, it was not unusual that the pilot swept out a bucketful of fly corpses at the end of the day.¹⁶⁹

In conclusion, this chapter was focused on the bush flying phenomenon itself. All the various branches of industry in which bush flying played an important role were mentioned. Northern flying was proved possible, but not easy at all and many pilots lost their lives during the diverse nature of their flight operations. Unknown, unmapped, sparsely inhabited, this was the region that became home but also grave to plenty of those courageous men. Next subchapter deals with bush pilots themselves; it points out the characteristic features they had to dispose of and activities and procedures which were an integral part of their job.

3.3 DUTIES AND QUALITIES OF A BUSH PILOT

“To survive in such a place requires ruthless endurance, but as likely as not the North will drive you mad, starve you, and freeze you to death in the end.”¹⁷⁰

Bush pilots and their companion adventurers, the air engineers, compose a crew dauntless to run risks and tackle adventure when delivering supplies and maintaining access to isolated communities in the north. Since 1919, these hardy adventurers have dominated the northern skies, defying the elements with resourcefulness, determination, and courage.

In Boulianne’s documentary film, all bush pilots interviewed in the video claim that they wanted to become pilots at very young age, usually after their first encounter with a bush plane or upon hearing or reading the wondrous tales of the pioneer bush pilots, and with the increasing amount of hours spent in the sky, their passion grew stronger and stronger. One of the bush pilots even claims that “[he] learned to fly before [he] walked – [he] was obsessed with plane at 3.”¹⁷¹ That demonstrates how intense his love for flying was. Being passionate about flying, however, was not enough, and it is essential to understand that bush flying did not include just having control over the plane and knowing in which direction to fly. It was hard physical labour as well since pilots spent a large part of their time preparing the plane for flight, loading, securing and

¹⁶⁹ Wahlroth quoted in Wheeler, *Skippers of the Sky*, 196.

¹⁷⁰ Grace, *Canada and the Idea of North*, 183.

¹⁷¹ Boulianne, *Into the Wild Blue Yonder*.

unloading the cargo and rounding up the passengers and all of this by themselves.¹⁷² As Venne aptly claims, “Not everyone would want it. You have to really love it, or be a little crazy.”¹⁷³ If the pilots were lucky enough, when landing on water they could pull up to a dock, but more often than not there was not any and therefore they had to wade into the water, pull the cargo out the plane and carry it to shore piece by piece.¹⁷⁴ Or, as it is portrayed in Boulianne’s film, if there was no dock, the pilot would land as close to the intended place of harbour as possible; after landing, with the engine at lower power, he would slowly float to the spot, and then, with the help of paddles, turn the plane to the harbour in such a position which made it easy and safe to disembark the plane and unload the cargo.¹⁷⁵

According to Wheeler, the loading of an aircraft was always at the direction of the pilot flying the trip and it was his job to do.¹⁷⁶ Pilots were responsible for transporting every-day goods commonly available in cities near the U.S. border such as fresh fruit and vegetables, canned goods, cough medicine, tea and whisky, but also sacks of flour or sugar which were not available in the northern outposts. They delivered anything a customer might want if it fitted into the cabin. Occasionally, unusual type of freight was transported, including mink, trucks, small bulldozers and other mining equipment required at mining sites which made the magnetic compass on the plane malfunction and thus the pilot confused. Last but not least, one bush pilot even transported a sedated ox.¹⁷⁷

As Boer describes, “[bush pilots] were a tough, friendly sort who flew endless hours in often-unreliable aircraft, delivering supplies and people to some of Canada’s most desolate territory.”¹⁷⁸ Matheson mentions that so-called “uncontrolled landings”¹⁷⁹ were common in the unforgiving terrain of Canada’s north and many pilots did not survive.¹⁸⁰ Despite the risks they ran, they loved their bird’s-eye view of the world and they were there for each other in good times and bad. According to Cross, they had to dispose of many talents, including

¹⁷² Cross, *Flying on Instinct*, 40.

¹⁷³ Venne quoted in Boulianne, *Into the Wild Blue Yonder*.

¹⁷⁴ Cross, *Flying on Instinct*, 36.

¹⁷⁵ Boulianne, *Into the Wild Blue Yonder*.

¹⁷⁶ Wheeler, *Skippers of the Sky*, 79.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 10-11.

¹⁷⁸ Boer, *Bush Pilots*, 190.

¹⁷⁹ Small crashes.

¹⁸⁰ Matheson, *Flying the Frontiers*, 44.

advanced outdoor survival and first-aid skills, the ability, to repair an airplane using little more than duct tape and wire, and knowledge of how their airplane performs in changing conditions over boreal forest, tundra, mountains and Arctic seas. They must also be well-versed in navigation, cockpit instrumentation and Canadian Aviation Regulations.¹⁸¹

In order to demonstrate the importance of the characteristics in practice, two short stories of bush pilots' adventures follow. Once, when flying along the Eagle River, bush pilot Wop May spotted a shot man below. He landed immediately, approached the bullet-riddled corpse, got him on board and flew at top speed to Aklavik for medical treatment, making the 200-kilometre distance in 45 minutes. On their way there, his knowledge of the surrounding terrain, of every pass and peak in the mountains, proved invaluable especially when they ran into a blizzard. The man's life was eventually saved only by May's extraordinary flying skills. According to the doctor, had they been 15 minutes late on arrival, the man would have died.¹⁸² Walter Edwin Gilbert, another former bush pilot, had a similar experience to share. As Cross describes, once there was a patient mauled by a grizzly bear and an experienced pilot was needed to deliver the man to a critical-care hospital as quickly as possible, and Gilbert volunteered to do it. He managed to make the 450-kilometre-long journey from Steward to Burns Lake in incredible 2 hours and 10 minutes. The next morning, he transported the wounded man to 835 kilometres far Vancouver. Again, the man survived only thanks to Gilbert's flying skills and stamina.¹⁸³

However, George Venne gives warning that some pilots might feel seasoned too soon, usually when they have just begun to learn bush aviation properly, which might be fatal since they could overestimate their skills and reflexes.¹⁸⁴ Pierre Cabana, a bush pilot, remarks that up to 99 per cent of aviation accidents are caused by pilots. In his opinion, reflexes are important and if pilots lack the reflexes bush flying takes, are overconfident in terms of their skills, too daring or lack judgment, they may encounter great trouble.¹⁸⁵ According to Frédéric Jalbert, it is best when pilots listen to their instinct; if they do so, their actions and feelings will help them get through every situation.¹⁸⁶

¹⁸¹ Cross, *Flying on Instinct*, 122.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, 76.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, 49.

¹⁸⁴ Venne quoted in Boulianne, *Into the Wild Blue Yonder*.

¹⁸⁵ Pierre Cabana quoted in Boulianne, *Into the Wild Blue Yonder*.

¹⁸⁶ Frédéric Jalbert quoted in Boulianne, *Into the Wild Blue Yonder*.

Matheson claims that pilots also needed to be adaptable to various living conditions and climate, systematic when going over the checklists, of strong physical constitution to withstand the fierce weather conditions and capable of dealing with numerous occurrences simultaneously.¹⁸⁷ In addition to the above-mentioned qualities, patience and perseverance were also essential in a bush pilot especially in winter when there was nothing more irritating than freezing temperatures. In sub-zero weather, everything outside froze solid usually within an hour, which dictated extra chores and precautions. It was the job of the flight engineer, or, if flying alone, the pilot to take care of the engine and the procedure was far from easy. As Cross explains, the oil had to be drained into buckets and taken inside a cabin or a tent every night, and if possible, the engine, propeller and wings covered by a canvas tarp as a protection against the frost and snow.¹⁸⁸ It was vital to stick to this procedure since, as Geoffrey Wyborn states, even a thin, insignificant film of frost on the wings could drastically reduce the lifting ability of the plane and result in a difficult take-off or even a crash. Apart from the above mentioned steps, planks or logs had to be inserted between the skis and the snow, otherwise the skis would freeze in place, which would require extra hard work and time.¹⁸⁹ In the morning, to maximize daylight flying hours, pilots continued the procedure in pre-dawn darkness. The engine was warmed with a kerosene heater for at least an hour, depending on the outside air temperature and the wind-chill factor. Then the thinned oil was carefully poured back into the warmed engine which was prepared to start. If the engine did not turn over, the pilot had little time to find and correct the problem before everything froze solid again.¹⁹⁰ Wyborn claims that whenever they had difficulties with getting the engine running, they managed to do so by the risky process of hand-swinging the propeller. One man at the controls, one at the propeller, the procedure involved turning on the gas, setting throttles, a few priming shots and then swinging the prop with hands. "Sometimes it started, sometimes it did not. In the latter case, it was the same procedure all over again," Wyborn says.¹⁹¹ If the pilot did not manage to correct the problem or failed to follow the warming procedure, he was forced to stay. A frozen engine could not be used and encouraging it back to life was risky since without careful attention and with the air reeked of gas

¹⁸⁷ Matheson, Introduction to *Flying the Frontiers*, x.

¹⁸⁸ Cross, *Flying on Instinct*, 38-39.

¹⁸⁹ Geoffrey Wyborn quoted in Wheeler, *Skippers of the Sky*, 144.

¹⁹⁰ Cross, *Flying on Instinct*, 38-39.

¹⁹¹ Wyborn quoted in Wheeler, *Skippers of the Sky*, 147.

fumes, the wood fabric on the plane could easily catch fire. If that happened and the pilots were lucky, someone would spot the smoke coming from the plane and fly in for a rescue. Otherwise it meant a long walk back to civilization or wait until spring thaw.¹⁹² Cross points out that in order to help himself and other bush pilots ease winter engine start-ups, Doc Oaks, a former bush pilot, set up fuel depots all over northern Canada so that pilots could go farther in greater safety. Together with another man he created small heated tents called “nose hangers” that would cover engines, allowing work to be done without frostbitten fingers.¹⁹³

Very often, pilots flew with air engineers who sat in the right-hand cockpit seat on daily flight operations, each trusting and depending upon the other. The engineers’ contributions to the success of any bush flying operation were vital. Their task was to refuel the aircraft, fix any structural damage, repair the engine and in winter warm the oil so the engine would start, using nothing more than just basic tools and their innate innovative abilities and courage.¹⁹⁴ Although engineers did most of the drudge work and should be given the credit for keeping bush planes flyable, it was often the pilots who enjoyed the lion’s share of glory and public recognition.¹⁹⁵

Bush flying involved working, sleeping and spending time in freezing temperatures and harsh climate, thus proper outdoor clothing was a necessity for every bush pilot in order to survive. A cold-weather flying suit consisted of a quality fur parka with a fur-lined hood, quilted nylon wind pants and war-surplus flying boots with two pairs of socks and leather slippers inside. One-piece coverall and a jacket could be added on top of this all, creating attire that would keep the body warm.¹⁹⁶ Despite wearing appropriate clothes, bush flying especially in open-cockpit airplanes could affect the health conditions of some pilots, especially of those doing aerial mapping and flying in high altitudes. Robert Fowler states that some pilots, including himself, suffered from so called “bends” while high in the air, affecting mainly their limbs and forcing them to land. As he explains, some pilots suffered from very painful bends regularly, others, like himself, experienced only an occasional twinge. As in his case, bends could eventually end the high-altitude flying career of many pilots.¹⁹⁷

¹⁹² Cross, *Flying on Instinct*, 38-39.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, 32.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 13.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 93.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 128.

¹⁹⁷ Wheeler, *Skippers of the Sky*, 166.

As it is obvious from the information mentioned in this chapter so far, using apt remarks of George Venne, bush flying seemed less monotonous, yet more dangerous, for pilots than flying for an airline since, as he explains, pilots never landed the same way. He further continues that on an average day, pilots landed up to 15 times; making 100 or 150 landings a week, and each time it may be on a different lake or river.¹⁹⁸ According to William Wheeler, routines were seldom unbroken. Be it a drop-everything mercy flight, a sudden loss of power, a damaged undercarriage, wing icing, an engine fire, unusual turbulent air, the list of potential hazards was endless, yet these were the spice of the job.¹⁹⁹ In Bailey and Lower's documentary film, the unpredictability and excitement of a bush pilot's routine is also suggested. It is mentioned that pilots usually started working at around 4 o'clock in the morning. Their first task might be picking up some fishermen or taking a diamond driller. Upon returning back to their base camp, there might be an emergency call – a seriously injured or sick person in one of those Indian reservations or mining camps, so the pilots would have to fly there. Next, there might be a forest fire reported. Thus, the pilots never knew what lied ahead of them every day.²⁰⁰ All this might be the reason why so many pilots have pursued bush flying career.

Boulianne's documentary film, portraying current bush flying practice, nicely depicts what a day in a modern-day bush pilot's life looks like. Pierre Cabana starts his working day meeting the air transport supervisor in his office and receives the instructions for the day from him:

You have an engine and supplies for Camp 6. Then you drop your 3 passengers at Camp 15. Then you go to 14. Pick up 2 more passengers and take them to 17 with their meat. You leave 17 empty, and you go back down to 15. Then you go to Schefferville. That's a flight of 450. Altogether [it is] 480 miles.²⁰¹

While giving him these flight instructions, the supervisor marks the location of each camp on a map and using a cord creates trajectories of Cabana's flight hoping to facilitate his task and make him will visually imagine his route.²⁰² Another pilot, Frédéric Jalbert, gives the passengers of his little bush plane pre-flight instructions on where the emergency transmitter and emergency exits are located,²⁰³ a practice typical

¹⁹⁸ Venne quoted in Boulianne, *Into the Wild Blue Yonder*.

¹⁹⁹ Wheeler, *Skippers of the Sky*, 15.

²⁰⁰ Bailey and Lower, *Reflections on a Canadian Myth*.

²⁰¹ Boulianne, *Into the Wild Blue Yonder*.

²⁰² *Ibid.*

²⁰³ Jalbert quoted in Boulianne, *Into the Wild Blue Yonder*.

for commercial airline passenger flights. Nevertheless, it is important to remind that in its pioneering days, bush flying was not so easy and lucid, and pilots were not given such detailed information about their flights.

It is also essential to mention that it was not only male pilots who piloted the bush aircraft and barnstormed across open skies. Although it has been stated that the north was not suitable to women and they were not welcomed there, they have been associated with aviation in the north almost since the first bush plane arrived there. Pioneering female pilots proved their flying abilities as well; it was, however, much more difficult for them to establish themselves as bush pilots in the man's world and it took several decades until women were allowed to fly passengers into the Canadian wilderness.²⁰⁴ Although Canadian women started flying as early as the 1930s, they were expected to follow, and be satisfied with, the traditional roles, and thus none had become bush pilots until the post war era.²⁰⁵ Eileen Vollick was among the first women to apply for flying lessons. In spite of her physical limitations, since she had difficulties with seeing over the windscreen of the school's aircraft due to her height, she succeeded and in 1928 she became Canada's first licenced female pilot.²⁰⁶ In November 1929, the world's oldest and largest organization of licenced female pilots, The Ninety-Nines Inc., was established by 99 women pilots.²⁰⁷ Nevertheless, despite their highly specialized flying skills, as Boer claims, only few women used to be hired in the field of aviation in the 1920s and 1930s and even then they were routinely rejected because of their gender.²⁰⁸ As Lorna Bray aptly explains, women were simply "not welcome on the voyage."²⁰⁹ It was as late as in the 1940s that women eventually became employed in the bush flying industry and the catalyst was, as usual, a war.

As remarked in *Double Heritage*, men and machines were two things the war demanded and Canada was a major supplier of both.²¹⁰ In another documentary called *Rosies of the North* directed by Kelly Saxberg it is stated that "Canadian factories and Canadian workers could mean the difference between survival and disaster."²¹¹ So, while men were serving in the army, women were fighting side by side with them in

²⁰⁴ Cross, *Flying on Instinct*, 102.

²⁰⁵ Wheeler, *Skippers of the Sky*, 15.

²⁰⁶ Boer, *Bush Pilots*, 8.

²⁰⁷ Cross, *Flying on Instinct*, 109.

²⁰⁸ Boer, *Bush Pilots*, 8.

²⁰⁹ Lorna Bray quoted in Matheson, *Flying the Frontiers*, 82.

²¹⁰ Gilbert, *Double Heritage*.

²¹¹ Kelly Saxberg, dir., *Rosies of the North* (Ottawa: National Film Board of Canada, 1999), accessed February 12, 2017, http://www.nfb.ca/film/rosies_of_the_north/.

factories. They were not spared because of their gender and so did every job there was to be done – welding, riveting or building wings and it was not unusual that there were more women working in the assembly line than men.²¹² According to Saxberg's documentary, in 1943, up to 3-4000 women mostly from the prairies arrived to be employed in factories and help build a new type of airplane ordered by the USA.²¹³ It was not, however, easy for women to work alongside men who never truly accepted them as equal workers²¹⁴ and were given better wages for the same job.²¹⁵ To conclude, the World War II offered many employment opportunities to women since men were drafted to serve on the front lines. Boer states that women were finally allowed to learn to fly when the women's section of the Air Transport Auxiliary was created in 1940. The objective of this aviation company was to transport aircraft of various classes and sizes all over North America and Europe during the war, and plenty of women were thus hired to pilot those war machines to their destinations.²¹⁶ One of them was Violet Warren called Vi who by war's end was qualified to fly nearly every plane in the Allied air force. She ferried different types of war machines across Canada, England and Scotland and thus supporting the war effort. Upon her return to Canada and demobilization from the military at the war's end, she was offered a job as a pilot for Nickel Belt Airways where she taught flying lessons and flew charter flights across northern Ontario, displaying just as much strength as her male colleagues. She is considered Canada's first female bush pilot.²¹⁷

Gradually, women became successful and respectful bush pilots who were not only able to fly bush planes but also repair them. Therefore, when the RCAF pilots returned home from the war in 1945, the world of aviation had completely changed, not only because there were women pilots but also because of great development in aviation industry. Ralph Langemann, a former bush pilot, describes the difference between male and female bush pilots from his perspective as follows: after four or five days spent in a cabin, "the men in the bush camps would start raising hell, punching out the walls, getting drunk. They could not handle it. The women could always find something to do to occupy their time."²¹⁸ It seems that although they lacked the physical strength of

²¹² Ibid.

²¹³ Ibid.

²¹⁴ Ibid.

²¹⁵ Ibid.

²¹⁶ Boer, *Bush Pilots*, 8-9.

²¹⁷ Ibid., 9.

²¹⁸ Ralph Langemann quoted in Matheson, *Flying the Frontiers*, 167.

men, women could cope with the solitude they faced during their flying adventures in the Far North much better than men.

To summarize, the historical value of bush pilots to open up Northern Canada is rooted in the return of the pilots from the World War I. They were a new breed of airborne pioneers who were opening the vast virgin, and until that time inaccessible, territories to business via bush flying. Thus, just as the railroad had opened the west and contributed to the establishment of cities like Edmonton a century earlier, in the 1920s the airplane was penetrating the north. Using Brian Richardson's apt remarks, bush pilots were "more than just airplane driver[s], [they were] history itself, bushing the frontier north."²¹⁹ They symbolized the new age of exploration and high adventure; moreover, they pushed geographical and social boundaries and opened up whole new world to travel and commerce, transporting passengers, working in mineral exploration and mining, public health, smoke jumping and tourism. They were the off-roaders of aviation; they managed to achieve unbelievable deeds even without air-traffic controllers, radios and even proper maps. They were mavericks in one sense; they refused a thing could not be done. Instead of crumbling, these intrepid men and women accepted every challenge they faced and could never accept defeat in the face of disaster or certain death. Landing their plane in the middle of a snowstorm or changing an engine in the middle of the Barren Lands of the Northwest Territories were mere commonplace events in the lives of those courageous pilots. They developed their own flying technique to land on different surfaces and became a vital part in everyday life of the locals. As one current bush pilot in Bailey and Lower's documentary argues, "In those days, it was so much better to be a [bush] pilot. It was a pioneering thing. You were doing something that was totally new."²²⁰ Moreover, thanks to bush pilots, air transport became affordable to geologists and surveyors and the ill or injured could be quickly transported for medical attention. In addition, bush pilots came to know Native tribes better than anybody else and those northern communities received the support from the flying services to provide the resources and services that would not be available for them if the bush aircraft had not been developed to the level of operation today. By searching for mineral and metal deposits from the air, flying to those remote communities and establishing business with the tribes, bush pilots helped build the country's economy. As Cross states, even today there are some small remote

²¹⁹ Richardson in Bailey and Lower, *Reflections on a Canadian Myth*.

²²⁰ Bailey and Lower, *Reflections on a Canadian Myth*.

communities in the Canadian north who still rely on bush planes and pilots to bring in necessities of everyday life which inhabitants in the south take for granted.²²¹ Nevertheless, as Boer claims, “the bush pilot phenomenon is increasingly scarce in this great country of ours.”²²² Jean-Marie Arseneault, an interviewed pilot-mechanic, perceives the aviation situation similarly as Boer, arguing that nowadays, “there are more “wilderness taxis,” not real bush aviation. It is the end of an era.” He continues his argument saying that, “perhaps, there is no more use for it. The breed [of bush pilots] is not dying, [but] the need for it is gone.”²²³

3.4 BUSH PLANES

“[My aircraft] is just a little more than ‘a collection of spare parts.’”²²⁴

In the present, everyone can obtain a pilot’s licence and certification since there is a myriad of flight training courses available to enrol on. In the past, however, there were no such courses providing bush-flying instruction available and the plane equipment was simplistic. Furthermore, as Thomas Fecteau, a retired pilot interviewed in Boulianne’s film, states, there were no navigational aids in the early bush flying days, let alone range radios. The only thing the pilots could rely on during their flights were outdated maps.²²⁵ Fecteau goes on explaining the way of signalling back in those days since with no radio station available and installed in their planes, the pilots were forced to invent their own way of communication with their fellow pilots. As he describes, “If someone had a problem, they had to signal. Not with standard codes, but we had signals meaning “Stop here,” which was paddling in a circle. A white sheet on the shore meant “I need someone.” In winter, a fix-branch “X” on the lake meant “Stop.”²²⁶ Arseneault supports Fecteau’s descriptions and argues that before the arrival of GPS, pilots could spend hours planning flights due to the lack of navigational aids. He further suggests that they must have constantly been worried about whether they had enough fuel for the route and detours or emergency air strips.²²⁷ Despite their lack of aeronautical education and navigational aids, however, pioneering bush pilots are responsible for immense

²²¹ Cross, *Flying on Instinct*, 9.

²²² Boer, *Bush Pilots*, 6.

²²³ Jean-Marie Arseneault quoted in Boulianne, *Into the Wild Blue Yonder*.

²²⁴ Cross, *Flying on Instinct*, 37.

²²⁵ Thomas Fecteau quoted in Boulianne, *Into the Wild Blue Yonder*.

²²⁶ *Ibid.*

²²⁷ Arseneault quoted in Boulianne, *Into the Wild Blue Yonder*.

development in the Canadian north in terms of business, mapping the territory, in the mining industry, etc., and it was not only their skills, bravery, ability to keep calm, and luck they needed in order to be successful and manage their tasks. Another factor contributing to a successfully completed mission was the pilots' unity with their planes.

There were several various types of bush planes used in Canada; the prime focus of this chapter is, however, on the very first pioneering, most famous and most used bush planes and fleets. Modern types of bush planes which became used after the World War II are briefly mentioned in the final part of this chapter. Nonetheless, before dealing with names like de Havilland, Fairchild, Junkers, La Vigilance, Norseman, and Twin Otter, which have become recognizable names in bush flying, it seems vital to point out some general facts concerning bush planes first. Cross claims that in pioneering bush flying, the city of Edmonton was called the Gateway to the north, and aircraft which served adventurers to discover and transport northern riches, such as fish, furs, diamonds and uranium, was built and repaired there.²²⁸ It is also essential to recall that at the birth and gradual expansion of the bush flying phenomenon, there were no concrete landing strips or runways in the remote areas of the Canadian north and bush flying very often involved operations in rough terrain. Forest clearances, still water surfaces, and in winter, frozen lakes were used as areas for landing. As it was suggested in previous chapters, such terrain conditions necessitated for the bush planes to be equipped with large tires for landing on the land, floats for water landings, and skis or skids for landings on snow and have the ability to switch between them to be operable in all weather conditions. Moreover, as Cross states, the planes should have short take-off and landing capabilities and the ability to stop in a short distance. Concerning the structure of a typical bush plane, its wings should be located on top of the fuselage to avoid making contact with bumps or any overgrowth in the landing area. As for the landing gear, it was of two main types. The first one, conventional or taildragger, comprised two wheels at the front of the plane and a smaller one or skid at the rear. The other type, tricycle or nose-wheel, had two main wheels under the wings and a third smaller wheel under the nose.²²⁹ The taildragger had better aeronautic ability whereas the tricycle had more landing options if equipped with oversized tires, Cross explains. In the early years of bush flying, pilots preferred the taildragger arrangement for its large propeller which required greater ground clearance and thus helped avoid hitting any

²²⁸ Cross, *Flying on Instinct*, 87.

²²⁹ *Ibid.*, 34-35.

obstacles in the landing area. Nevertheless, due to the fact that the main wheels were located forward of the plane's centre of gravity, pilots needed greater skills when flying a plane of this type because any deviation from a straight trajectory might affect the stability of the aircraft. On the other hand, when flying the tricycle arrangement plane, pilots might experience tail-strike problems, when the rear section of the plane hits the runway, if they pulled up too quickly or raise the nose too sharply while landing. A skilled pilot was supposed to manage either type of aircraft, Cross remarks.²³⁰

The planes used in the early years of bush flying were adapted from military uses and therefore were not specifically designed for transporting heavy cargo to the far north and withstand the rigours of the Canadian wilderness.²³¹ As a result, plenty of them experienced numerous crashes, hard landings and makeshift mends.²³² Cross claims that even minor turbulence could cause the early planes to bump around, and variations in altitude would distort the map scale.²³³ One pilot described his plane as little more than "a collection of spare parts."²³⁴ Consequently, some aviation companies planned to produce a sturdy civilian airplane which would withstand landing on very rough airstrips or none at all without shaking the plane apart by installing a shock absorber made of bungee cord.²³⁵ Furthermore, in the early years of bush flying, planes were not radio-equipped, and there were only six radio stations in operation across the territories. Civilian airfields were scarce and accidents were commonplace. Often the unreliable aircraft left the crew sitting on a remote lake miles from civilization and without communications.²³⁶ A lot of bush pilots were reported missing many times during their missions, but the lucky ones always managed to get back home.²³⁷

Canada's very first bush plane was Curtiss HS-2L Flying Boat, also known as Curtiss HS-2L La Vigilance, twenty of which the Canadian government was given in a post-war gift. Pilots who trained on different aircraft during the World War I returned to Canada and flew this war-surplus aircraft which was purchased for services to northern, isolated communities.²³⁸ It was the very type of plane which was used in the

²³⁰ Ibid., 35-36.

²³¹ Ibid., 36.

²³² Ibid., 37.

²³³ Ibid., 38.

²³⁴ Ibid., 37.

²³⁵ Ibid., 28.

²³⁶ Ibid., 45.

²³⁷ Ibid., 58.

²³⁸ Ibid., 18.

first-ever bush flight in Canada in 1919, Boer claims.²³⁹ According to Cross, the HS-2L was primitive and its equipment included only a compass, an air-and wind-speed indicator, and a turn-and-bank indicator.²⁴⁰ Its appearance reminded some pilots of a pelican with its biplane wings attached to a thick, bathtub-like fuselage, Cross states.²⁴¹ As Boer describes, its construction was wooden, the pilot's seat was situated in front of the rear engine while passengers sat at the front of the plane.²⁴² Since both the crewmen and up to 5 passengers sat in open cockpits, they had no protection whatsoever from rain, snow or skin-searing cold. What is more, the plane had only one engine and when it overheated, it spewed its boiling water all over the cabin. It took a lot of muscle power of both crewmen to manoeuvre and have control over the plane on water or in bad weather. Upon landing, for example, the engineer was often forced to climb out onto the lower part of the wing to add extra weight in order to allow the pilot to turn.²⁴³ As it is implied, the craft was far from perfect and it gave the crew a lot of trouble. For instance, sometimes immediate mechanical adjustments had to be completed while airborne or in the water in pouring rain, surrounded by mosquitoes.²⁴⁴

In addition to the previously-mentioned handicaps, this plane was so noisy that it made any conversation aboard impossible. Bush flying required ingenuity in pilots to able to solve various problems quickly, and thus, as a result, some pilots introduced a primitive in-cabin mail, sending written messages to and from the occupants as a form of conversation. As its name implies, this massive, single-engine biplane required a water surface to land and over summers it was used to transport personnel, patrol for forest fires and map territories.²⁴⁵ As it has been mentioned, the hull was wooden, which proved to be problematic since it absorbed water and thus created extra weight and reduced the amount of cargo on board. As a result, this type of plane demanded more space to take off than to land, which forced pilots to be creative. They could choose from several techniques to achieve it, one of them included a rope attached to the plane on one side and to a tree on the other side. The pilot revved the engine and when it was at full power, the engineer leaned from the cabin and cut the rope to set the plane free and unable it to take off in a shorter distance. In conclusion, as Cross states, the HS-2L

²³⁹ Boer, *Bush Pilots*, 156.

²⁴⁰ Cross, *Flying on Instinct*, 21.

²⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 19-20.

²⁴² Boer, *Bush Pilots*, 152.

²⁴³ Cross, *Flying on Instinct*, 19-20.

²⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 19-20.

²⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 28.

was, after all, a flying boat, thus, when lakes became frozen, there was no chance for the plane to be used until spring. It was a capricious machine which needed, as Cross puts it, “a fearless pilot and an agile engineer to manually manoeuvre it as required.”²⁴⁶ A picture of the HS-2L is to be found in Appendix B.

William J. Wheeler mentions another World War I surplus aircraft which was used extensively by post war pilots especially for flying instruction and barnstorming. It was the open-cockpit training biplane Curtiss JN-4 named the Canuck.²⁴⁷ If interested in a picture, see Appendix C.

One of the pioneering all-metal aircraft model used in the early years of bush flying was Junkers, especially Junkers W33 and W34 produced by a German aircraft manufacturer. Although a single-engine monoplane, with its low wings Junkers W33 was aerodynamically advanced for its time, moreover, as Cross notes, it was used in the first east-west, non-stop, heavier-than-air crossing flight over the Atlantic. The younger model, Junkers W34, could transport a pilot and 5 passengers or their equivalent weight in cargo. Both models comprised square fuselage and due to their capability of storing large amount of cargo they were nicknamed “flying boxcars.” Cross further states that their low-wing design was appreciated by pilots and proved to be useful especially in winter season when landing on a frozen lake since if the skis broke through the snow and ice, the broad wings managed to keep the passengers and cargo out of the freezing water for longer time.²⁴⁸ For a picture of Junkers W-34, see Appendix D.

As a result of gradually increasing popularity and usefulness of bush flying, bush pilots demanded aircraft which would be suitable for flying in Canadian conditions, which became a challenge for manufacturers. One of the manufacturers, Fairchild, adopted a different and fairly new strategy. As Cross describes, before starting production, the manufacturer had asked pilots what characteristic features the plane should have, and then they incorporated those recommendations into the first models. This later became a common practice when construing a new bush plane model. What pilots demanded was a monoplane with high wings which would enable them to see the ground, an air-cooled radial engine to avoid cold-weather problems which they experienced when flying the war-surplus planes with liquid-cooled engines, and an enclosed, heated cockpit and cabin was also a must. Thus, in 1927 the purpose-built

²⁴⁶ Ibid., 19-20.

²⁴⁷ Wheeler, *Skippers of the Sky*, 6-7.

²⁴⁸ Cross, *Flying on Instinct*, 37.

all-purpose Fairchild FC-1 was born. It could be outfitted with wheels, floats and skis and thus was suitable for year-round flying. Smaller, faster and easier to fly, as Cross summarizes it, the Fairchild was an ideal bush plane and its design features were much copied by other manufacturers, Cross claims.²⁴⁹ See the attached picture in Appendix E.

Another aircraft type used for bush flying was Fokker Universal, based on the design of Anthony Fokker, which was, according to Cross, the first airplane built in the US.²⁵⁰ Its interchangeable undercarriage could be outfitted with wheels, floats and skis and was thus operable in virtually all seasons.²⁵¹ Later on, under the supervision of Robert Noorduyn, who would later build his own bush plane, a new plane evolved from the Fokker Universal, namely the Fokker Super Universal. It comprised high wings with a span of 14.55 metres, a single 149 kW J-6 engine, and two gasoline tanks, and at maximum speed of 190 km/h it could manage to fly up to 860 kilometres. The pilot sat in an open cockpit situated in the front section while 4 to 6 passengers or their equivalent weight of cargo were seated in an enclosed cabin below and to the rear of the pilot. However, neither the Fokker fleet was flawless. According to Cross, on March 3, 1931, the wing of a Trans World Airlines Fokker fell off on its way from Kansas City to Los Angeles, crashing and killing all passengers on board.²⁵² If interested in pictures, see Appendices F and G.

In 1935, Robert B.C. Noorduyn, a designer and manufacturer of Dutch origin, also aspired to create a bush plane that would be suitable for Canadian conditions. In order for his plane to have all the necessary equipment that bush pilots needed, after the fashion of Fairchild, he asked them what they would welcome and need in a bush plane so that he could build accordingly.²⁵³ According to them, the new model should have high wings to provide for a good view of where they were going, and two doors on each side of the plane to enable them to load and unload large cargo quickly. Furthermore, its undercarriage had to be rugged enough and easily adaptable to different landing conditions, such as rough water in summer and snowdrift in winter. In addition, an insulated cabin and heated cockpit were taken for granted as well. Noorduyn met all

²⁴⁹ Ibid., 43-44.

²⁵⁰ Ibid., 27.

²⁵¹ Ibid., 28.

²⁵² Ibid., 28-29.

²⁵³ Cross, *Flying on Instinct*, 24.

the requirements and so a 10-passenger Norseman, a sturdy, reliable and easy to repair aircraft, was produced.²⁵⁴ A picture of Norseman is to be found in Appendix H.

In 1946, another aircraft manufacturer, de Havilland, made it its objective to replace the old-fashioned unreliable bush planes and develop a new all-purpose civilian plane for extreme northern conditions. They had already produced a few aircraft before the war, such as de Havilland Fox Moth, a light plane designed for recreational purposes and civilian training, capable of seating 3 passengers,²⁵⁵ and de Havilland Tiger Moth biplane, a small plane with limited range, needing to be refuelled every 210 kilometres, which might cause pilots to find themselves in an extraordinary situation. For instance, as Cross mentions, once a pilot was forced to land on a baseball diamond, interrupting the game in progress in order to refuel the plane. After doing so, the pilot lifted off, waving to the surprised players when flying away.²⁵⁶ Nevertheless, these models were outdated and could not keep up with the increasing demands of bush pilots. Therefore, the company did what Fairchild and Noorduyn had done before – they circulated a questionnaire among seasoned bush pilots for specifications and innovations they would like to see in a bush plane. The pilots requested an all-metal airframe, an undercarriage that could be equipped with wheels, skis or floats, wide doors on both sides of a dock for easier loading and unloading, and extra power and STOL²⁵⁷ performance. Following the specifications, the company launched de Havilland Chipmunk (DHC-1) and de Havilland Beaver (DHC-2). De Havilland Beaver was a single engine, propeller-driven, high-wing aircraft seating 6 people and, as Cross claims, was often referred to as a half-ton truck with wings.²⁵⁸ According to Boer, DHC-2 was designed by Clennel Haggerston, a former bush pilot known as Punch Dickins in the bush flying world, and was one of the most reliable aircraft which became very popular and was profusely used in a high number of flight operations in the north. Its construction was rugged and engine powerful.²⁵⁹

Later, the manufacturer launched de Havilland Otter (DHC-3), de Havilland Caribou (DHC-4), de Havilland Buffalo (DHC-5), and de Havilland Twin Otter (DHC-6), planes used worldwide from jungles to glaciers.²⁶⁰ De Havilland Otter was big and fast with

²⁵⁴ Ibid., 24-25.

²⁵⁵ Ibid., 80.

²⁵⁶ Ibid., 88.

²⁵⁷ Short take-off and landing.

²⁵⁸ Cross, *Flying on Instinct*, 66.

²⁵⁹ Boer, *Bush Pilots*, 59.

²⁶⁰ Cross, *Flying on Instinct*, 66.

a range of 965 kilometres. Having the same overall configuration as the Beaver, although being longer, heavier and with a wider wingspan, the Otter could store an impressive payload and transport up to 11 people on board.²⁶¹ As Boer states, de Havilland Twin Otter was helped designed by Punch Dickins as well and served various purposes – a passenger plane, cargo and bush plane, and occasionally as a water bomber, and became very popular among bush pilots.²⁶² Matheson adds that a new navigation system was later installed in the Twin Otter making it easier for pilots to fly over the Canadian territory.²⁶³ See the attached pictures in Appendices I–M.

As Richard Gilbert mentions in his documentary called *The Golden Age*, it was not until 1945 that the jet age started in Canada. The war had provided Canada with airports and terminal buildings and thousands of properly trained, experienced and enthusiastic pilots who were anxious to fly. The number and size of the airports, however, soon proved insufficient and the terminal buildings inadequate. Suddenly, engineers were facing a problem of not being able to keep pace with the tremendous advance that had taken place in aviation, concerning both the amount of flying since it had doubled and new breakthroughs in the technical field. Therefore, Canada was not only in need of new airports, terminal buildings, telecommunications, surveillance radars for major airports and weather services in the north, it also strove for satisfying the needs of people for safe, regular, licensed, efficient, and economical jet air transport.²⁶⁴

In the 1960s, Boeing and McDonnell Douglas fleets took over the aviation markets all over the world with their revolutionary high-flying long-range passenger jets Boeing 707, 727, and the huge 747 and McDonnell Douglas DC-3, DC-6 and DC-8, increasing charter service range and the ability to transport more passengers to a destination faster and more safely than before²⁶⁵ and thus adding a new dimension not only to trans-arctic flying. Thousands of passengers were flown over the inhospitable arctic regions of Canada and the traffic was growing. Although these airplanes could carry bigger loads, they could not, however, land in isolated communities; moreover, they required runways for their operation²⁶⁶ and demanded better ground facilities,

²⁶¹ Ibid., 91.

²⁶² Boer, *Bush Pilots*, 59-60.

²⁶³ Matheson, *Flying the Frontiers*, 181.

²⁶⁴ Richard Gilbert, dir., *The Golden Age* (Ottawa: National Film Board of Canada, 1959), accessed November 10, 2016, http://www.nfb.ca/film/golden_age/.

²⁶⁵ Boer, *Bush Pilots*, 181-182.

²⁶⁶ Bailey and Lower, *Reflections on a Canadian Myth*.

better electronic equipment and specialization. As stated in Gilbert's documentary, due to the difficulties to meet the numerous requirements of the big jet planes, small planes were kept in the bushes while the versatility of the helicopter was used in mountains. Therefore, small bush planes and their production still had their place in business even in the midst of the jet boom.²⁶⁷ According to Bailey and Lower's documentary, however, the current aviation situation is that there are no new bush planes produced anywhere in the world these days.²⁶⁸ If interested in more modern types of aircraft, see Appendices N–P.

Ralph Langemann describes the differences between the old piston engines and the jet turbine ones. In his opinion, the modern engines lack the physical symptoms of the old ones. In the old airplanes, as he claims, pilots could feel the air starting to nibble, bite on the controls when ready to lift off and then breaking loose from the wing. The latest airplanes are totally computerized. As he sees it, "your control column is no different from the joystick on your computer. But small planes are still 1930s technology. You still have to feel them."²⁶⁹ Many pilots also stick to the old planes for the very sense of pioneering they provide them with. Robert S. Grant, a pilot used to flying original bush planes, also felt a little uncomfortable when flying the new types of aircraft, stating that "much of the flying took place on instruments, a field in which I lacked extensive experience."²⁷⁰ His quote suggests that pilots who were used to relying solely on visual approaches and flying using their vision might have found it difficult to adjust to new planes with new technology and the advanced communicative procedures. As a result, despite the advances in aviation, many pilots still preferred to fly older aircraft with minimal communication en route.

In order to make the list complete, other types of aircraft used in bush flying and popular with pilots included the Canso, Stinson, Piper and Cessna family, then Beechcraft, Lockheed, Boeing B-17 Flying Fortress, and Avro Lancaster which was popular especially for survey photography in later years.²⁷¹ The H-21 Piasecki helicopters nicknamed "flying bananas," on the other hand, found their use in search operations. Pictures of some of these aircraft are to be found in Appendices Q–S.

²⁶⁷ Gilbert, *The Golden Age*.

²⁶⁸ Bailey and Lower, *Reflections on a Canadian Myth*.

²⁶⁹ Langemann quoted in Matheson, *Flying the Frontiers*, 173.

²⁷⁰ Robert S. Grant, *Bush Flying: The Romance of the North*, ed. DM Communications (Surrey: Hancock House Publishers Ltd., 1995), 240.

²⁷¹ Wheeler, *Skippers of the Sky*, 8.

Although knowing or expecting the behaviour of their flying machines in any situation was vital for bush pilots, Arseneault is of the opinion that the feeling of overfamiliarity with the plane could be fatal and harmful for pilots. He argues that if pilots rely too much on the clean accident and technical-fault records of their plane, it might have tragic consequences. He goes even further to advise that it is better to go far beyond basic mechanical requirements when doing maintenance of the plane.²⁷²

To sum up, aviation in Canada changed dramatically during a few decades and its importance rapidly increased in the last decade of the 20th century. The often unreliable open-cockpit aircraft models such as the HS-2L used at the very beginning were gradually replaced by more reliable Norsemen, de Havillands, and last but not least, DC-8s and Boeings. Where remote settlements once depended upon single-engine aircraft equipped with floats or skis requiring waterways, jet-powered planes now operate on a regular basis using all-weather landing strips. Instruments and modern equipment have reduced the danger caused by bad weather; roomier aircraft models then have enabled to carry more profitable payloads. The risks that were once a part of bush flying are no longer the norm. Data provided in Hynek and Kovaříková's work called *Geografie Kanady* show that the number of registered aircraft increased by 147 per cent during the period between 1970-1995. Moreover, in 1997 the number of transported passengers reached over 78 million while in 1991 it was 32 million. Furthermore, in 2000 two major competing airlines, Air Canada and Canadian Airlines, were united and today their fleet counts more than 240 aircraft and flies to 545 destinations all over the world. In addition, there are around 1,500 other licensed companies providing domestic flights and flights between Canada and the United States. As Hynek and Kovaříková state in their detailed study, in 1998 there were 1395 airports in Canada; 515 out of them were runways with concrete surface, 880 comprised runways with unpaved surface and then there were 17 heliports. As it was suggested in one of the previous chapters, plane service has to certain extent been replaced by helicopter service. According to Hynek and Kovaříková, nowadays helicopters are used in TV news reporting, by building, forestry, and mining companies and the police, as air ambulance and for sight-seeing flights.²⁷³ From Hynek and Kovaříková's data it can be

²⁷² Arseneault quoted in Boulianne, *Into the Wild Blue Yonder*.

²⁷³ Alois Hynek and Leona Kovaříková, *Geografie Kanady* (Brno: Masarykova univerzita v Brně, 2003), 149-150, author's translation.

concluded that Canada's airline industry has acquired international recognition and importance.

Despite the fact that airplanes are very sophisticated, reliable and safe nowadays, there was a devastating plane crash in Canada with an alarming number of victims as late as in August 2011. That day, First Air charter Flight 6560 was flying from Yellowknife to Resolute Bay (Nunavut) situated north of the Arctic Circle and very close to the magnetic North Pole using Boeing 737-200. During the final approach to the runway, the aircraft crashed into the shoulder of a hill approximately one mile to the east of the runway killing 12 people on board. Only 3 passengers survived the crash. The factors which contributed to the accident were manifold, among them heavy fog and poor visibility connected to it which proved dangerous during flying in the Canadian north also in the analysed works and made it impossible to see the hill until was too late; another factors were inaccurate compass reading giving the pilot incorrect data, the pilot's relying too much on his faulty instruments and, last but not least, strong side wind which pushed the plane further and further away from its intended path.²⁷⁴ To conclude, in spite of the technological development and modern instruments, the erratic northern weather and conditions may still play a significant role in a plane accident, especially if pilots are distracted.

Next chapters are dedicated to literary and film analyses. A considerable attention will be paid to the bush flying phenomenon and the image of North the analysed literature and film presents and its possible impact on the protagonists.

²⁷⁴ Tim Wolochatiuk, dir., "Death in the Arctic," *Air Crash Investigation*, National Geographic Channel, 2015, accessed April 19, 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OF1myk3VmTI>.

4 BUSH FLYING IN LITERATURE

Nowadays, travelling by plane is comfortable and in Canada, flying to areas distant from the U.S. border has become a matter of course. These days, passengers flying to Yellowknife or Whitehorse travel in air-conditioned or heated Boeing aircraft completely oblivious to the situation of air transportation in those areas in the past century. They cannot imagine the hardships the pioneering bush pilots suffered on their journeys.

The previous chapters provided a detailed insight into the world of bush flying; the development of this industry until the end of the 20th century was mentioned as well as the duties of bush pilots and the advancement and expansion of aircraft. This chapter brings to life wondrous tales of the adventures and misadventures over the endless bush and forbidding barrens of Canada's north from the log books and journals of people for whom bush flying was a way of life, and thus providing a rare glimpse at the unique way of life the intrepid men and women adopted and showing that often there was nothing romantic about bush flying. The aim of this chapter is to interconnect the theoretical background from the previous chapters with real-life adventures of bush pilots. Although the theoretical information has already occasionally been supported by some brief accounts, this chapter narrates a few similar chosen stories but in greater detail. The objective is to demonstrate the process of various bush pilots' missions, be it mapping missions, search and rescue missions, regular passenger transport, or freight transportation during mining rush, in real life. This chapter should be useful to the comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon and the duties and situations bush flying brought with itself. It also stands as evidence of the toughness and mental agility of the men brought to bush flying. The chapter is divided into three subchapters; the first one focuses on analysing adventure biographical accounts, the second deals with a non-fiction book and the last one analyses a fictional short story.

4.1 BUSH PILOTS' ADVENTURE NARRATIVES

In this subchapter, the real-life stories of former bush pilots Mike Thomas, Lyle James Anderson, both taken from Shirley Matheson's *Flying the Frontiers*, and Colonel C.D.H. MacAlpine's expedition, included in Peter Boer's *Bush Pilots: Daredevils of the Wilderness*, are to be analysed and compared in terms of the cause of their crash and the weather conditions; next their struggle to survive is to be explored, examining

especially the particular steps they took to be rescued, and their rescue and return home. The last focus of the analysis is the portrayal of the Canadian North these accounts provide. These 3 stories have been chosen on the basis of certain factors they share and at the same time differ in. They all depict unfortunate circumstances such as plane crash or deteriorating weather making the crew stranded since the book fictions to be analysed in the following chapter also involve a plane crash. The objective is not only to introduce the woes bush pilots and their passengers were forced to experience, but also to demonstrate how they managed to tackle the situation. It is essential to bear in mind that not all Canadian bush pilots found themselves in these situations or experienced an airplane crash; some pilots experienced none or only a few uncontrolled landings, others, however, died in a plane crash.

All of these stories have something in common – the participants found themselves stranded and far from the touch of humanity. The flight of Mike Thomas was a routine flight between Yellowknife and Snowdrift involving transportation of passengers back home and delivery of parcels and post money orders. In James Anderson's case, on the other hand, it was a prospecting flight focusing on mapping the terrain nearby the Akie River, 50 miles east of Fort Ware. Regarding MacAlpine, he set out for the high Arctic with 8 engineers and prospectors in 2 single-engine planes on a three-week-long journey which should have been the longest round-trip by plane ever with the intention to stake claims in a rich copper field and was thus an exploratory mineral-seeking flight. Once finished, the expedition would total more than 22,000 miles, starting from Winnipeg, through Bathurst Inlet, Aklavik to Yukon and then back home. Their plan was to drop off some supplies along their way, explore the territories and pick up some prospectors due for a trip home.

To start with, the cause of the forced landing or crash is first to be analysed and compared. As has already been stated, operations in the changeover seasons, spring and autumn, were always challenging and unpredictable, which former bush pilot Mike Thomas came to know to his cost. On November 28 1962 he set off from Yellowknife to Snowdrift flying a Helio Courier with 4 passengers and a 9-month-old baby aboard. Despite the poor weather and considerable fog, they decided to fly. Moreover, the ice that had formed on Great Slave Lake along their route was not very stable yet and thus landing on it could prove dangerous and cause the plane to crash. Aware of these facts, Thomas took off to the skies since his passengers were eager to be home. After some time, however, the fog became extremely thick and was joined by heavy snowfall.

Furthermore, the plane had also picked up some ice which, together with the poor visibility, made it dangerous to stay in the air. Thomas made a decision to land on an unidentified near-by lake covered by a thin layer of snow. Upon landing, using his axe Thomas tested the thickness of the ice. When the thickness proved appropriate, he taxied the plane along the ice to a cabin. “Black ice!”²⁷⁵ shouted suddenly Ken Kerr, one of Thomas’s passengers. As they were moving along the lake, the ice conditions were changing as well when suddenly the ice could not bear the weight of the plane anymore causing the plane to crash. “In they went. Water bubbled up right over the engine, which abruptly stopped running. They were sinking fast.”²⁷⁶

The cause of James Anderson’s crash is slightly similar to that of Thomas in terms of the style of the crash. Together with Jim Radley and Bill Young, Anderson set off to their prospecting flight over the Rocky Mountains in September, 1966, just before the arrival of the changeover season. After some time spent prospecting, they decided to land on a gravel bar to stake claims. Anderson checked the landing area twice to make sure it was safe and the conditions were suitable for landing and the third time he came on in. Although twice checked, the landing was rough, bouncing over brush and rubbish. Anderson decided to abort the landing and took off into the wind again. However, “then the wind receded,”²⁷⁷ causing him to lose his lift. In order to avoid rolling into a rock pile, Anderson had to turn the plane a bit. Nevertheless, an accident could not be averted. Upon touching the water, the wheels hit some big boulders making the plane turn upside-down.²⁷⁸ Thus, while Thomas’s plane crashed due to thin ice when touching the water surface, Anderson’s problems were boulders hidden below the water surface.

The story of MacAlpine’s expedition is the oldest one of these three, dating back to as early as August 1929, to the beginnings of bush flying in Canada, and involves a forced landing, not a crash. It was rather a matter of bad luck. Bad luck accompanied the expedition from the very beginning since they became stuck in Fort Churchill for 3 days owing to an explosion of a ship with MacAlpine’s supplies and the loss of one of their airplanes. As well as in Mike Thomas’s case, the participants of the MacAlpine expedition found themselves lost in the skies because of heavy rain and snow and strong winds. Furthermore, both planes were dangerously low on fuel. When spotting a small

²⁷⁵ Matheson, *Flying the Frontiers*, 8.

²⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 8.

²⁷⁷ James Anderson quoted in Matheson, *Flying the Frontiers*, 49.

²⁷⁸ Matheson, *Flying the Frontiers*, 49-50.

Inuit camp on a lake below them, they started descending with the intention to ask the Inuit about their location and directions.²⁷⁹ Both planes managed to land on surface without any problems, which makes them so far the only undamaged and flyable planes in these 3 stories.

While Mike Thomas and Ken Kerr managed to abandon the plane, the women and the baby found themselves locked inside the fuselage. Thomas immediately tried to release the women by kicking out the plexiglas window, to no avail. Watching the plane sinking, soaking wet, with broken leg, no knife and the axe inside the plane, Thomas was desperate. Then he spotted an approaching Inuit. After explaining the situation to him, he was supplied with an axe and managed to pull the women, both unconscious, and the baby, blue and foaming at the mouth, out of the wreck.²⁸⁰ Concerning Anderson's upside-down crash, neither of the men was injured. Just as in Thomas's case, their plane started to sink fast. Therefore, they jumped out into water and tried to pull the airplane up to shore, but to no avail since as Anderson describes, "Gurgle, gurgle, the wings filled with water and it sunk."²⁸¹

As stated before, since bush flying involved spending time in freezing temperatures and harsh climate, appropriate clothing was essential for survival out there. Thus, when flying to northern outposts especially in wintertime, a fur parka was invaluable, a must. Mike Thomas was wearing one. Unfortunately, in 20 below zero, when trying to get his passengers out of the airplane, Thomas broke through the ice, his parka got soaked and was thus ineffective. Regarding James Anderson and his crew, because it was supposed to be a short flight, they did not even have proper boots, let alone a parka. "We even had oxfords on! Damned fools,"²⁸² Anderson states.

Concerning weather conditions, each of the 3 groups was grounded on the ground and at the spot of their landing or crash due to bad weather. MacAlpine's crew was the only one with flyable airplanes; nevertheless they could not be used for 3 days because of a thick fog. When they attempted to fly for supplies and fuel, the plane returned after twenty minutes in the air since the fog was too heavy and they did not have enough gasoline to reach their intended destination. To avoid getting lost at two different places, they decided to stay together at their landing spot since "they were

²⁷⁹ Boer, *Bush Pilots*, 211-215.

²⁸⁰ Matheson, *Flying the Frontiers*, 8-10.

²⁸¹ Anderson quoted in Matheson, *Flying the Frontiers*, 50.

²⁸² *Ibid.*, 50.

miles from help, and no one knew where they were.”²⁸³ MacAlpine’s expedition was also the only one who had some food supplies with them which were rationed as sparingly as possible. Furthermore, although early September, in this northern part of Canada the temperatures were already dropping below zero and snow began to fall in late afternoons. These conditions also prevented them from using a canoe to get to the nearest outpost since most of the water surfaces were starting to freeze over which could result in them becoming stuck in the ice along their way.²⁸⁴

As for Mike Thomas’s party, they were not that lucky. When everybody was safe inside the sparsely furnished cabin off the shore of the lake, they realized they had nothing to eat. They were in a critical situation since as Boer claims, once they were down and became lost, “no one knew of their predicament”²⁸⁵ and thus could not help them. Nonetheless, Matheson states that every pilot was supplied with a ration kit.²⁸⁶ When Thomas opened it, however, its content consisted of hard candies, biscuits, a fishnet, but no food essential for survival. Furthermore, all their blankets and bedrolls were wet, forcing them to sleep on the floor. To make matters even worse, as well as those of MacAlpine’s crew, each of their attempts to reach civilization failed. The weather continued to deteriorate to such an extent that they could not see more than a few yards from the cabin. Consequently, no one would attempt to search for them in that weather. Their attempt to get to Yellowknife by dogsled was aborted since the dog’s feet got so sore due to water on top of the ice that they were forced to return. Unless the weather changed, there was a little chance of any airplane coming that way. As Cross explains, “in the time before locator transmitters, searching for a missing aircraft by sight in the north was a long and often futile process.”²⁸⁷ As it appears, it was difficult to spot a coloured crashed plane from the air, less so Thomas’s silver Courier with only tail and top sides of the wings showing from beneath the snow and thus blending perfectly with it.²⁸⁸

Regarding James Anderson’s party, not only did they not have proper clothing, they also did not have any food. In addition, the weather deteriorated as well.²⁸⁹ Just as Mike Thomas or Colonel MacAlpine, they had no hope that a rescue operation would be

²⁸³ Boer, *Bush Pilots*, 216.

²⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 216-219.

²⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 45.

²⁸⁶ Matheson, *Flying the Frontiers*, 11.

²⁸⁷ Cross, *Flying on Instinct*, 119.

²⁸⁸ Matheson, *Flying the Frontiers*, 10-11.

²⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 50.

organized to search for them since as Anderson explains, “it was 1966, there wasn’t too much for search and rescue in those days. That was normal.”²⁹⁰

According to Matheson, pilots had to be adaptable to various living conditions and harsh climate in order to survive in the hostile environment of Canada’s north.²⁹¹ Ronald A. Keith also adds that “to survive, pilots had to rely entirely on their own resources.”²⁹² Even though having nothing to eat, Anderson and the two other men lit a fire and with a couple of crude tools such as a hunting knife, a pair of pliers, a crescent wrench and an axe built a makeshift shelter using nothing more than some spruce boughs, the airplane cowling and some branches. Other than the already mentioned tools, Anderson’s survival equipment also included a .45 Colt and a .357 Magnum, short guns which proved invaluable. When the heavy skies lifted, they decided to try hunting, but to no success. Both mountain goat and moose managed to escape with no scratch on their skin, leaving the men desperate and hungry. To make matters worse, one morning the men found grizzly tracks all around their fire. All they could do was sit and wait until the moose come into view again and hope no grizzly bear decides to have them for dinner. In the meantime, they tried to make their plane, still laying upside-down, flyable again. As Cross remarks, successful bush pilots needed to dispose of the ability to repair an airplane using only limited set of tools such as duct tape and wire.²⁹³ So, first they had to drain the wing tanks. Next job was to put the plane back on its wheels. To do so, a hole had to be dug in the river bottom so that the airplane’s nose could be pushed into it and the plane flipped over. The hole was created with hand-made tools made of materials available at the spot – mostly wood. To flip the airplane, the propeller was removed to avoid further bending and a rope was attached to the wheel. Another step was to push the nose down into the hole. Although the first attempt was unsuccessful, they managed the second time with sore muscles and empty stomachs. A few repairs were still there to make, but the worst had been done. Moreover, they finally managed to shoot a moose. With full stomachs and plane almost repaired, their hope was growing stronger by day.

In comparison with Anderson’s party, Mike Thomas did not dispose of any of such tools. The only tool there was available for them was a fishnet which they set on the second day and managed to catch a few whitefish which were shared. On the third

²⁹⁰ Anderson quoted in Matheson, *Flying the Frontiers*, 51.

²⁹¹ Matheson, *Flying the Frontiers*, x.

²⁹² Keith, *Bush Pilot with a Briefcase*, 87.

²⁹³ Cross, *Flying on Instinct*, 122.

day, however, the 12 people had nothing to eat at all. As Thomas Fecteau has already explained, when in need of help in wintertime, pilots should construct the letter “X” from branches meaning “Stop” in order to attract the attention of passing-by pilots. Due to the poor weather conditions and therefore the possibility of a passing-by pilot overlooking the “X” mark, however, Thomas and his passengers made an “SOS” sign on the lake using spruce boughs since, as Fecteau adds, pilots often invented their own way of communication with their fellow pilots depending on the conditions and circumstances.²⁹⁴ In addition, Thomas and the others also marked out an airstrip for a rescue pilot where it was safe to land. On the third night, Thomas heard an Otter flying low and heading towards them. It seemed it was going down towards the strip they made, so Thomas started waving his arms only to see the Otter flying over him, climbing and disappearing. The crew must have overlooked him and the big marks on the lake. “That was a heartbreaker,”²⁹⁵ Thomas admits. To prevent other planes from passing-by without spotting them, they piled up some brush and prepared some oil to light in case of hearing another airplane. Thomas also tried to repair his flare pistol.²⁹⁶

In order to maintain their discipline, the MacAlpine party worked hard to stay busy and build a high sod hut for all of them to live in. They also tried to use the engine cowling as a makeshift stove, but it did not serve its purpose. So, MacAlpine traded field glasses for a proper tin stove to the Inuit who helped the party survive when they ran out of food. The Inuit supplied them with whitefish and salmon which caused the crew stomach ache and diarrhoea, but they had little choice. With the hope of their rescue fading, the group decided to wait until freeze-up, then walk out over the ice to the nearest white settlement at Cambridge Bay — a month wait and a more than 70-mile track across the open ice. According to Boer, however, walking out was impossible in the Barren Lands. He gives a warning that “many people had tried to make the trip across the region of foot or sled, but their stories usually ended in starvation, even cannibalism.”²⁹⁷ Unfortunately, although being aware of this fact, the MacAlpine’s party had little choice. Lack of proper food started to be visible on the men and since no one knew of their predicament, walking out seemed to be the fastest and only option to reach civilisation. In the beginning they managed to shoot some ptarmigan, but as the season changed, only squirrels were left. Furthermore, the Inuit supplying the group

²⁹⁴ Fecteau quoted in Boulianne, *Into the Wild Blue Yonder*.

²⁹⁵ Mike Thomas quoted in Matheson, *Flying the Frontiers*, 12.

²⁹⁶ Matheson, *Flying the Frontiers*, 11-12.

²⁹⁷ Boer, *Bush Pilots*, 45.

with food left for several days during which the conditions of the men worsened considerably. In addition, no animal wandered to the vicinity of their camp and their rations were dwindling. They spent their time lying in their sleeping bags, too tired to speak. Fortunately, the Inuit eventually returned with more food and a shot caribou which was shared.

Then the temperatures dropped below zero and with the ice growing thicker, the crew began to prepare for their journey. On October 21, they struck out northwest along the coast. The Inuit guides helped the party built snow igloos every night and supplied them with fish. Malnourished, exhausted, frozen and frostbitten, the men fought the wind the whole way and for miles they were surrounded by whiteness. There were no signs of land in any direction around them. Moreover, they were stopped by thin ice twice and had to camp out for a few days until it was safe to proceed. They were slowly loosing hope of reaching the white settlement and they did not care about the wind anymore. “Everything was cold—toes, fingers and noses.”²⁹⁸

The return back to civilization was different for each group. Concerning Mike Thomas and his party, the fourth day was their lucky day. Thomas heard a low flying Cessna circling around them, although not visible. They lit the brush they prepared the day before making the clouds completely black with smoke. In addition, when hearing the Cessna turning, Thomas fired his flare pistol. Then the plane landed on the strip they had marked out and pilot Bobby McLean got out, complaining to Thomas that his flare had just missed the wing of his airplane. McLean transported the women to Yellowknife first, and then returned for Kerr and Thomas. They were stranded for 4 days.

After they managed to get their plane on its wheels and shoot a moose, Anderson and his men worked hard to make the airplane into flying conditions. They had to drain water from the wings and then pour the gas back into the tanks. Next, they heated the engine to dry condensation and cleared logs from the lake. When all the 3 men were in the plane, they taxied upriver and finally took off to the skies. On their way home they stopped in a hunting camp to drain remaining water in the sediment bowl and borrowed some gas. Then they were overtaken by a rainstorm, however, they managed to get through and at last spotted some lights on the Alaska Highway. They were welcomed in the local camp. This accident on Akie River was just one of Anderson’s famed 16

²⁹⁸ Boer, *Bush Pilots*, 229.

crashes. Although being lost for around 5 days, Anderson did not even consider it a crash; for him it was just one of his “uncontrolled landings.”²⁹⁹

Regarding the MacAlpine expedition, with less than one third of their journey remaining, the men were buoyed by encouraging news about two Natives hearing a plane engine while searching for supplies. They spent the next two days eating, resting and conserving their strength for the final part. On November 3 they set out on their final trek. Due to the fact that the ice was very thin, they were forced to run fast the rest of the way and avoid dark patches. Their Inuit guide whom they named “Charlie” advised them, “if someone fall[s] in, no stop.”³⁰⁰ Thus, unable to stop, the men kept on running until the party became separated as the stronger outpaced the slower. “Their legs burned and cramped, their sides blazed in pain and their lungs ached every icy blast of wind, but they did not stop.”³⁰¹ The first group arrived at Cambridge Bay around 4:30 pm, the last one at around 7:30 pm. They were immediately medically examined and accommodated in a room with a warm fire. MacAlpine managed to send a message to the home base in Winnipeg confirming their arrival and well-being. They all feasted that night.

Unluckily, their adventure, however, was not over yet. Eager to get home, the party left Cambridge Bay on November 7 only to become stuck in Bathurst Inlet for five days owing to heavy snow. When up in the air again, a considerable fog occurred and obscured visibility, forcing the plane to land until the fog lifted. When it did, and they attempted to take off, the engine quit causing the plane to smash into the ice. They were stranded again. As previously, they set up a camp, erected tents and spent most of the day in their sleeping bags. The only animal they managed to shoot was a foolish fox which crawled into their tent. Their rescue arrived as late as 2 weeks after their accident, transporting the party home at last.³⁰² In total, the expedition took approximately 102 days, from August 24 to December 4, out of which 87 day the group was stranded. Had it not been for the supplies and guidance of their Inuit companions, the MacAlpine expedition would not probably have survived in the bush, less so the long walk across the open ice.

In conclusion, although each accident differs from the others, a few similarities have been found. Both Mike Thomas and the MacAlpine expedition were forced to land

²⁹⁹ Matheson, *Flying the Frontiers*, 53-54.

³⁰⁰ “Charlie“ quoted in Boer, *Bush Pilots*, 231.

³⁰¹ Boer, *Bush Pilots*, 231

³⁰² *Ibid.*, 230-234.

due to deteriorating weather and decreasing visibility, not knowing their exact location. Anderson, on the contrary, intended to land at the site of their crash and the visibility during their flight was good. Thomas, as well as Anderson, checked if the ice conditions were suitable for a safe landing prior to their final landing and taxiing, yet both crews crashed. Another similarity between Thomas's and Anderson's incidents is that the planes of both men became unable to fly and sank under water. Thomas's airplane started to gain water directly after the crash just as that of Anderson's, Thomas's plane, however, was inevitably lost since the water started to freeze, imprisoning the airplane in itself. MacAlpine's planes, on the other hand, did not suffer any damage and were operable. Owing to the quickly deteriorating weather, however, all 3 groups were confined to their landing sites and every attempt at reaching civilization proved pointless. They were stranded and no one knew of their predicament so their hope of being rescued in that weather and at that place was quickly fading. Moreover, they had no or very little supplies. With their lives depending solely on themselves, they had to adapt to the new living conditions in order to survive and some groups managed to do so better than others.

Mike Thomas and his crew chose fishing as a means of food supply and emergency signals using branches and fire to attract the attention of passing-by pilots while Anderson's party had guns available to them and so they shot a moose and in the meantime managed to mend their airplane. Regarding MacAlpine's men, although starving, they built a makeshift hut in which they spent their time before setting out on their long hike. Despite their awareness of how risky it was to walk out in freezing temperatures in that terrain and how little their chances of completing the journey were, after a month of idleness and waiting, and having no choice, they left their camp and set off towards civilization and the never-ending whiteness.

The return back to civilization was, however, different for each group. Mike Thomas and his passengers were rescued by a passing-by pilot whereas Anderson used his own repaired plane to get back home. Concerning MacAlpine's expedition which took the longest time, it was also the only group who reached a settlement on foot. They would probably never have succeeded had it not been for the support and guidance of the Inuit. In spite of being lost in inhospitable climate with no one knowing of their whereabouts, all parties successfully managed to tackle the situation and return back to their families.

Concerning the image of North these narratives construct, it is similar, or almost identical, to the one formed by Canadian art. The North here is presented as void of almost any living creatures, inaccessible, challenging and frozen. Its remoteness is present in each narrative. Furthermore, the North is a place where getting lost is easy due to the unpredictable and quickly deteriorating weather, heavy snowfall, thick fogs, poor visibility, heavy rains, and strong winds, and it is also dangerous because of its enormous size and wild animals. The endless whiteness of the regions may drive even hardened men mad if discipline is not maintained, moreover, it may starve them and the rough terrain, overwhelming vastness and harsh climate may swallow them. Once situated in those inimical, threatening, and icy districts miles from help and no one knowing of their whereabouts, it is a matter of luck to be rescued. It takes endurance to survive in the overwhelming hostile North.

In conclusion, this portrayal deepens and contributes to the idea of North formed by Canadian art. Stories such as these shaped the public image of Canadian North.

Finally, there is one last issue needed to be mentioned and cleared regarding these accounts. They have been taken over from sources who compiled them on the basis of tape recordings, period papers, chronicles, or other sources keeping accounts of their adventures, or interviews with the pilots themselves. If it was the former case, the stories could have been affected by the compilers' attitude towards this topic; in case of the latter, there is a possibility that the pilots could have varnished or altered their memories of their (mis)adventures over the years and thus providing inexact data.

4.2 INTO THE ABYSS

The previous subchapter was concerned with compiled real-life accounts of bush pilots or northern explorers; this subchapter is also focused on a non-fictional real-life story, namely *Into the Abyss: An Extraordinary True Story* by Carol Shaben, and examines a plane crash that happened in the 1980s.

Carol Shaben is a Canadian National Magazine Award-winning journalist, author, investigative reporter, humanist and a winner of the Edna Staebler Award for Creative Non-fiction. At 42 she decided to pursue her writing career and began writing stories of often overlooked or underrated individuals who, through their actions, courage and heroism move, inspire and teach others to create a better world, a world without racism, violence, poverty, and environmental issues. As a humanist, she also

strives to promote the greater good of humanity. Her debut, *Into the Abyss*, that is to be analysed, has become a national bestseller and been optioned for film. Her recent book, *The Marriot Cell*, written in cooperation with Mohamed Fahmy, was published in 2016 and selected as one of the Globe 100 Best Books of the Year.³⁰³

Bush flying has always been a hard-driving, high-risk profession. Many pilots are young, idealistic, driven by the desire for freedom and adventure and eager to work for major airlines. First, however, they have to build their logbook hours by flying for small airlines. Some of them pay with their lives on their way to the top. In this book of hers, Carol Shaben chronicles a catastrophic story of a devastating plane crash of Wapiti Aviation Flight 402 involving a 10-passenger aircraft Piper Navajo Chieftain near High Prairie in 1984. Only 4 passengers out of 10 survived the deadly crash and had spent the night and much of the following day huddled in deep snow and sub-zero conditions until being rescued. The survivors of the crash – Erik Vogel, a 24-year-old novice pilot, Paul Archambault, an accused criminal, Scott Deschamps, a police officer taking him to face charges, and Larry Shaben, a prominent politician had boarded the plane as total strangers. Despite coming from considerably different backgrounds, the men had helped one another survive a bitter night in the Canadian wilderness and formed a long-lasting friendship. At the underbelly of the story lies a compelling truth about the danger of the commuter airline industry which takes a large portion of commercial aviation in North America.

Erik Vogel, the pilot of the unfortunate flight, came to his passion for flying honestly. He had been fascinated by flying since childhood and influenced by his father who was a major airline pilot. Thus, at the age of 18, Erik began his pilot's education at Trinity Western College, one of the prestigious private schools in the area. Just as in the case of other young men eager to fly and described in the theoretical part, as soon as he climbed into the small cockpit, Erik found himself in another world, a world of no worries, of magic and possibility. “[He] felt a rush of pure elation. For the first time, he was absolutely certain that it was his destiny to fly.”³⁰⁴ As Shaben describes, however, it was not easy to obtain a pilot's job and there was a long procedure to get one. Once he finished school and received a pilot's licence, Erik found out that for young inexperienced pilots like himself, professional flying jobs were non-existent. First, they

³⁰³ Carol Shaben, “Author. Journalist. Humanist“ Carol Shaben, accessed April 12, 2017, <http://www.carolshaben.com/>.

³⁰⁴ Shaben, *Into the Abyss*, 43.

had to build over 1,000 flying hours before being accepted on the position of a co-pilot or pilot-in-command. Wasting no time and opportunity, in 1980, Erik headed to Yellowknife, the gateway to the Canadian north, in search of work. Yet, even there the search for flying job proved difficult since young eager pilots willing to take to the skies were plentiful. Before being offered a co-pilot's job, Erik worked as a barmaid. In his first flying job, however, he was given the chance to take the controls only during nights when the outside world slept. When he was not qualified for a pilot's job, he headed home. Later, Erik was offered a co-pilot's job in Edmonton which provided him with enough logbook hours to be hired as a co-pilot in Yellowknife and later at La Ronge. Normally, during the flight, the pilot was responsible for take-offs and landings and once he felt tired, he would retire to the back of the plane to sleep and let Erik take over the helm. This job, however, included, apart from the cockpit tasks, also heavy labour of loading and unloading the cargo bound for remote camps and then manually refuelling the aircraft using a hand pump, which was a tedious, arm-numbing task.

So far, it is clear that becoming a professional bush pilot was not simple even with hundreds of flying hours and Erik was to learn that soon. Being a pilot-in-command of a multi-engine aircraft, he migrated further north thinking he would have no trouble finding a job at another airline. Unfortunately, he was wrong and was not given the opportunity to fly until two years later when he was hired by a small northern Alberta airline called Wapiti Aviation. In comparison to his previous flying experience across Canada's vast expanses of the far north, Wapiti's passenger flights between Grande Prairie and Edmonton proved complex, demanding, challenging and far exceeded anything he had faced in the Arctic before. His flying routine consisted of 2 to 4 flights a day, 6 days a week, and when not flying, he was supposed to be ready in case to be called for medivacs. The pace was punishing and taking its toll on him since Erik quickly lost 25 pounds due to his poor diet and lack of decent night's sleep in weeks. Sometimes, exhausted, he had slept less than an hour when his pager started beeping which proves that the job of a bush pilot was both psychologically and physically demanding. Carol Shaben claims that regarding commuter airlines, many young and inexperienced pilots experience so-called "go fever," a pressure to fly when they should not, owing to the highly competitive environments they work in which encourages them to push the limits to reach their destinations. As a result, they are

driven by emotion rather than by logic and prone to making mistakes.³⁰⁵ She further states that many of them also face direct pressure from the management: “Do whatever’s required to get the job done.”³⁰⁶ Erik was, unfortunately, one of them. He had realized that a certain degree of danger was part of his job, but suddenly it felt that bush flying was demanding too much of him. Due to his busy flying schedule, pushing the weather and overlooking minor maintenance issues had become a commonplace for Erik.

The day of the disaster was supposed to be a day just like any other, yet it proved totally different. Erik was extremely busy that day as usual; moreover, he was late. The flights of Wapiti Aviation airline were fully booked and as soon as he arrived in Edmonton, Erik was scheduled to leave for the north again within half an hour and, what is more, without a co-pilot. There was one positive thing about that evening – he had time to check the weather, a luxury he seldom had time for, which illustrates how demanding the job was and how busy the pilots were. The ten-seater plane, Piper Navajo Chieftain, he flew that night, which had been recently grounded citing maintenance issues, was the only departing plane on the runway. Wet flakes were falling from the sky, icy biting wind was blowing and the airport was shrouded in thick fog. Although a regular flight, Erik felt uncomfortable flying that night and the queasy feeling in his stomach grew with every minute approaching the departure. It seemed as if Erik had some sort of premonition of the unfortunate things to come. “I’m overwhelmed. And overworked. And exhausted. I need a second set of eyes in the cockpit. I need a plane I can trust. I’d like to overfly High Prairie tonight. I’d like not to be flying, period.”³⁰⁷ These were Erik’s thoughts prior to his departure; however, he was not able to tell his superior since he would have been fired. He did not even bother to calculate the weight and balance of the aircraft, which was a standard pre-flight procedure. Moreover, he was under enormous pressure since the passengers expected him to transport them home regardless of the weather, and strain in his voice could be detected. Nevertheless, Erik took a deep breath to calm his nerves and despite being frustrated and scared, he prepared for a take-off.

Just as other modern bush pilots do, Erik gave his passengers pre-flight safety instructions for case of an emergency and took to the skies. The landing strip at High

³⁰⁵ Shaben, *Into the Abyss*, 136.

³⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 22.

³⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 71.

Prairie was short and dimly lit with only a single beacon and no control tower, therefore, the airport could be approached only in visual conditions, meaning when the weather was clear. That night, however, visual approach was not legal because of low cloud deck and poor visibility. So, the navigation towards the airport and landing in the middle of the night and in such weather conditions seemed too dangerous and demanding for exhausted Erik. He was under pressure; he was supposed to make an important decision – he could violate the regulations and rules and thus risk losing his pilot’s licence, or he could omit landing in High Prairie and risk losing his job. He chose to fly on instruments. The thought of flying blind to the world outside the cockpit windows in the weather conditions made Erik nervous since it would be the first time he would have to rely completely on his instruments during his final approach to the uncontrolled airports in High Prairie and Fairview. Furthermore, it was much more complex than flying on visuals and required much more concentration. Thus, being too preoccupied with the instruments, he did not notice a trace of rime forming along the edges of windshield. Although he attempted to remove it as soon as he noticed the frost, nothing happened – the plane’s de-icers did not function. Flying in icing conditions without reliable de-icing equipment was, however, very dangerous and the night of the flight was marked by severe and hazardous weather conditions, including severe icing. To make matters worse, the ice had the ability to reduce the plane’s aerodynamic performance, decelerate it, or even cause it to crash. This highly demanding, in terms of concentration, type of approach together with lack of sleep, overall exhaustion, severe weather conditions and the malfunctioning de-icers could be seen as another factors contributing to the accident.

Having no visual reference, distance readout and guidance from an air traffic controller, Erik was forced to rely on his dead reckoning skills that were far from perfect. As Shaben explains, it was “a complex series of calculations involving speed, elapsed time and course”³⁰⁸ so that he could determine the distance from his destination. As it appears, this primitive and outdated technology of his small bush plane was making Erik too preoccupied. It is of no surprise that “his head ached from the pressure of pounding blood.”³⁰⁹ Having no co-pilot to assist him with his tasks and rely on, he was forced to cope with everything on his own and doing too many tasks simultaneously made him restless and under even more pressure. Moreover, having

³⁰⁸ Ibid., 24.

³⁰⁹ Ibid., 25.

flown the route less than a dozen times in clear weather only or only as a co-pilot some time ago, he was not very familiar with it and thus did not know exactly what his location was. Furthermore, he constantly reminded himself how difficult if not impossible it would be to spot the small snow-covered runway in that weather. So, due to his preoccupation, concentration, the demanding character of the flight and his exhausted brain he did not even consider that he could have made an error in his calculations and was now 20 nautical miles short of the expected location. Instead, he had other tasks in mind. These facts stand as evidence of Erik being extremely tired, under terrible pressure, restless and not level-headed. The foul weather reduced his visual information, the fatigue affected his dead reckoning and decision-making skills and his cumulative lack of sleep impaired his concentration; therefore Erik experienced a loss of situational awareness, which formed a perfect platform for the accident.

Until the very last moment, the snow-covered treetops remained invisible behind his frosted windshield; however, it was too late when Erik noticed them and started acting accordingly. He had absolutely no idea how low he was flying. When he hit the treetops, he was flying 175 nautical miles per hour. The impact was tremendous – the entire nose section of the plane had been ripped as well as its wings and engines, the sound of ripping metal resounded all around, and cargo, luggage and briefcases went flying through the cabin. Furthermore, by the time the plane hit the ground, it had rotated full 90 degrees and finally came to halt 684 feet from the initial crash spot. Then the smell of fuel overwhelmed the air and the four survivors, so they quickly abandoned the wreckage and resorted to a safe distance from it. The terrain surrounding the crashed plane was rugged, the snow unexpectedly deep and the skies above them were low, grey and oppressive. Furthermore, they sustained several injuries during the accident; minor ones were swollen hands, bent fingers, missing teeth, and blooded eye; more severe injuries included a punctured lung, flail chest, broken ribs, fractured spine, and critical loss of blood. Although Paul Archambault tried to help the rest of the passengers, it was too late for them.

It took some time for them to realize what happened. The next thing to do in order to survive was to build a fire. They created a path through the deep snow until they reached a clearing distant enough from the wreckage to prevent its explosion. There they trampled the snow down to create a fire place and lit a cardboard box from the plane. Paul, the least wounded of them, proved how vital resourcefulness and proper clothing was to survive in such conditions and circumstances. First, he provided each of

them with an extra layer of clothing he found inside the wreckage, such as winter boots, a woman's parka, trench coat, sweater, and pyjamas. Next, he urged them to return to the bush to collect more wood for the fire since it represented the difference between surviving and freezing to death. A first aid kit, flares, blanket, axe, and a working radio were other survival essentials, however, they did not dispose of any of these since the aviation rules did not require survival gear on board. Having no axe, keeping the fire burning proved a challenge as every 15 minutes the survivors were forced to resort to the woods in search of more branches to burn.

Although busy maintaining the fire and keeping himself warm, Erik was overcome with guilt and remorse. The situation was his fault and, as a true bush pilot, he felt responsible for helping his 3 passengers survive. He realized that he had let the pressure of the situation overpower his instincts and critical thinking and his traumatized mind could not understand how he could have made such a novice mistake. He had lost situational awareness and everything was a blur. Shaben describes this phenomenon as frequently occurring in aviation accidents especially if the visibility is poor. When experiencing it, pilots have difficulties finding the switches and are disoriented.³¹⁰ Erik was suffering both physically and emotionally. He desperately needed to talk about the stress and pressure he had been under in the past weeks at Wapiti. He admitted his hesitation whether or not to take the flight that night, but he felt he had no choice. He did not want to lose his job.

Under normal circumstances, they were supposed to arrive in High Prairie approximately at 8 p.m. As soon as at 8:40 p.m., search was initiated after a pilot flying near-by the crash site marked a distinctive emergency signal of a downed aircraft through his headset. At around 9 p.m. an air disaster plan was implemented in Edmonton and a ground search party was organized in case that rescue planes could not reach the crash site. Locals volunteered to participate in the ground search, offering every available man and every piece of heavy machinery they owned. When they left with their snowmobiles into the bush, after less than a mile, they became stuck by waist-deep snow and dense trees. Despite their slow progress and difficult navigation, they had the best chance to reach the wreckage although the task of clearing and managing the 20-kilometre trail through the wilderness seemed impossible. In the meantime, the crew of a heavy-load Hercules aircraft circling far above the ground

³¹⁰ Ibid., 135.

picked up the wrecked plane's emergency signal and attempted to determine its exact location. In addition to Hercules, Chinook, a twin-engine, agile and versatile helicopter was called on due to its construction and manoeuvring abilities. Around midnight, the 4 survivors heard sound from a large aircraft in the distance, which filled them with hope. Erik assured his companions that it was the search-and-rescue plane and it would not be long before they were rescued. Although later the helicopter came very close, the crew did not spot their fire place and the wreckage. Hearing the pulsing thrum of the helicopter fading in the distance, their hearts filled with disappointment. Furthermore, hypothermia was slowly stealing the warmth from their bodies.

As the warmth emanating from the fire was gradually waning, the men were increasingly desperate for heat and the idea of death was slowly crawling into their minds. However, Paul did not give up. "I'm walking out of this and you three are coming with me because we weren't meant to die this way."³¹¹ Then a miracle happened. "I hear noise in the bush."³¹² All of a sudden, they could hear a noise coming from a circling aircraft far above. Around 9 a.m. a yellow plane crossed a small patch of blue sky above them and at 11:25 a.m., 15 hours after the crash of Wapiti Aviation Flight 402, Paul Archambault, the final survivor was lifted aboard the Chinook helicopter where paramedics tended to their injuries and the Hercules then transported them to a hospital in Edmonton. So, although they were forced to spend only 1 night in the wilderness, 15 hours exactly, which is the least from the bush flying stories analysed so far, their situation was the worst since they had no shelter to retire to, furthermore, in comparison with the previously analysed crashes or uncontrolled landings, they sustained severe and life-threatening injuries.

During an investigation launched directly after the rescue, after interviewing Erik, the investigators quickly reached a conclusion that stress and fatigue were major factors leading to the accident. Seeing news of the crash in newspapers and finding out details of the killed passengers, Erik could not come to terms with the accident and his stomach would tighten into a first of guilt. Before the accident, he had been absolutely certain that he was born to fly. Now, his flying career was over. "No one wanted anything to do with me."³¹³ The period after his crash was bleak and hopeless. Even though he applied for countless flying positions, both local and across the globe, flying

³¹¹ Paul Archambault quoted in Shaben, *Into the Abyss*, 154.

³¹² Scott Deschamps quoted in Shaben, *Into the Abyss*, 159.

³¹³ Erik Vogel quoted in Shaben, *Into the Abyss*, 190.

jobs were non-existent for him. To make matters worse, in 1985, his pilot's licence was suspended. When unable to work as a pilot, he applied for dozens of different jobs; however, to no avail. In the meantime, he kept himself updated on similar small plane accidents and was making notes of the factors contributing to it. The findings were shockingly similar and familiar, including pilot fatigue, anxiety, exhaustion, and pressure. To be helpful in some way, Erik started giving presentations of potential hazards at flight schools since there was no one doing anything to prevent accidents from happening. What is more, he still longed to fly. However, later, when his pilot's licence was restored, the nature of his crash kept closing the doors of aviation companies before him. Then, after a decade of effort, he finally returned to the co-pilot's seat flying a scheduled passenger service between Vancouver and the surrounding islands; this time, however, as a safer and wiser pilot.

In conclusion, Shaben's book is convincing evidence of bush flying being highly dangerous and overall, it contributes to the image of bush flying which was built in the theoretical background of this paper. It portrays the struggles of an overworked young pilot eager to build flying hours to apply for a real airline job, and the marginal existence and practices of a family-run commuter line that he works for. Concerning the event itself, the accident was a result of mechanical failures, exhaustion, lack of sleep, stress, pressure, overwork, and frustration. Furthermore, foul weather and severe icing were another factors contributing to the crash. Nevertheless, more than anything, it is an institutional failure that *Into the Abyss* chronicles. According to Laura Eggertson, Shaben delves into the frightening side of the Canadian commuter airline industry and reveals the lax regulations, lack of safety, and the stressful atmosphere surrounding pilots of commuter aircraft.³¹⁴ As it seems, however, the tragic accident did not have a major impact on the situation of bush flying in Canada. Shaben states that years after the crash there were thousands of reported incidents involving small passenger planes, their details were, unfortunately, remarkably similar and familiar: pilot fatigue, equipment failure, and pressure to fly in inclement weather. Just a handful of people sound the alarm, and even when they do, it is just a faint cry that remains unnoticed.³¹⁵ It appears that after almost a century of flying in Canada, people involved in this industry have not learnt anything from the fatalities and incidents and the number

³¹⁴ Laura Eggertson, "Into the Abyss by Carol Shaben Review," review of *Into the Abyss: An Extraordinary True Story*, by Carol Shaben, *The Star*, 2012, accessed April 4, 2017, https://www.thestar.com/entertainment/books/2012/11/30/into_the_abyss_by_carol_shaben_review.html.

³¹⁵ Shaben, Introduction to *Into the Abyss*, 6.

of casualties is still very high. Eggertson, for instance, remarks that 5 years after this disastrous accident, an Ontario Fokker F-28 plane carrying 69 people crashed shortly after take-off in Ontario killing 24 people altogether. Surprisingly or not, severe icing, pilot's decisions and pressure made a major contribution to the tragedy just as in the case of the Wapiti flight. Moreover, there was also a prisoner aboard the Air Ontario flight.³¹⁶ Dennis Drabelle reminds that in bush flying, the penalty for a mistake can be death, which makes it one of the top three world's most dangerous professions with the highest mortality rate regarding commercial flying.³¹⁷ Although pilots and time have changed and crucial regulations and safety measures have been adopted, bush flying remains as dangerous as it was many decades ago and defying foul weather is still arduous.

Concerning the lives of the survivors of the crash, it affected all of them deeply, each in their own individual way. Some of them had nightmares, but all decided to alter the course of their lives. Each man incurred emotional scars, but as for Erik, the burden of guilt over the death of 6 passengers has never left him. Yet the 4 of them represent an inspiring example of strength, courage, endurance, and the will to rebound from the depths of tragedy and begin their lives anew. This literary piece depicts long-term survival far beyond the cold night in the bush.

In terms of the portrayal of the North in this literary work, it is mostly depicted as an icy, lifeless, challenging, and snow-covered land; frigid barren wilderness where the weather is erratic and harsh, the wind fierce and warm clothes is a must. The temperature may decrease as low as -50°C, and if it does so, "exposed skin would freeze almost instantly."³¹⁸ This is the North the survivors of the plane crash experienced. Apart from this struggle-for-survival portrait, the author also provides a different, more romantic one. This other North is alive with rich wildlife ranging from bears and wolves to herds of caribou and innumerable bird species. Once,

Erik was 1,000 feet up when the landscape suddenly transformed into a moving mass with no beginning or end in sight. As far as his eyes could see forward, back, and to either side, there was only an ocean of caribou, their antlers bobbing

³¹⁶ Eggertson, "Into the Abyss by Carol Shaben Review."

³¹⁷ Dennis Drabelle, "Into the Abyss: An Extraordinary True Story By Carol Shaben," review of *Into the Abyss: An Extraordinary True Story*, by Carol Shaben, *Washington Post*, 2013, accessed April 3, 2017, https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/into-the-abyss-an-extraordinary-true-story-by-carol-shaben/2013/08/16/dd5f8f7c-9ad3-11e2-9bda-edd1a7fb557d_story.html?utm_term=.af109d9055ab.

³¹⁸ Shaben, *Into the Abyss*, 20.

like a briar of nude branches and their mottled beige bodies spread like a dappled fleece over the land.³¹⁹

Apparently, it depends on the circumstances which one finds themselves under and they then determine their perception of the North. Inside the plane's cockpit, the land seems beautiful, diverse, and abundant; once on the ground without any resources, it becomes empty, barren and hostile.

Regarding the book's literary praise or criticism, when reviewing Shaben's book, Andrew MacDonald starts by quoting Margaret Atwood's influential study of Canadian literature, in which she perceives much of Canadian fiction as "a struggle against an uncaring hinterland that its hero must conquer. Faced with the otherness 'that lies beyond the frontier,' the Canadian hero engages in the process of 'winning over nature and enhancing his own stature.'" Although non-fiction, in MacDonald's opinion, Shaben's story depicts the human struggle against the nature in earnest exactly as Atwood's describes it.³²⁰

While Drabelle admits disappointment at the title since "there is no abyss" as the plane crashed into a hillside, not a canyon or a deep blue sea,³²¹ and thus implying that the title may be misleading, Rosemary Anderson argues that the abyss is that of human psyche, exploring the minds and feelings not only of the 4 survivors, but also of the readers.³²²

Stephanie Green claims that, in comparison with a fiction, in which miracles would have happened to the survivors, Shaben's non-fictional story does not "sugarcoat the difficulties all four of the men experienced" and provides their genuine struggle.³²³ Michael Hingston, on the other, implies that Shaben has varnished the facts and aggrandized the events a little; in his view, the distances are not as great as Shaben paints them, he also points out some discrepancies concerning the distances and

³¹⁹ Shaben, *Into the Abyss*, 48-49.

³²⁰ Andrew MacDonald, "Review: Non-Fiction by Carol Shaben and Jay Ruzesky," review of *Into the Abyss: An Extraordinary True Story*, by Carol Shaben, and *In Antarctica: An Amundsen Pilgrimage*, by Jay Ruzesky, *Event Magazine*, 2014, accessed April 5, 2017, <https://www.eventmagazine.ca/2014/07/review-non-fiction-by-carol-shaben-and-jay-ruzesky/>.

³²¹ Drabelle, "Into the Abyss."

³²² Rosemary Anderson, "Review: 'Into the Abyss' by Carol Shaben," review of *Into the Abyss: An Extraordinary True Story*, by Carol Shaben, *Prism International Magazine*, 2013, accessed April 8, 2017, <http://prismmagazine.ca/2013/03/04/review-into-the-abyss/>.

³²³ Stephanie Green, "Book review Monday: Into the Abyss, by Carol Shaben," Stephanie Early Green, last modified 2013, accessed April 4, 2017, <http://stephanieearlygreen.com/book-review-monday-into-the-abyss-by-carol-shaben/>.

suggests that she is biased.³²⁴ MacDonald compares the story to a Greek tragedy and finds Archambault's redemption as hero and the goodhearted pilot's fall and role of Wapiti's scapegoat rather comical,³²⁵ which might also support the idea of Shaben having varnished the story a bit. Stephan Wilkinson, a skilled Piper Navajo Chieftain pilot who has flown to the North, is, however, astonished by Shaben's precision and the correct details she provides concerning flying and aviation in general.³²⁶

To conclude the book's reviews, Library Journal wrote, "Well-written...[This] work casts troubling light on the enormous challenges faced by pilots at these smaller airlines and the harsh realities of travel in Canada's unforgiving northern regions."³²⁷

4.3 "WALK WELL, MY BROTHER"

The analytical part of this paper has been concerned with biographical and non-fictional sources so far. This subchapter, on the other hand, is focused on the analysis of the phenomenon in literary fiction. The objective is to examine how the phenomenon is portrayed in fictional accounts and compare this portrayal with the one non-fictional literature presents. The theoretical background from previous chapters, both the one concerning the idea of Canadian North and the bush flying phenomenon, will be taken into consideration during the analysis. Although biographical literature and non-fictional literary compilations dealing with bush flying are abundant, there is only one literary work, a short story, to be analysed in this subchapter since it seems to be the only available literary fiction focused on this topic. The short story to be examined is called "Walk Well, My Brother" written by a famous Canadian writer Farley Mowat and can be found in his short-story collection *The Snow Walker*.

Farley McGill Mowat (1921-2014) was an acclaimed Canadian prolific and bestselling author, an Arctic naturalist, anthropologist, environmental advocate, and a passionate defender of Canadian wilderness. He was a master of depicting the blustery landscapes, fierce weather and strange beauty of the northern regions and over the years he has become a gentle and persistent voice for the isolated native population, such as

³²⁴ Michael Hingston, "Review: Into the Abyss, by Carol Shaben," review of *Into the Abyss: An Extraordinary True Story*, by Carol Shaben, *National Post* 2012, accessed April 9, 2017, <http://news.nationalpost.com/afterword/book-review-into-the-abyss-by-carol-shaben>.

³²⁵ MacDonald, "Review: Non-Fiction by Carol Shaben and Jay Ruzesky."

³²⁶ Stephen Wilkinson, "Book Review: Into the Abyss, by Carol Shaben," review of *Into the Abyss: AN Extraordinary True Story*, by Carol Shaben, *Aviation History Magazine*: March 10, 2017, History Net 2017, accessed April 11, 2017. <http://www.historynet.com/book-review-abyss-carol-shaben.htm>.

³²⁷ *Library Journal* quoted in Shaben, Introduction to *Into the Abyss*, by Carol Shaben.

Aleuts or Caribou Inuit, and for wild animal species, especially the threatened ones.³²⁸ As Greg Quill claims, Mowat has sold approximately 14 million copies in 52 languages and through his literary mastery and a heightened sense of reality has defined the Canadian wild North for readers all over the world. He further adds that Mowat's writings are quite unique since he invented his own brand of real-life non-fiction based on his experience and embellished with imagination and indignation.³²⁹ As Mowat himself claimed, "I took some pride in having it known that I never let facts get in the way of a good story. I was writing subjective non-fiction all along."³³⁰ According to Jay Parini, Mowat first visited the Arctic at the age of 15 and immediately developed love for the countryside and its wild creatures and indigenous peoples, which is reflected in many of his books. His first novel, *People of the Deer* (1952), illustrates his fascination with the Caribou Inuit tribes he visited and his rage at their mistreatment and governmental neglect. *Never Cry Wolf* (1963), one of his most famous books, is, on the other hand, a controversial fictionalised account of the author's observation and examination of the habits and habitat of the Arctic wolf. *A Whale for the Killing* (1972) presents a moving story of a fin whale trapped in a local cove and concludes with an urgent plea to end the whale hunting by commercial fishermen. The destruction of animal life is also portrayed in *Sea of Slaughter* (1984). His bibliography also includes memoirs and popular books for children.³³¹ Some of his titles have been made into feature of TV movies; *The Snow Walker* (2003), *Never Cry Wolf* (1983), *Lost in the Barrens* (1990), and *A Whale for the Killing* (1981).³³² Although Mowat is an excellent storyteller, a quintessential sadness permeates all his Arctic tales making them the sort of narratives unsuitable to hear around a winter campfire.

T.D. MacLulich remarks that "Mowat's books are part of the last phase in the development of the Canadian literature of exploration" since, just like the earlier explorers, "Mowat describes a journey into a relatively unknown and little-travelled region." He further states that instead of reporting his observations and adventures in a journalistic, objective and factual manner, Mowat provides a subjective interpretation

³²⁸ Jay Parini, "Farley Mowat obituary," *The Guardian*, May, 2014, accessed April 8, 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2014/may/08/farley-mowat>.

³²⁹ Greg Quill, "Farley Mowat's legacy: Our supreme storyteller," *The Star*, May, 2012, accessed April 8, 2017, https://www.thestar.com/entertainment/books/2012/05/11/farley_mowats_legacy_our_supreme_storyteller.html.

³³⁰ Farley Mowat in Quill, "Farley Mowat's legacy."

³³¹ Parini, "Farley Mowat obituary."

³³² Quill, "Farley Mowat's legacy."

of his experiences and focuses on understanding the strange land and its peoples. In addition, he attempts to give expression to the wind-swept Arctic plains of the land itself.³³³ As in his other written pieces, this characteristic may be traced in *The Snow Walker* as well. According to Jim Harrison, this book presents Mowat's 30-year obsession with the Arctic and its people. In his opinion, the literary piece points out the beauty and anguish of the desolate Inuit culture and the beauty of the tales brings a purgatory effect to the readers. The immediacy of death pervades all the stories and, as he claims, "the main character is the cold and the snow. The "snow walker" itself is death."³³⁴ One of the stories, "Walk Well, My Brother," which is to be analysed, supports Harrison's view since it involves a long walk through an unfamiliar and cold environment where death is always just behind the corner, and it implies the decrease in population of the Inuit and the averse attitude of white southerners towards them.

Concerning the short story itself, despite being a fictional account, L.D. Cross is of the opinion that when writing it, Mowat could have been inspired by a real-life adventurous story of a stranded pilot, Johnny Bourassa, whom he also recollects in *People of the Deer*. As Cross describes, Bourassa launched an intensive search when he disappeared in May, 1951. After stopping at Bathurst Inlet to refuel his plane on the way to Yellowknife, he took to the skies but never reached his destination. Approximately 4 months after his disappearance, his de Havilland Beaver was located 565 kilometres southeast of Yellowknife with a note explaining the reason of his forced landing and his plans for return. The bush along his intended journey was searched carefully several times by ground searchers and trappers since it would be difficult for aerial searchers to locate one lone man on the vast landscape, however, no trace or campsite was ever found. It was concluded that Bourassa took a shortcut across a lake and thawing ice around small islands could have drown him.³³⁵

The main protagonist of Mowat's short story is Charlie Lavery, a 26-year-old former World War pilot, now a fairly experienced bush pilot who has strong belief in himself, his experience, skills and his flying machine. Having flown to every part of the

³³³ T.D. MacLulich, "The Alien Role: Farley Mowat's Northern Pastorals," *Studies in Canadian Literature* 2 (1977), accessed April 5, 2017.

<https://journals.lib.unb.ca/index.php/scl/article/view/7868/8925>.

³³⁴ Jim Harrison, "The main character is the cold and the snow," review of *The Snow Walker*, by Charles Martin Smith, dir., *The New York Times*, February 22, 1976, accessed April 12, 2017, http://www.nytimes.com/1976/02/22/archives/the-main-character-is-the-cold-and-the-snow-the-snow-walker.html?_r=0.

³³⁵ Cross, *Flying on Instinct*, 118-121.

Arctic and being familiar with the arctic skies, for him, there is no challenge that a reliable airplane and a skilled pilot like himself could not overcome. Thus, he makes an impression of an over-confident, self-absorbed and irresponsible young man. Although he stresses his familiarity with the northern regions from above, yet “the monochromatic wilderness of rock and tundra, snow and ice, existed outside his experience and comprehension, as did the native people whose world this was.”³³⁶ Therefore, even though he has travelled the north innumerable times, he has not experienced it personally, and so his feeling of overfamiliarity with the area and over-confidence in his abilities might prove dangerous.

Once, he lands near a shore to set out a cache of aviation gas there and encounters 2 local Inuit inhabitants. They help him with no hesitation and then invite him into their tent. First reluctant to enter, but then his trader character awakes in him and with a vision of good trade on his mind he goes inside. As he quickly learns, however, the invitation into the tent is not a business one. What he finds there is an ill-looking young Husky woman who his two companions think he might take to a hospital aboard his plane, which he immediately refuses. So, while the Inuit family does not hesitate to give him a helping hand, he acts loftily and is reluctant to participate in anything but strictly business, which is indicative of his careless attitude towards them and probably of overall treatment of the native tribes by white settlers. Nevertheless, Lavery’s attitude changes as soon as he is offered two valuable walrus tusks of exceptional quality, and he reluctantly agrees to carry the mercy flight for the woman named Konala out.

Within less than 2 hours in the skies, although not aware of any warning from the twin engines of his plane, the machine betrays his trust and before realizing the seriousness of the situation, Lavery finds himself falling steeply down toward a shining circlet of a pond. Although the date is not specified, it is clear that the planes are still unreliable, working perfectly at one moment and nosing uncontrollably down at another, and even though Lavery considers himself an experienced pilot, he found the behaviour of his aircraft surprising. Once down, he realizes that “no white men lived in that part of the world”³³⁷ and the chances of their rescue are low. He is overwhelmed with a sense of doom when he becomes aware of the fact that they are stranded

³³⁶ Farley Mowat, “Walk Well, My Brother,” in *The Snow Walker* (Toronto: Little, Brown and Company and Atlantic Monthly Press, 1975), 144.

³³⁷ *Ibid.*, 145.

hundreds of miles from civilization in the barren and perilous arctic tundra with technology that does not function. He then examines his “survival kit” equipment which comprises a rusty .22 rifle, a torn sleeping bag, an axe, a few cans of pork and beans, a box of matches and a pocket knife. His poor survival outfit consisting only of a stylish cotton jacket proves his disdain for and unfamiliarity with the world that normally stretches far below his machine. As in the case of the bush pilots from the previous accounts, Lavery’s food supplies, survival kit and outfits are considerably deficient with regard to local conditions and his countless flying missions in the north. Konala, as a native, on the other hand, is perfectly prepared for such a situation, carrying caribou robes and a large sealskin pouch with her.

When he carefully considers his situation and realizes how serious it is, fear starts creeping in his mind. Nonetheless, he still tries to keep calm. The best and wisest thing to do is to stay by the plane and wait for being rescued by a passing-by pilot or a rescue team. Unfortunately, while still in the air he had deviated from his intended direction and thus concludes that “there wasn’t a chance in a million they’d look for him this far off-course. Come to that, he didn’t even know exactly where he was. [...] There were so damn few landmarks in this godforsaken country...”³³⁸ His thoughts imply the vastness of the north, its remoteness and isolation and how easy it is to get lost, but difficult to be found and rescued. Every settlement he can think of walking to lies too far, except for one 200 miles away. Being in good health, condition and strong enough, he makes a decision to set out on his journey, leaving Konala by the wrecked plane for, as he defends his decision, she is weaker than him and he is of the opinion that he knows the region better, at least from the skies. At this point his attitude towards her can be labelled as cold, reserved, sexist, even unfriendly and abhorrent and he seems to value his abilities over hers. He seems too preoccupied with himself instead of helping her. Her people represent a source of business for him and he does not care about them or appreciate their resourcefulness, let alone to let them give him advice.

Thus, convinced of his ability to reach the settlement and bring back help even without the help of the natives, he begins his journey. Once alone in the wild environment, the hardship the north involves is revealed to him. Along his journey he experiences and fights fear that is aroused by the view of the area surrounding him. “With a chill of dismay he looked out across the tundra rolling to a measureless horizon

³³⁸ Ibid., 148.

ahead of him – a curving emptiness more intimidating than anything he had seen in the high skies.”³³⁹ As obvious, he perceives the land as endless, vast and threatening. In addition, he also feels unbearable sense of loneliness which grows so strong that it makes him panic. Apparently, if discipline and common sense are not maintained and cherished, it can drive a person mad. Alone in the lifeless wilderness he experiences unspoilt solitude devoid of noise, gas and human beings. Despite his innumerable flying missions to the north, he is not able to take care of himself there and acts like an unexperienced powerless southerner experiencing the North. Moreover, the surrounding environment gradually starts to affect his mental health, which is reflected in the nightmares of his crash he suffers, which reveals how frightened and misplaced he is. As he becomes exposed to the dangers and harsh conditions of the north on his own and fights for his life every day, he starts to value his life more.

Ten days after he abandoned Konala in the wilderness, Lavery wakes up after being unconscious for several days just to find her silhouette bending over him in a tent. He realizes that the girl has been taking care of his hurt body for the past few days. Although reserved and scornful towards her at the beginning, after several lonesome and fearful days in the immense country, Lavery feels grateful for her presence and “would desperately fix his thoughts on Konala for she was the one comforting reality in all this alien world.”³⁴⁰ As a result of travelling with and watching her for some time, Lavery’s perception of the north as of an empty, lifeless, inhospitable and threatening desert changes into an abundant land full of birds, hawks, diversity of plants; a romantic place of exciting adventure and a journey of discovery of its riches even despite their constant struggle for survival. With the days passing, his depression begins to cease with the feeling of becoming a part of the environment. Wearing caribou-skin clothing, long hair and a dark beard, he is no longer an alien in an inimical land. The north seems to have accepted him. Moreover, he also comes to realize that it is of no avail to compare his abilities with the knowledge and skills of the natives who may not be educated but are vital for the survival in local environment, which is reflected in his willingness to follow Konala wherever she might lead. She represents strength, independence and resourcefulness and the north as a severe, yet abundant and beautiful place offering plentiful opportunities to hunt. Despite her illness, she manages to take care of them both.

³³⁹ Ibid., 150.

³⁴⁰ Ibid., 152.

Although mid-September, gusts of snow begin to sweep from the darkened skies and ice crystals appear on surfaces. At the end of their adventure, they shift their roles. Konala is not strong enough to resist her illness and eventually dies, which alludes to the decrease of the Inuit population in Canada, while Lavery takes care of her and is capable of surviving on his own thanks to her. It is not stated whether he reaches the camp in the end, but if he does so, he manages to do so only owing to the techniques of survival she has taught him and the clothes she has made for him, which is a must in such conditions.

In conclusion, the analysis of this short-story supports both the myth of the North and the theory of bush flying. It has been proved that feeling over-confident and over-familiar with their aircraft and the terrain in which bush pilots fly might have serious consequences. Moreover, planes are portrayed as still very primitive, dangerous and unreliable machines. Furthermore, as it is obvious from the story, if a pilot crashes both in his intended flight path and out, they find themselves in a serious situation which does not offer many solutions. As depicted here, they can either wait at the crash site and pray for being spotted by a passing-plane, or, despite the danger of becoming stranded or starving along the way and if strong enough, they may set out on a long walk back to civilization. Concerning the main protagonist, Charlie Lavery, an experienced bush pilot incapable of taking care of himself, undergoes a change from an ignorant, over-confident, angry, self-absorbed, resentful southern man interested only in business and gaining money, highly dependent on technology and initially alienated from the northern wasteland, into one who appreciates life and people he encounters and is accepted in the north. At the beginning, for him the north is just a source of money and he does not see and appreciate its scenery and beauty and does not take its dangers seriously. However, MacLulich states that “in Mowat’s books the physical journey becomes a symbol for a mental journey into new areas of understanding.”³⁴¹ In this short story, it is only after his solitary and stressful journey that Lavery at last overcomes his pride and prejudice, acknowledges his misbehaviour towards Konala, starts to understand not only her language but also her way of life; furthermore, he begins to see the surrounding environment in Konala’s eyes and realizes that the Barrens are a place of unsuspected life. Thus, only after his long walk and change of his mind-set becomes he a part of the countryside. Another point is that as a “powerful

³⁴¹ MacLulich, “The Alien Role.”

defender of the oppressed and mistreated,”³⁴² through Lavery’s initial racial, sexist and abhorrent attitude towards Konala and her kind Mowat draws attention to the ignorant and unkind behaviour and exploitative attitude of southern Canadians towards Canada’s indigenous tribes. Furthermore, the story may be compared to white man’s arrival in the New World and his survival in the wild environment only thanks to the helping hand of the native tribes. Finally, just as the whereabouts of Johnny Bourassa have never been located, the reader never learns whether Lavery manages to successfully complete his journey.

Regarding the idea of North, what is constantly present in the whole narrative is the remoteness of the northern regions, as in the previous cases. The uninhabited North stretches before the two protagonists and they experience the most primitive principle of nature – the survival of the fittest; as well as in the previous accounts; thus the North becomes a place only for strong individuals. The image of the North “Walk Well, My Brother” presents is a distant and silent place of wilderness and unbearable solitude, but simultaneously promoting the romantic side of the myth of the North. If discipline and common sense are not maintained, the oppressive presence of the overwhelming perilous land may have negative influence on people’s mental health. In addition, the narrative also emphasizes the necessity of unity of the participants. Lavery manages to survive only when he joins forces with the Inuit girl and form a unit together. Thus, the vastness and remoteness of the North compels the wanderers to join together in order to survive, which is also illustrated in the preceding narratives. Although alienated from the rest of the world, in the North the couple represents a united element.

Based on the analysis, the North is presented as a romantic place of exciting adventure, yet harsh and hostile. When compared with its portrayal in the accounts antecedent to this one, here the North changes from severe and inimical into pleasant yet dangerous, while in the rest of the stories it remains alien and merciless.

To summarize the literary portrayal of the bush flying phenomenon, each story contributes in its own way to the formation of the image of bush flying and depicts similar, yet still a little different aspects of the phenomenon. The first biographical adventurous accounts portray rather pioneering bush pilots and the trouble they experienced due to foul weather and show how essential patience and resourcefulness was for survival. The second analysed story is a proof that during the 70 years long

³⁴² Quill, “Farley Mowat’s legacy.”

period since the first heavier-than-air flight, the dangerous character of flying has not changed and that even fairly skilled pilots are prone to make mistakes when exposed to pressure, lack of sleep, exhaustion, and zero visibility. The last account captures a bush pilot fighting his unreliable malfunctioning plane and his subsequent struggle to survive in the hostile environment of the vast northern regions. At least two of the analysed stories prove how essential the help of the Inuit tribes can be to the stranded southern bush pilots.

5 BUSH FLYING IN CINEMATIC PRODUCTION

Just as there is a wide variety of Canadian literature dealing with Canadian themes, there are numerous films as well. Concerning the bush flying phenomenon, however, just as in the case of literary fiction, cinematic production is not plentiful. Even though many documentary films introducing and depicting bush flying have been produced, some of which have been used as sources in this paper, feature films portraying the life of Canadian bush pilots are scarce. This chapter concentrates on the analysis of 2 feature films, namely *The Snow Walker* and *Bush Pilot*, in which the ways the films depict the life and duties of bush pilots are to be examined and, if possible, the attention will be paid to the portrayal of the North as well. In addition, aspects by which the films contribute to the theoretical part concerning the phenomenon and the idea of North are also to be explored.

5.1 THE SNOW WALKER

The Snow Walker is a 110 minutes long adventure drama directed by American director Charles Martin Smith, who appeared in Farley Mowat's film adaptation of *Never Cry Wolf* (1983), and was first released in 2003 starring Barry Pepper, Inuit actress Annabella Piugattuk, and James Cromwell. Produced by First Look studio, the film focuses on Canadian themes, among them are the bush flying phenomenon, the Far North, and the relations between white southerners and First Nations. Its plot is based on the short story analysed above, namely Mowat's "Walk Well, My Brother," set in Canada's northern regions, Manitoba and filmed in Manitoba, Nunavut, and British Columbia.³⁴³ Therefore, the film version will be compared with its book original.

Set in 1953, unlike the literary original, the story begins with a scene of a First Nations tribe in a remote location and foul weather spotting a walking person in a distance; thus, the viewer quickly realizes that the walking person is the main male protagonist reaching its intended destination – the camp of Konala's people. So, in comparison with the short story, which does not specify whether Charlie survives his long walk, he clearly does so in the film. Apart from the introductory scene, the rest of the film adheres to its written basis, with only the names of the main protagonists having been altered a bit and a few extra scenes added in order to make the events

³⁴³ "The Snow Walker," National Canadian Film Day 150, accessed April 8, 2017, <https://canadianfilmday.ca/film/the-snow-walker/>.

captured by the film more credible and comprehensive. Another detail the film does not provide, in comparison with the book, is the explicit description of the protagonist's feelings and thoughts.

Charlie Halliday, a former war pilot in Europe and a bush pilot of 12 years, began his bush flying career directly after his return home from the war, which is a very common pattern traced in bush pilots. As well as in the short story, he reveals a lot about his personality at the very beginning and makes an impression of a relaxed, irresponsible, arrogant, selfish, and lofty party man with an inability to see beyond himself who treats the First Nations inhabitants with aversion and scorn. Furthermore, he oversleeps and subsequently arrives late at work, but remains confident as always with no sign of regret. Unlike in the short story, Charlie flies a single-engine Norduyn Norseman equipped with both floats for water landings and tundra tires for dry land landings. Once he is airborne, the film provides shots of the massive land stretching below the plane glistening due to its countless water surfaces, and thus presenting a romantic picture of the northern region. Charlie hauls aviation gas to a remote cache and encounters a small group of First Nations inhabitants. Here, the film sticks to the short story – Charlie initially refuses to transport Kanaalaq to a hospital in Yellowknife, but having been offered the valuable walrus tusks, he agrees. In comparison with the literary piece, however, he does not seem to be that reluctant to take her aboard his plane, nor does he act so reserved towards her. Rather, he merely seems concerned with his own health since he assumes that she is infected with tuberculosis. Once airborne again, he behaves kindly towards her, offering her coffee and attempting to communicate. Although they encounter rain on their way to Yellowknife, the image of the North still remains romantic. Then, unexpectedly, the engine starts to sputter until it stops altogether, implying how unreliable the planes used to be in the past, and though Charlie tries hard to keep the machine in the air as long as he can in these circumstances and, as a true bush pilot, he does not give up and fights the instruments until he hits hard the bottom of a small lake and crashes.

Examining his completely ruined plane and realizing that his chances of being spotted by a passing-by plane and rescued or reaching civilization on foot are very low, he bursts into angry tirade against his own plane, which is one of the entertaining moments in the film. Being stranded hundreds of miles from any settlement in the barren tundra, the sense of doom is overwhelming since he has deviated from his flight path and no one knows their location. Unlike the short story, before leaving Kanaalaq at

the crash site and setting on his journey, Charlie builds an SOS sign to attract the attention of a search party. His journey coincides with the one presented in the original, but in the film, the feelings of solitude and misplacement evoked during his long and hungry trudge, together with the vastness and remoteness of area and the great distances are strengthened by several shots of the land surrounding Charlie. No landmarks can be seen in the distance, just daunting stretches of flat, barren, rocky tundra and marshland covered with low grass spreading hundreds of miles in all direction. Furthermore, once he is even tormented by biblical swarms of flies, presumably blackflies, and mosquitoes which are reported to inhabit the north. Exposed to the harsh elements of the north on his own, he does not endure his situation and solitude well; he still occasionally bursts into hysterics full of rage, screaming at inanimate objects and feeling sorry for himself, and lets the feeling of hopelessness and fear overwhelm him. Moreover, the environment surrounding him affects him mentally as well. He suffers nightmares reminding him of his war experiences such as being bombarded, which reveals how frightened and misplaced he is, just as in the short story.

When saved by Kanaalaq and no longer alone, the dim pictures of the vast and barren land seem to fade away and are replaced by colourful and romantic shots of the North brimming with various forms of life. Once united, they appear to be enjoying their dangerous adventure in the wilderness and their predicament no longer seems so tragic.

The scenes in the wilderness with Charlie and Kanaalaq are intercut with those taking place back in civilization since in the meantime, aerial search-and-rescue operation is initiated by his employer, a detail which is omitted in the short story. While his boss is distressed by Halliday's disappearance, his colleagues consider it an integral part of the job of being a bush pilot. On one occasion Charlie hears an engine of a plane flying near-by, but is not able to spot it. It would be, however, very difficult for a pilot to catch sight of a person in the middle of such an immense country. With his hope of being rescued shaken, he recalls the rule vital to the rescue when forced down, "You never, never, never leave the plane,"³⁴⁴ which he has violated and regrets it. After 3 weeks, the search-and-rescue operation is cancelled due to the great size of the area of Charlie's presumable crash providing hundreds of kilometres and countless air routes to be searched.

³⁴⁴ Charles Martin Smith, dir., *The Snow Walker* (First Look studio, 2003), accessed April 16, 2017, <http://ffilms.org/the-snow-walker-2003/>.

When back at the crash site, after several survival lessons from Kanaalaq, Charlie uses the canvas covering the wings of his wrecked plane to create a primitive shelter for Kanaalaq and wrapping cloths to store the caribou meat in, and thus proving his resourcefulness, a quality essential in a bush pilot for survival. Furthermore, when Kanaalaq is not able to move on her own any longer and the land becomes covered with snow, he makes a sledge to help her move. When Kanaalaq dies, Charlie reaches the First Nations' settlement only thanks to the clothes she made him and the valuable hunting lessons she gave him. In the final scene, Charlie is walking through mounds of blinding snow towards a group of Inuit moving in his direction. They stop a few inches from each other and then the group takes him into their midst. It seems to represent an iconic moment since the Inuit accept him as their brother and Charlie comes to terms with it, which is something he would have never done had it not been for the circumstances he found himself in. This scene is, however, not present in the short story, although it supports and enhances the thought hidden in its title.

To sum up, the portrayal of the bush flying phenomenon in this film appears to be credible. There are no spectacular crashes or unrealistic survival scenes. Charlie crashes because of malfunctioning equipment, which was still rather common in those days. Then the search-and-rescue party was organized, which is a standard procedure when a plane goes missing. It seems vital for bush pilots to wait to be rescued at the crash spot since had not it been for Kanaalaq, Charlie would have died on his trudge back to civilization. Furthermore, the film also proves that crashes and forced landings were an integral part of this job; moreover, it depicts how difficult it is to search for a missing pilot in such an immense country and many a time such missions were not successful. In addition, the film supports the notion that resourcefulness is a vital quality every bush pilot should dispose of in order to survive in the harsh and hostile environment of the Canadian north. Last but not least, it promotes the culture of the First Nations, moreover, it portrays them as vital to the survival of wrecked bush pilots and other southern explorers in the north. The initial culture clash between the two protagonists melts into a romantically-tinged quest for survival.

Concerning the depiction of the North in this film, it is the same as is presented in the written original, but the idea is strengthened and supported by the visual images. *The Snow Walker* presents the North as a distant place of wilderness. With the couple being the only people present in the immense area, the North is portrayed as uninhabited and remote, and the relative silence deepens the sense of loneliness. The shots of the

endless tundra and swampland stretching hundreds of miles in all direction makes the viewer appreciate the northern regions, yet the wilderness and harsh elements of the North are presented without any sensationalism. The dangerous aspect of the North is also emphasized in the film since the two main protagonists are forced to fight for their survival every day. When alone in the wild environment, Charlie experiences the hardship the north involves, thus the scenery of the North in his view is harsh, inhospitable and empty. In Kanaalag's presence, the North becomes represented as a severe, yet romantic place with fairly rich diversity of animal life. Nonetheless, the North remains a place only for strong individuals. As the couple is tormented by swarms of blackflies and mosquitoes and experiences rainy and cold days and snow blizzards, they experience the true nature of the North and its most basic principle – only the strong survive.

To conclude, *The Snow Walker* supports the theoretical background of this paper regarding bush flying and contributes to the phenomenon; furthermore, it enlarges and deepens the myth of the North. It promotes the romantic, yet severe representation of the North, and emphasizes the distance and solitude.

5.2 BUSH PILOT

Bush Pilot is a 59 minutes long black-and-white adventure feature film directed by Sterling Campbell, starring Rochelle Hudson, Jack La Rue and Austin Willis. It was released in 1947 by Dominion Productions Ltd. *Bush Pilot* follows a bush pilot whose business is menaced by the arrival of his rival brother. The film was filmed predominantly Toronto, with outdoor and flight scenes taken in the Muskoka region of Ontario.³⁴⁵ Morris, Madger and Handling claim that it is the only English Canadian feature film produced in the 1940s; moreover, it is presumed to be an imitation of *Captains of the Clouds*, a film released in 1942 by Hollywood.³⁴⁶

The film opens with shots of a flying bush plane taken from a cockpit and of the land below, they are not, however, as breath-taking and romantic as in *The Snow Walker* since first, this film was produced much earlier than the latter, second, the plot does not take place so far in the north, and third, the shots are not coloured. The plane from the

³⁴⁵ "Bush Pilot (film)," Wikipedia, accessed April 17, 2017, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bush_Pilot_\(film\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bush_Pilot_(film)).

³⁴⁶ Peter Morris and Ted Madger and Piers Handling, "History of the Canadian Film Industry," The Canadian Encyclopedia, last edited February 22, 2017, accessed April 10, 2017, <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/the-history-of-film-in-canada/>.

opening scene is captured flying at first, then the pilot spots fire on the ground, lands on a near-by lake and taxis to the shore. The pilot's name is Red North and this is a mercy flight. There he takes a sick girl aboard his bush plane to deliver her to a hospital. This scene portrays not only the common business of bush pilots, but also their importance to the distant communities scattered across Canada. Mercy or medical flights were a common part of their job. Red is late on his arrival, leaving his mechanic Chuck uneasy. There is a fog coming which might cause problems for Red. He is, however, a skilled and experienced bush pilot and although the operator advises him not to land in Nouvelle, after a moment of suspense, he does manage to do so despite the thick fog, low ceiling and zero visibility since he does not have enough fuel to land elsewhere. Neither the sick girl nor the paramedic aboard describes the landing as tough.

During Red's short absence in Nouvelle that day, his half-brother Paul Girard arrives in the small community in order to set up a business there. Paul is a bush pilot as well and with his arrival a conflict comes – this area is considered Red North's flying territory and there is not enough business for 2 bush pilots to make a profit flying to Silver Lake Mine. Paul makes an impression of an arrogant, vindictive, self-absorbed man while Red North seems reliable, practical and fair-playing. Red North does not want his brother to take all the credit and Paul's disrespect for his business makes Red angry. He cannot let his contract be affected by Paul now when they started making a profit as he does not even have enough money to buy new floats. In order to help his companion, Chuck, his mechanic, asks Red to allow him to fly as well which Red North refuses to do since Chuck has not built enough flying hours to obtain a pilot's licence.

A few days later, an offer from Toronto arrives for Red North to transport highly explosive nitroglycerine to Silver Lake. At first, Red hesitates; he has never hauled it so far because his sweetheart's bush pilot father died young in a violent mid-air explosion while shipping a load of nitroglycerine, and thus Hillary begs Red to refuse it; however, pilots receive an extra bonus for ferrying it, furthermore, Red cannot refuse such a lucrative offer in this suddenly highly competitive environment since his business would devolve to his brother. In Red North's absence, Paul offers himself to transport it but Chuck, afraid that Red North might lose his business, decides to do the job himself. Being an unexperienced and unqualified pilot, Chuck crashes and the nitroglycerine explodes. From this it can be concluded that bush flying involves highly dangerous and risky operations in which no mistakes are allowed.

Following the tragedy that he did not know about until it was late, Red North rejects to fly, feeling responsible for the young man's death. It is not until a friend and colleague pays him a visit and persuades him to return to flying that he does so. Then there follows a series of shots capturing newspaper job offers and articles about bush pilots' mercy flights hauling scarlet fever vaccines to isolated north camps. In the situation of an epidemic, bush pilots were irreplaceable in serum transportation and the fight against the disease. Shortly after that, the managing director in Toronto receives a message from Red North's superior in Nouvelle, describing Red as unreliable, and asking for permission to hire Paul to deliver the serum despite his insufficient knowledge of the area requiring the presence of a guide. Thus, instead of Red North, his brother Paul is hired to do the job and Hillary, Red's sweetheart, is hired as the guide.

The first part of their flight goes smoothly; they successfully drop the serum from the plane at their destination and head back home. On their way back, however, the engine starts to sputter, as well as that of Charlie Halliday's in the previous film, forcing them to attempt to land and subsequently crash. As soon as they are down and the operator in Nouvelle lost their signal, Red North jumps into his plane to search for them. Hillary sustained just a few bruises but Paul's ribs and lungs are broken and subsequently he dies. In the meantime, Red North is searching the ground from above overlooking waving Hillary at first. In the end, everything turns out right; Red North's main rival is dead and he can continue his flying business in peace.

To conclude, *Bush Pilot* is focused rather on the economic aspect of bush flying and depicts a conflict between 2 brothers since there is not enough business for both of them to make a profit in the territory. The film portrays the difficulties in terms of job keeping and profit making bush pilots had to face, moreover, it stresses the dangerous side of the job; furthermore, it also proves how vital bush pilots were in times of an epidemic and how competitive the environment was, forcing many bush pilots to give up their passion due to the lack of work.

Regarding the portrayal of the North, the film does not provide any. It provides shots of airborne bush planes and Red North's maintenance of his plane, such as pumping water out of his plane's floats. In general, it rather depicts the interesting job of a bush pilot and his duties and troubles they face.

To summarize the portrayal of bush flying in cinematic production, each film is concerned with its different aspect. While *The Snow Walker* points out the unreliability

of the first bush planes, the dangers and elements of the northern regions awaiting every pilot forced down and the gruelling, difficult, and often unsuccessful trudge back to civilization, *Bush Pilot* is, on the other hand, rather focused on the economic side of the job, the struggle of bush pilots to maintain their business and the potential danger evoked by competitive environment.

CONCLUSION

This thesis was dedicated to the bush flying phenomenon and bush pilots; its objective was to introduce this phenomenon and investigate the origin of aircraft's functional role in Canada. Its primary aim was to provide a detailed and comprehensive overview of this phenomenon from its origins in the early 20th century until the present day, and to explore its function, development and significance for the economics and geography of Canada. Furthermore, the research also examined the impact of bush flying on the progress in aviation technology, its influence on the formation of the myth of the North, and, in addition, it also investigated what qualities were necessary for bush pilots to survive and become successful and what responsibilities and challenges bush operations involved. The secondary purpose of this paper was to analyse the portrayal of this phenomenon and the North in both literary non-fiction and fiction and in cinematic production, and subsequently to explore whether their portrayal supports or extends the theoretical basis of this paper. The thesis covers the depiction of bush flying and the North in 3 bush pilots' adventure narratives, a biographical account *Into the Abyss* by Carol Shaben, and a short fictional story "Walk Well, My Brother" by Farley Mowat, and 2 films, namely *The Snow Walker* and *Bush Pilot*.

Bush flying originated in Canada. Aviation has been a practical reality since the early 20th century and Canadians have actively participated in its development from its birth. Due to the impenetrable northern terrain and its limited transport, bush flying was born to open the north and make improvements in terms of adaptation to the immense and severe country. As has been explored, the key event for the birth of this phenomenon so indigenous to Canada (and Alaska) was the outbreak of the First World War. Many veterans who survived the aerial combats and returned home then wanted to continue flying and gravitated to the wilderness of the north where they faced different foes. It was the simple ability to fly that captivated them so much. Together with their engineers, they became world leaders in the art of bush flying in northern arctic climates. While opening up the isolated regions of the country and operating without compasses, radios, or detailed maps, early bush pilots battled inclement weather, blinding snowstorms and the unknown perils of the deserted and uncharted terrain where a wrong turn could end in disaster. Tough and risky, that was the spirit of early-day bush flying. Every flight into the bush meant a challenge to the Canadian frontier. Bush pilots were larger-than-life men, dare devils, barnstormers, explorers, and

a new breed of airborne pioneers who opened the vast virgin territories of the north, explored its farthest riches and established vital links between remote communities, delivering supplies, medicine, medical assistance and the mail. Furthermore, by doing so, they have made the immense country smaller. They represented a new kind of explorers and adventurers who pushed the geographical boundaries, helped search for mineral and metal deposits and introduced a whole new world to travel and commerce, and thus contributed to Canadian economy and tourism. In addition, they became a vital part in everyday life of the Native tribes and came to know them better than anybody else.

Northern flying was proved possible; many pilots, however, lost their lives during the process and their flight operations. Thus, while some of those courageous and dauntless fliers called the unknown, unmapped, and sparsely inhabited region their home, for others it became a grave. Self-reliance, resourcefulness, and determination proved vital during the operations of those intrepid adventurers. The miracles they wrought are that of adaptation to the gigantic, fierce, and incredibly difficult country. Contemporary bush fliers and pilots have been inspired by those who showed the way and much of the airline industry has its roots in the achievements of those aviation pioneers.

Concerning the aircraft, the transition during those years was from rudimentary to sophisticated, from adapted to design-specific, from civil to commercial; it also included a change from a lack of maps and limited instrumentation to induction compasses, from flying on visuals to flying on reliable instruments and controlled aviation, and from unreliable and malfunctioning to safe. Single-engine aircraft were replaced by jet-powered planes, moreover, the installation of modern instruments and equipment have reduced the danger caused by inclement weather, in addition, more spacious plane models then have enabled to carry larger amounts of profitable payloads and a higher number of passengers. The risks that were once a part of bush flying are no longer the norm. Owing to the necessity to adapt the aircraft to the conditions and environment of the north, new models, inventions and technologies which would make flying easier and more effective were being built, which subsequently led to the construction of modern airplanes.

Regarding the analysed literature and films, although each of them deals with the bush flying phenomenon in a slightly specific way, it cannot be denied that all the analysed works markedly support and contribute to the image of bush flying that was

formed in the theoretical part. These fictional and non-fictional accounts and films serve as convincing evidence of the unpredictability, demandingness, and danger this occupation involved and of courage, endurance, psychological and physical strength, and resourcefulness those involved in it had to dispose of. Apart from the bush flying phenomenon, it has been examined that the literature and film also deepens the image of the Far North, moreover, it extends the idea of the North – bringing bush pilots and their stories into the process of creation. In other words, the adventurous accounts of bush pilots have contributed to the formation of the myth of the Canadian North, one of the essential pillars of the problematic matter of Canada's national identity. The analysed works predominantly portray the North as place of hard living conditions and everyday struggle for food and survival. It attracts male adventurers and tests their strength and competence; furthermore, it has the power to drive them mad, starve them and freeze them to death. On the other hand, some of the analysed works also promote the romantic representation of the North, despite the severe living conditions, depicting it as a land of a fairly rich diversity of animal life. Taken together, these narratives and films construct the North as a place of masculine romance in a fierce but magnificent and unspoilt landscape, offering challenge and adventure.

In conclusion, this thesis and the analysed works have helped approach the mysterious North and as a whole have contributed to the formation of the myth of the North which, by being portrayed and analysed, subsequently gains significance.

Although the bush flying phenomenon seems rather neglected in academic or encyclopaedic production, judging by the amount of Internet websites and biographical books devoted to it, Canadians appreciate the remarkable accomplishments of bush pilots and their engineers and are proud of and interested in this phenomenon, which is reflected in the widespread popularity of a reality television series called *Ice Pilots NWT* among Canadians. Debuted in 2009, it portrays Buffalo Airways, an airline based in Yellowknife specializing in modern-day bush flying. The team mainly flies vintage WWII-era propeller planes year-round in the Canadian north. Running from 2009 to 2014 and comprising 6 seasons, the series was nominated for and actually won several Leo Awards, Gemini Awards, and Canadian Screen Awards, including categories such as Best Documentary Series or Best Factual Program or Series.³⁴⁷

³⁴⁷“Ice Pilots NWT,” Wikipedia, accessed April 20, 2017, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ice_Pilots_NWT.

RESUMÉ

Tato práce se věnovala éře v kulturní a ekonomické historii Kanady, která dnes již nemá takový význam jako za minulého století a postupně se z kanadského severu vytrácí. Tématem byl fenomén bush létání a piloti, jež jej provozovali, ale také všichni ostatní, jejichž kariéra s ním byla spjata. Vzhledem k tomu, že je tento fenomén velmi často opomíjen v učebnicích a knihách obecně zaměřených na Kanadu, její historii a kulturu, nebo jen velmi stručně zmíněn a nastíněn, práce si kladla za hlavní cíl především představit tento historicko-kulturní fenomén a do hloubky přiblížit jeho vznik, vývoj a význam pro kanadskou ekonomiku a geografii nejen širší akademické obci, ale také komukoliv, kdo by měl zájem dozvědět se něco víc o tomto tématu, které je v Evropě prakticky neznámé a neprobádané. Dále se práce zaměřila na výzkum vlivu tohoto druhu létání na pokroky v leteckém průmyslu, jeho vliv na utváření mýtu kanadského Severu, a v neposlední řadě se práce zabývala činnostmi a povinnostmi, které toto povolání obnášelo, letadly, která při něm byla používána, a studovala také charakterové vlastnosti, které byly pro přežití v tamním divokém a drsném kraji pro piloty nezbytné. Teoretická část se opírala především o knižní publikace sestavené na základě záznamů z palubních deníků, dobových novinových článků a rozhovorů, archivů muzeí či leteckých společností, a také o kanadské dokumentární filmy, které se věnují fenoménu bush létání nebo letectví v Kanadě obecně. Součástí práce byla také analýza zobrazení bush létání a kanadského Severu v kanadské fiktivní literatuře a literatuře faktu a kanadské filmové produkci a její porovnání s teoretickým základem této práce.

Ačkoliv je Kanada, co do rozlohy, druhou největší zemí světa a zabírá neuvěřitelných 10 milionů kilometrů čtverečních, obývá ji pouze 40 milionů lidí, což je velmi řídké pokrytí, přičemž většina z nich sídlí u hranice se Spojenými státy, poněvadž je pro ně tamní klima snesitelnější. Kvůli této nevyrovnané hustotě osídlení zůstávají severnější regiony země kvůli svým nehostinným a krutým podmínkám velmi řídké osídleny a tudíž odtrženy od zbytku civilizované části země, což vytváří velké rozdíly mezi jednotlivými územími. Tím, že se Kanada rozprostírá na severní části kontinentu Severní Ameriky, že až téměř polovinu jejího území pokrývá tundra a její nejsevernější ostrovy sahají až k severnímu pólu, je Kanada vnímána jako severská země plná kontrastů.

Kanada je multikulturní země složená z přistěhovalců, která svým obyvatelům dává možnost si ponechat národní zvyky a tradice své kultury a přitom se stát jejím

plnohodnotným občanem. Z tohoto důvodu je pojem národní identity v kanadském měřítku velmi složitý a komplexní a odjakživa vzdoruje jednoznačné definici. K tomu přispívá také fakt, že Kanada nezahrnuje pouze jednu homogenní kulturu, národnost a historii, nýbrž vícero naprosto odlišných. Mezi ty nejvýraznější a nejpočetnější patří kanadské původní obyvatelstvo, Britové a Francouzi, jejichž neutichající vyostřené vztahy mají svůj podíl na fragmentaci kanadského národa a kultury. Mezi nejčastěji zmiňované pilíře kanadské národní identity se řadí právě tento kulturní spor, národní symboly, lední hokej a národní hymna, pro jiné jsou to zase důležitá kulturní opatření a charakter, jako třeba nezávislost, svoboda, vlídnost, rovnost a demokratická občanská práva. Mimo to, Kanadčané jako národ mají často tendenci se definovat i ve vztahu ke Spojeným státům americkým, přičemž kladou důraz na rozdíly, které je od jejich vlivného a velkého jižního souseda odlišují. Kanadská identita nadále zůstává probíhajícím a neukončeným procesem a otázka její problematické definice se sama postupně stává dalším symbolem identity Kanadčanů. Ačkoliv se může zdát, že v Kanadě převažuje více oddělujících než jednotících faktorů, navenek jsou však Kanadčané jako národ jednotní.

Kanadský sever je nedílným a významným prvkem kanadské identity a mnozí vnímají právě sever jako onen prvek, který sjednocuje celý národ. Kanada je se severem spjata v mnoha ohledech, zvláště pak svojí geografickou polohou. Počínaje 60. rovnoběžkou, kanadský sever je velmi unikátní oblastí, která často bývá spojována s krutými zimami, které ji nemilosrdně sužují po dobu minimálně 6 měsíců, a s nimi spojenými těžkými životními podmínkami. Vzhledem k těmto faktorům je tato oblast obývána pouze nízkým počtem obyvatel, a těmto severanům bývají často přiřknuty vlastnosti jako síla, vytrvalost a soběstačnost. Mimo roztroušené komunity původních obyvatel lze na severu najít jehličnaté lesy, skaliska a nesčetné množství jezer a řek. Více na sever však vegetace ubývá a tamní terén bývá po většinu roku pokryt vrstvou sněhu, během krátkého a poměrně chladného léta je však možné narazit na nekonečná hejna komárů a mušek, která dokáží zatemnit celou oblohu. Jedním z nejdůležitějších charakteristických rysů severních území Kanady jsou ohromné vzdálenosti oddělující jednotlivé regiony a komunity, jež mají za následek výrazné rozdíly mezi jednotlivými regiony, nepřístupnost těchto oblastí, protože na sever vede pouze malé množství cest, a nedostatek kvalitních map severních částí. Právě nedostatek kvalitní dopravní sítě měl za následek dlouhé přehlížení a zanedbávání severních regionů Kanady ze strany vlády. Avšak od dob, co tam byla nalezena důležitá zásobniště kovů a nerostných surovin, nabyly

sever nejen na ekonomickém a kulturním významu, ale také se spustila lavina jeho kulturního opěvování a celkové fascinace, která si našla cestu především skrz umění.

A právě umění a to obrovské množství obrazů, básní, hudebních skladeb, tištěných publikací a ústně předávaných příběhů objevitelů a průzkumníků napomohlo k definici kanadského Severu a dalo prostor tomu, aby se Sever stal mýtem, produktem představ lidské mysli, který nabízí prostor pro fantazii. Nejedná se však pouze o zdroj bohaté inspirace umělců, stal se i jejich výtvorem a každé z těchto uměleckých děl představuje unikátní obraz Severu. Daná vyobrazení lze rozdělit do dvou skupin. První z těchto reprezentací je romantický obraz Severu, jenž jej zachycuje jakožto příjemné a bezpečné místo stvořené pro sny a fantazie, do kterého lze uniknout z rušného život na jihu, a které je také místem pro vzrušující mužská dobrodružství. Druhá skupina umělců jej vyobrazuje jako lidupusté, nepřátelské, drsné a kruté místo obrovských rozměrů a nekonečné divočiny. Podobně jako definice kanadské identity, je i definice kanadského Severu neustále se měnícím procesem, který se vyvíjí s každým novým uměleckým dílem, dobrodružstvím a čtenářem, posluchačem či vnímatelem.

Kvůli obrovským rozměrům Kanady a ohromným vzdálenostem mezi městy, farmami a komunitami byl sever Kanady dlouho zapomenutým a zanedbaným územím. Z tohoto důvodu bylo zajištění fungující vnitrostátní dopravy na severu naprosto zásadní. Nejstarším způsobem dopravy v Kanadě je vodní doprava, kterou používali jak původní kmeny, tak první osadníci, průzkumníci a cestovatelé. Důležitým dopravním prostředkem se v minulém století stala železnice, která zajistila důležité spojení mezi vzdálenými městy a dala za vznik spoustě nových osad. I přesto, že bylo postaveno spousta kilometrů silnic a dálnic, kvůli jeho nepřístupnému terénu zůstávala dostupnost dalekého Severu stále omezena na psí spřežení a sněžné skútry. S příchodem nového vynálezu, letadla, které s sebou přineslo pokrok co do přizpůsobení se tamním podmínkám a klimatu, se však tato situace obrátila a ze severu se stalo hlučné a rušné centrum obchodu.

Bush létání zahrnuje letecké operace v odlehlých končinách kanadského severu. Prvotním impulsem pro jeho vznik byla první světová válka, ve které se spousta mladých mužů naučila leteckému řemeslu a upřímně se pro něj nadchla. Po válce si tak spousta z nich chtělo na létání postavit kariéru. Kanadská vláda však v poválečných letech neměla zájem financovat vojenskou leteckou sílu, proto bylo pro mnoho pilotů těžké najít a udržet si práci letce. Bylo však nutné zajistit stály přísun zásob, strojů a léčiv do odlehlých severských komunit, a tak první průkopníci bush létání nasedli do

velmi primitivních válečných letadel a z důvodu nedostatku přistávacích ploch a leteckých základen začali využívat hladiny jezer a řek jako místa pro přistání a vzlet. Terén na dalekém severu však nebyl téměř vůbec zmapovaný, dalším úkolem pilotů bylo tedy při svých operacích vytvářet jednoduché ručně kreslené mapy, do kterých zaznamenávali co nejvíce orientačních bodů, podle kterých by bylo možné se řídit. Tím začal velký vzdušný průzkum a mapování kanadského severu. Součástí tohoto mapování bylo také založení několika základen s leteckým palivem na odlehlých místech daleko od civilizace, u kterých by piloti mohli v případě nouze natankovat. Postupně začala být náplň jejich práce čím dál víc rozmanitá a bush létání se začalo využívat i v přepravě pošty a pasažérů, těžebním průmyslu, při záchranných a pátracích misích a pátrání po lesních požárech a jejich potlačení. Ačkoliv v období hospodářské krize zájem o leteckou přepravu upadl z důvodu nedostatku financí, toto řemeslo se však dokázalo vzpamatovat. Nicméně záhy po skončení krize přišla druhá světová válka a tito ostřílení piloti neváhali využít své letecké poznatky a zkušenosti ve vzdušných bitvách. Po jejím skončení se piloti vrátili zpátky do kokpitů svých malých bush letadel a náplň jejich práce byla stejná jako před válkou. Nutno podotknout, že piloti sehráli také velmi důležitou roli v životě tamních původních obyvatel, poněvadž s nimi navázali obchodní styky a zajistili jim tak stálý příjem materiálu, surovin a potravin. Tento obchodní styk spolu s hledáním a přepravou nerostných surovin pak měl za následek také posílení kanadské ekonomiky. Kromě tuhých zim, mrazivých teplot, hustých mlh a oslňujícího slunce museli piloti na svých misích čelit také nepříjemnému a otravnému hmyzu.

Mnoho pilotů projevilo vášně pro létání již v útlém věku, často po prvním setkání s letadlem. Bush létání však nebylo povolání pro každého, neboť nestačilo jen umět ovládat letadlo. Naopak, byla to těžká fyzická práce, která zahrnovala nakládání a vykládání nákladu do a z letadla a to mnohdy i v po pás vysoké studené vodě. Nejen to, bylo to také velmi náročné povolání z hlediska soustředění, poněvadž piloti trávili několik hodin denně v kabině letadla vysoko nad zemí. Navíc byla práce bush pilota také velmi nebezpečná, obzvláště pak v počátcích, kdy neexistovaly spolehlivé mapy a letadla a žádná rádiová komunikace. Takový bush pilot měl být schopen zvládnout přežití v terénu, měl mít základy první pomoci a dobré orientační a navigační dovednosti, rozumět dobře letadlům, umět spravit letadlo a poradit si i uprostřed divočiny naprosto bez prostředků. Mimo to bylo také zásadní, aby byl pilot snadno přizpůsobivý různým životním podmínkám a klimatu, pečlivý co se týče různých

systematických úkolů a dobře stavěný, protože práce bush pilota také obnášela náročnou údržbu letadla i během mrazivých zimních teplot. Bylo štěstí, když měl pilot s sebou na pomoc mechanika, se kterým si mohl údržbu letadla rozdělit. Právě na mechanikovi mnohdy záleželo to, zda bylo letadlo letu a provozu schopné, i když většinu zásluh nakonec stejně získal sám pilot. Jelikož během operací piloti často pobývali nějaký čas venku v mrazivých teplotách a kokpity letadel zprvu nebyly vyhřívány, kvalitní teplé oblečení sestávající se hlavně z kožešinové parky bylo na dalekém kanadském severu naprostou nutností. Nutno podotknout, že bush létání se nevěnovali pouze muži; i řada žen si k němu našla cestu, ač byla ze začátku velmi strnitá a obtížná. Jak tomu bývá, ženské pohlaví nebylo v leteckém prostředí vítáno, natož pak v takovém, které vyžadovalo statnost, sílu a odolnost. Nicméně i tak se pár žen může pyšnit tím, že si udělaly jméno právě v tomto leteckém odvětví.

Letadla používána v bush operacích byla z počátku velmi primitivní. Jednalo se o zbylé kusy používané během první světové války, které byly naprosto nevhodné a nedostatečné v krutých kanadských severních oblastech. Mnohá letadla měla z počátku otevřený kokpit, takže piloti a mechanici v nich létající mívali často omrzliny, zvláště pak v mrazivých zimních měsících. Kromě toho prvotní letadla neskýtala žádné navigační pomůcky ani zařízení, takže piloti se museli spoléhat na nedokonalé mapy a záchytné body, které viděli z kabin svých letadel, a pokud ztroskotali, museli si vymyslet vlastní způsob, jak přežít, upoutat pozornost kolem letícího letadla a vrátit se zpět domů. Se vzrůstající oblibou bush létání se však mnoho výrobců letadel začalo pozastavovat nad otázkou, jak by mohli vytvořit letadlo, které by bylo perfektně přizpůsobené tamním drsným podmínkám a po všech stránkách by pilotům vyhovovalo. Proto mnozí z nich před zahájením samotné výroby vyzpovídali několik bush pilotů, aby od nich zjistili, jaké vlastnosti od letadel, se kterými létají, požadují. Tyto vlastnosti se potom snažili zakomponovat do svého modelu, a tak bylo vytvořeno spoustu modelů letadel ryze pro kanadské podmínky, jako například Fokker Universal, Noordyun Norseman či de Havilland Beaver. Za pomoci bush pilotů tak letecká výroba a průmysl vzkvétaly a díky snaze neustále vyrábět dokonalejší a spolehlivější letadla dnes mohou pasažéři usednout na palubu moderních proudových letadel typu Boeing, McDonnell Douglas a Airbus. Mimo letadel si své místo v bush létání našly také helikoptéry, které se osvědčily především v záchranných a pátracích misích.

Vzhledem k tomu, že tato diplomová práce není pouze historicko-kulturní, ale i literární, je nutné podotknout také výsledky knižní a filmové analýzy. Bylo prokázáno,

že každé z analyzovaných děl přispívá k obrazu bush létání, jaký byl vytvořený v teoretické části práce, a to tím, že zobrazuje tu nepředvídatelnost, náročnost a nebezpečí, které toto povolání obnášelo, a také odvahu, vytrvalost, vynalézavost a duševní a fyzickou sílu, kterými museli bush piloti disponovat, aby byli schopni přežít. Kromě fenoménu bush létání bylo předmětem analýzy také zobrazení kanadského Severu. Na základě daných analýz je Sever místem vyznačujícím se těžkými životními podmínkami a každodenním bojem o potravu a přežití, které láká dobrodruhy na své výzvy a prověřuje jejich schopnosti. Avšak, některá díla také prosazují spíše romantické znázornění severních oblastí. Dané analyzované produkce pomohly přiblížit kanadský Severu a celkově přispěly k formování mýtu kanadského Severu, který tak nabývá na významu.

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The objective of this thesis is to introduce the bush flying phenomenon to academia and anyone interested in it. The theoretical part provides a detailed and comprehensive overview of this phenomenon from its origins in the early 20th century until the present day, and explores its function, development and significance for the economics and geography of Canada. Furthermore, the research also examines the impact of bush flying on the progress in aviation technology, its influence on the formation of the myth of the North in Canada, and, in addition, it also investigates what qualities were necessary for bush pilots to survive and what responsibilities and challenges bush operations involved. The practical part is based on the analysis of the portrayal of the bush flying phenomenon and the North in both literary non-fiction and fiction and in cinematic production, namely in 3 bush pilot's adventure narratives, a biographical account *Into the Abyss* by Carol Shaben, and a short fictional story "Walk Well, My Brother" by Farley Mowat, and 2 films, namely *The Snow Walker* and *Bush Pilot*, and explores whether their portrayal supports or extends the theoretical basis of this paper.

Keywords: bush flying, bush pilots, bush planes, Canadian North, Canada

ANOTACE

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Předmětem této práce je fenomén bush létání a piloti, jež jej provozovali, ale také všichni ostatní, jejichž kariéra s ním byla spjata. Teoretická část práce si klade za hlavní cíl především představit tento historicko-kulturní fenomén a do hloubky přiblížit jeho vznik, vývoj a význam pro kanadskou ekonomiku a geografii jak širší akademické obci, tak komukoliv, kdo by měl zájem dozvědět se něco víc o tomto tématu. Dále se práce zaměřuje na výzkum vlivu tohoto druhu létání na pokroky v leteckém průmyslu, jeho vliv na utváření mýtu kanadského Severu, a v neposlední řadě se práce zaobírá činnostmi a povinnostmi, které toto povolání obnášelo, letadly, která při něm byla používána, a studuje také charakterové vlastnosti, jež byly pro přežití v tamním divokém a drsném kraji pro piloty nezbytné. Součástí práce je také analýza zobrazení bush létání a kanadského Severu v kanadské fiktivní literatuře, literatuře faktu a kanadské filmové produkci a její porovnání s teoretickým základem této práce.

Klíčová slova: bush létání, bush piloti, bush letadla, kanadský Sever, Kanada

APPENDICES

Appendix A *Quotation from the Czech source in the original language*

Appendix B *Curtis C2-HS Flying Boat*

Appendix C *Curtiss JN-4 “Canuck”*

Appendix D *Junkers W-34*

Appendix E *Fairchild FC-1*

Appendix F *Fokker Universal*

Appendix G *Fokker Super Universal*

Appendix H *Noorduyn Norseman*

Appendix I *de Havilland Fox Moth*

Appendix J *de Havilland Beaver*

Appendix K *de Havilland Otter*

Appendix L *de Havilland Buffalo*

Appendix M *de Havilland Twin Otter*

Appendix N *Boeing 727*

Appendix O *McDonnell Douglas DC-6*

Appendix P *McDonnell Douglas DC-3*

Appendix Q *Canso*

Appendix R *Cessna*

Appendix S *Piasecki H-21 Flying Banana*

Page 61, footnote 273

Počet registrovaných letadel se v období 1970 – 1995 zvýšil o 147 % na celkový počet 28 054 v roce 1997. Počet cestujících přepravených komerčními aeroliniemi dosáhl v roce 1997 počtu přes 78 milionů ve srovnání s rokem 1991, kdy to bylo 32 milionů. První leteckou dopravní společností v Kanadě byla v roce 1937 Canada Airline. Ve svých začátcích měla společnost 10 letadel pro přepravu osob a jedno práškovací letadlo. V roce 1965 se změnil název společnosti na Air Canada. Hlavní konkurent společnosti Air Canada je Canadian Pacific Airlines založená v roce 1942. V roce 1968 se změnil název na CP Air a celá společnost byla v roce 1987 prodána Canadian Airlines. K 1.1.2000 došlo ke sloučení s Air Canada, která v současné době disponuje více než 240 letadly a létá do 545 destinací po celém světě. Vnitrostátní lety a lety mezi Kanadou a USA zajišťuje dalších asi 1 500 společností s licencemi. V roce 1998 bylo v Kanadě celkem 1395 letišť, z toho 515 s ranvejemi se zpevněným povrchem a 880 s nezpevněným a dalších 17 heliportů. [...] Helikoptéry se používají při televizním zpravodajství, jako letecká ambulancní služba, na přepravu vedoucích pracovníků a podnikatelů, při výstavbě antén, v policii a na vyhlídkové turistické lety. Nejčastěji však působí v lesnictví a u těžebních společností.

³⁴⁸ Alois Hynek, Leona Kovaříková, *Geografie Kanady* (Brno: Masarykova univerzita v Brně, 2003). 149-150.

Appendix B *Curtis C2-HS Flying Boat*



Source: "First Aerial Postal Service Created in 1924," Canadian Museum of History, accessed March 31, 2017, <http://www.historymuseum.ca/cmhc/exhibitions/cpm/courrier2/cciel20e.shtml>.

Appendix C *Curtiss JN-4 "Canuck"*



Source: "Collection Highlights – Curtiss JN-4 'Canuck,'" Canada Aviation and Space Museum, accessed March 31, 2017, <http://casmuseum.techno-science.ca/en/collection-research/artifact-curtiss-jn-4-canuck.php>.

Appendix D *Junkers W-34*



Source: “Collection Highlights – Junkers W-34F/FI,” Canada Aviation and Space Museum, accessed March 31, 2017, <http://casmuseum.techno-science.ca/en/collection-research/artifact-junkers-w-34f-fi.php>.

Appendix E *Fairchild FC-1*



Source: “Drawing – Paul Matt – Fairchild FC-1,” RC Flyer News, accessed March 31, 2017, <https://rcflyernews.com/products/drawing-paul-matt-fairchild-fc-1>.

Appendix F *Fokker Universal*



Source: “Fokker Universal,” Dutch Aviation, accessed March 31, 2017, <http://www.dutch-aviation.nl/index5/Civil/index5-2%20Fokker%20Universal.html>.

Appendix G *Fokker Super Universal*



Source: “Fokker Super Universal, CF-AAM,” Royal Aviation Museum of Western Canada, accessed March 31, 2017, <http://www.royalaviationmuseum.com/95/featured-slide-1/>.

Appendix H *Noorduyn Norseman*



Source: “Noorduyn UC-64 Norseman,” National Museum of the US Air Force, last modified April 16, 2015, accessed March 31, 2017, <http://www.nationalmuseum.af.mil/Visit/Museum-Exhibits/Fact-Sheets/Display/Article/196265/noorduyn-uc-64a-norseman/>.

Appendix I *de Havilland Fox Moth*



Source: “Collection Highlights – De Havilland D.H.83C Fox Moth,” Canada Aviation and Space Museum, accessed March 31, 2017, <http://casmuseum.techno-science.ca/en/collection-research/artifact-de-havilland-fox-moth.php>.

Appendix J *de Havilland Beaver*



Source: “De Havilland Canada DHC-2 Beaver Mk1 – Whistler Air,” Airliners, accessed March 31, 2017, <http://www.airliners.net/photo/Whistler-Air/De-Havilland-Canada-DHC-2-Beaver-Mk1/2191441>.

Appendix K *de Havilland Otter*



Source: “De Havilland Canada DHC-3/PZL3S Otter – Green Airways,” Airliners, accessed March 31, 2017, <http://www.airliners.net/photo/Green-Airways/De-Havilland-Canada-DHC-3-PZL3S-Otter/2113163>.

Appendix L *de Havilland Buffalo*



Source: “De Havilland DC-5 Buffalo,” Aircraft Market Place, last modified June 7, 2012, accessed March 31, 2017, <http://www.acmp.com/blog/de-havilland-dhc-5-buffalo.html>.

Appendix M *de Havilland Twin Otter*



Source: “De Havilland Canada DHC-6-100 Twin Otter – West Coast Air,” *Airliners*, accessed March 31, 2017, <http://www.airliners.net/photo/West-Coast-Air/De-Havilland-Canada-DHC-6-100-Twin-Otter/1594385>.

Appendix N *Boeing 727*



Source: "File: Air Canada Boeing 727-233F C-GAAL 07.jpg," Wikimedia Commons, last modified November, 2016, accessed March 31, 2017, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Air_Canada_Boeing_727-233F_C-GAAL_07.jpg.

Appendix O *McDonnell Douglas DC-6*



Source: "Douglas DC-6," Aircraft Wiki, accessed March 31, 2017, http://aircraft.wikia.com/wiki/Douglas_DC-6.

Appendix P *McDonnell Douglas DC-3*



Source: “Douglas Dc-3 Aircrafts Mcdonnell Douglas Douglas Dc3 Full HD Spunky Wallpaper,” Wallpaperrs, accessed March 31, 2017, <http://wallpaperrs.com/douglas-dc-3-aircrafts-mcdonnell-douglas-douglas-dc3-full-hd-spunky-wallpaper-96047.html>.

Appendix Q *Canso*



Source: “Consolidated Vultee PBY-5A Canso,” Buffalo Airways, accessed March 31, 2017, <http://www.buffaloairways.com/index.php?page=consonlidated-vultee-pby-5a-canso>.

Appendix R *Cessna*



Source: “Cessna,” Aircraft Compare, accessed March 31, 2017, <https://www.aircraftcompare.com/manufacture-aircraft/Cessna/5>.

Appendix S *Piasecki H-21 Flying Banana*



Source: “Piasecki H-21A/B Flying Banana – Mid Canada Line,” Scale Mates, accessed March 31, 2017, <https://www.scalemates.com/kits/179676-canmilair-136-piasecki-h-21a-b-flying-banana-mid-canada-line>.