A Poet's Seasons: A Gerontological-Ecocritical Approach to the Poetry of Lorna Crozier

Núria Mina Riera

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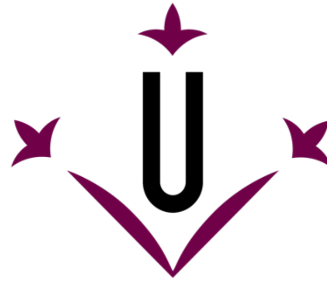

Universitat de Lleida

TESI DOCTORAL

A Poet's Seasons: A Gerontological-Ecocritical Approach to the Poetry of Lorna Crozier

Núria Mina Riera

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Abstract

Sense of place and corporeality are two essential components of a person's identity, especially in old age. Such notions are separately researched by different fields of study, notably environmental gerontology and psychology, ecocriticism, embodiment theories in ageing studies, and material ecocriticism. The present doctoral thesis contributes towards an interdisciplinary understanding of concepts of place and corporeality as related to the ageing process by means of developing the term *emplaced embodiment* for the analysis of literary works.

More specifically, this dissertation employs the notion of emplaced embodiment in order to examine the poetic oeuvre of contemporary Canadian writer Lorna Crozier (b. 1948). Such an approach is fitting for Crozier's poetry, given that it often discusses ageing embodiment and sexuality through place-based experiences of the natural world. Thus, this dissertation has a twofold aim, namely to interrogate how the speakers' embodiment at different ages is influenced by their interactions with the non-human world in specific places in Crozier's poetic work; and to trace the continuities and discontinuities in such interactions along Crozier's career, in order to elucidate the formation process of her late style.

It is my contention that Crozier's late style can be defined through Anne M. Wyatt-Brown's first model for late style creativity, as thematic continuities can be observed in Crozier's poetry, while discontinuities and new approaches suggest a rekindled creativity in Crozier's old age. Particularly relevant is Crozier's introduction of the effects of ageing on a couple's sexuality and an emphasis on older women's desire along her own ageing into old age. Both themes offer a continuation with Crozier's career-long criticism of ageism, often via the use of humour, and the positive stance from which she describes the ageing process as favoured by the healing properties of gardens.

Keywords: Lorna Crozier, contemporary Canadian poetry, emplaced embodiment, ageing studies, (material) ecocriticism, late style, sense of place, environmental gerontology, old age, sexuality.

Resum

El sentit de lloc i la corporalitat són dos elements essencials de la identitat d'una persona, especialment durant l'envelliment. Aquests dos conceptes s'investiguen de forma separada en diferents camps d'estudi, especialment en la gerontologia i psicologia ambiental, l'ecocrítica, les teories sobre corporalitat en els estudis d'envelliment i l'ecocrítica material. Aquesta tesi doctoral contribueix a una elaboració interdisciplinària de conceptes de lloc i corporalitat en relació amb el procés d'envelliment mitjançant el terme *emplaced embodiment* [corporalitat emplaçada] per a l'anàlisi de textos literaris.

Més concretament, aquesta tesi utilitza el concepte de corporalitat emplaçada per tal d'analitzar l'obra poètica de l'escriptora canadenca contemporània Lorna Crozier, nascuda l'any 1948. Aquesta aproximació teòrica és apropiada per tal d'analitzar la poesia de Crozier donat que la seva obra se centra sovint en la corporalitat i la sexualitat durant el procés d'envelliment a través d'experiències emplaçades en el medi natural. Per tant, l'objectiu d'aquesta tesi és doble: examinar com, en l'obra de Crozier, la corporalitat a diferents edats es veu influenciada per la interacció amb el món no-humà en llocs concrets; i traçar les continuïtats i discontinuïtats en aquestes interaccions al llarg de l'obra de Crozier, per tal de descriure el procés de formació del seu estil tardà.

En aquesta tesi, s'argumenta que l'estil tardà de Crozier es pot definir mitjançant el primer model dins la teoria sobre la creativitat en l'estil tardà que proposa Anne M. Wyatt-Brown, ja que s'observen continuïtats temàtiques en la poesia de Crozier, mentre que les discontinuïtats i les noves incorporacions suggereixen una creativitat renovada durant la vellesa de Crozier. Específicament, cal destacar la incorporació en l'obra de Crozier dels efectes de l'envelliment en la sexualitat d'una parella, així com un èmfasi en el desig sexual en les dones grans de forma paral·lela al propi procés d'envelliment de Crozier. Ambdós temes mostren una continuació en la crítica recurrent de l'edatisme en

l'obra de Crozier, que sovint es realitza mitjançant l'ús de l'humor i de la visió positiva sobre el procés d'envelliment que s'extreu de les propietats curatives dels jardins.

Paraules clau: Lorna Crozier, poesia canadenca contemporània, corporalitat emplaçada, estudis d'envelliment, ecocrítica (material), estil tardà, sentit de lloc, gerontologia ambiental, vellesa, sexualitat.

Resumen

El sentido de lugar y la corporalidad son dos elementos esenciales en la identidad de una persona, especialmente durante el envejecimiento. Estos dos conceptos se investigan de forma separada en diferentes ámbitos de estudio, especialmente en la gerontología y psicología ambiental, la ecocrítica, las teorías sobre corporalidad en los estudios de envejecimiento y la ecocrítica material. Esta tesis doctoral contribuye a una elaboración interdisciplinaria de conceptos de lugar y corporalidad en relación con el proceso de envejecimiento para el análisis de textos literarios, que se articula mediante el término *emplaced embodiment* [corporalidad emplazada].

Específicamente, esta tesis utiliza el concepto de corporalidad emplazada con el fin de analizar la obra poética de la escritora canadiense contemporánea Lorna Crozier, nacida el año 1948. Esta aproximación teórica es apropiada para analizar la poesía de Crozier puesto que su obra se centra a menudo en la corporalidad y la sexualidad durante el proceso de envejecimiento en el contexto de experiencias emplazadas en el medio natural. Así pues, el objetivo de esta tesis es doble: examinar como, en la obra de Crozier, la corporalidad a diferentes edades está influenciada por la interacción con el mundo no-humano en lugares concretos; y trazar las continuidades y discontinuidades en estas interacciones a lo largo de la obra de Croizer, con el fin de describir el proceso de formación de su estilo tardío.

El argumento principal de esta tesis es que el estilo tardío de Crozier se puede definir mediante el primer modelo de la teoría sobre la creatividad en el estilo tardío que propone Anne M. Wyatt-Brown, puesto que se observan continuidades temáticas en la poesía de Crozier y a su vez, las discontinuidades y las nuevas incorporaciones sugieren que Crozier goza de una creatividad renovada en su vejez. Específicamente, cabe destacar la incorporación en la obra de Crozier de los efectos del envejecimiento en la sexualidad

de una pareja, así como el énfasis en el deseo sexual en mujeres mayores, de forma paralela al propio proceso de envejecimiento de Crozier. Ambos temas demuestran una continuación en la crítica recurrente del edadismo en la obra de Crozier, que a menudo se realiza mediante el uso del humor y de la visión positiva acerca del proceso de envejecimiento a la que las propiedades curativas de los jardines contribuyen.

Palabras clave: Lorna Crozier, poesía canadiense contemporánea, corporalidad emplazada, estudios de envejecimiento, ecocrítica (material), estilo tardío, sentido de lugar, gerontología ambiental, vejez, sexualidad.

INTRODUCTION

As a contemporary writer who was born in and raised on the Canadian prairies and who has been defined as a writer of place (Philips 145), Lorna Crozier (b. 1948) belongs to a literary tradition in which the impression of the landscape on the individual and the individual's response to such an impression are major thematic concerns. Nature poets like Robert Kroetsch (1927-2011), Tim Lilburn (b. 1950), and Jan Zwicky (b. 1955) – who are nowadays classified as ecological poets – belong to such a tradition of prairie-based Canadian writers. While for Kroetsch grounding in place involves discovering and reinventing the prairies (Kaye and Thacker 168), for Lilburn and Zwicky poetic attentiveness to nature becomes a spiritual and philosophical matter, respectively (Kerber; Northrup).[1] Contrary to those earlier Canadian writers who used to emphasize the antagonism between nature and human beings – as Northrop Frye contends in relation to Canadian poetry from the 1940s and 1950s (141-42) –, Crozier is part of a generation of writers, which includes Zwicky, Lilburn, and Don McKay, who have rewritten the relationship between the individual and the environment. In other words, the post-colonial attitude in Canada that assumed the hostility of Nature – in capital letters –, which man had to conquer in order to exploit its resources, has been replaced by an eco-centric mindset which recognizes that "the destruction of Nature is equivalent to self-destruction on the part of man," to borrow from Margaret Atwood's words in her revised 2012 edition of *Survival*: *A Thematic Guide to Canadian Literature* (60).

[1] The citation system throughout this dissertation follows the eighth edition of the MLA Style Manual. However, two major modifications have been employed for readability purposes. Firstly, the year of publication of poems is provided in brackets rather than a shortened reference to the book title, so as to be able to have a quick visual reference when analysing their relevance for the formation process of Crozier's late style. Secondly, while this edition of the MLA citation stylesheet recommends formatting quotations of three or more lines as block quotations, the present dissertation keeps up to four-line quotations as part of the body of the text due to the large number of four-line quotations from Crozier's poems that are used.

Similar to the work of other prairie-based poets of the same generation, Crozier's oeuvre reveals several ecological concerns. These are reflected in the central role that the natural world and its creatures play in her poems, as well as in the attention paid to the non-dominant relationships between the human personae and the non-human world. Nevertheless, the special attention that Crozier pays to the human personae and their sense of embodiment – or bodily perceptions and experiences – in a given (often natural) environment partly departs from purely ecological concerns. Specifically, Crozier's work often discusses ageing corporealities and sexualities through place-based natural imagery. These range from a description of a young persona's observation of grandparents' older bodies at the beginning of her oeuvre to the personae's own process of ageing throughout the life-course, in later poetry collections. Crozier's attention to the body embraces multiple perceptions of both the ageing self and body image throughout the life-course. Notably, her use of natural imagery interweaves the physical, psychological, emotional, and relational effects of the ageing process, which include a salient engagement with the theme of sexuality, especially female sexuality, throughout Crozier's writing career. In turn, the recurrent use of images relating to specific flora, fauna and natural phenomena also emphasizes the central role of place in Crozier's work. Crozier's engagement with place is articulated via the symbols of the garden and the prairies. Life-long connections to different gardens and the characteristic climate of the prairies are portrayed as being highly meaningful for Crozier throughout the life-course. The emotional attachment to such places, and to their particular characteristics and non-human inhabitants, as present throughout Crozier's work, is best described through notions of sense of place.

The main aim of this dissertation is to interrogate how in Crozier's poetry the speakers' embodiment at different points in their lives is influenced by their interactions with the non-human world in specific places. In this sense, this dissertation traces the

evolution of the personae's embodiment of place (hereafter referred to as *emplaced embodiment*) throughout Crozier's work. The term 'emplaced embodiment,' which was coined by sociologist of sport and outdoor education Barbara Humberstone in 2018, is favoured in this dissertation over 'embodiment of place' because it shows at first glance the intimate connections that exist, and that this dissertation examines, between embodiment and emplacement. This examination of emplaced embodiment in Crozier's poetry draws on theories of sense of place and, more specifically, on an understanding of sense of place as affective attachment to a specific place through experiencing it, becoming involved in it, and through the sharing of local myths and symbols (Shamai and Ilatov 468). The concept of emplaced embodiment as formulated in this dissertation refers to the interplay between notions of embodiment and notions of emplacement; that is, how the interaction with the place a person is in both affects and is affected by the perceptions experienced through that person's body. In turn, the examination of continuities, variations, and new insertions in emplaced embodiment as regards both theme and symbolism reveals the formation process of Crozier's late style, which is a period in an author's career in which changes can be observed as a way of voicing the author's own deepest fears and sorrows, but in which continuities also remain (Wyatt-Brown and Rossen 7).

The corpus selected in order to fulfil the aims of this dissertation encompasses the eighteen poetry collections Lorna Crozier has authored to date; ranging from her first poetry collection, *Inside Is the Sky*, published in 1976, to her latest one, *The House the Spirit Builds* (with photographs by Peter Coffman and Diane Laundy), published in 2019. It is worth noting that the latter is the second poetry collection in which Crozier establishes a dialogue between her poems and photographs taken by prestigious photographers in nature reserves; the first one was *The Wild in You: Voices from the*

Forest and the Sea (2015), in which the photographs were taken by Canadian wildlife conservationist and nature photographer Ian McAllister. The book of new and selected poems *The Garden Going On Without Us,* published in 1985, will also be part of the corpus. Moreover, Crozier's two collections of prose poems, *The Book of Marvels* (2013) and *God of Shadows* (2018), will also be subject to study. From Crozier's memoir, *Small Beneath the Sky* (2009), the poems that are interspersed in between the chapters written in prose will be examined alongside those in poetry collections. In addition, the thematic concerns in her poetry that arose from her biographical, geographical, artistic, and social class background, as explained in the memoir and as expanded on in her first non-fiction book, *Through the Garden: A Love Story (with Cats)* (2020), will be used in order to deepen the understanding of some of Crozier's thematic concerns as present in her poems.

Regarding the reception of her work, the collection *The Garden Going On Without Us* became highly popular because of the sequence of poems "The Sex Lives of Vegetables," which depicts imagined sexual intercourse among garden vegetables. As Cooke explains, Crozier's humorous coital explicitness was met with both welcoming attitudes and discomfort by audiences in poetry readings (93). According to Crozier in her interview with Bruce Meyer and Brian O'Riordan, this was because many were not ready to listen to a woman writer being "irreverent about sex" ("Nothing Better" 28). In addition, Crozier garnered popularity with the Canadian general population as a guest for CBC Radio in the 1980s. From a literary perspective, Crozier's prestige as a poet became well established as a recipient of Canada's Governor General's Literary Award for English-language poetry with *Inventing the Hawk* in 1992. Numerous awards have followed thereafter, such as the Pat Lowther Award (from the League of Canadian Poets) for *Inventing the Hawk* in 1993, for *Everything Arrives at the Light* in 1996, and for *The Wrong Cat* in 2016, the Dorothy Livesay Prize for Poetry for *What the Living Won't Let*

Go in 2000, and the Chen Zi Ang Poetry Periodical International Poet Award, in Sui Ning, China, in 2018, among others. Crozier's recognition as a prestigious Canadian writer has also been enhanced by the five Honorary Doctorates she has received from different Canadian universities. Furthermore, Crozier was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada in 2009, and was named Officer of the Order of Canada in 2011, "for her poetry and her mentorship of the new generation of Canadian poets" (Recipients' Citations).

The evolution of Crozier's thematic concerns throughout her oeuvre has received little critical attention since 2002. Her poetic work from 1976 to 1995 was examined in Nathalie Cooke's critical overview, and Tanis MacDonald's study on Crozier's sexual poetics was published in 2002. Since then, only two articles on the evolution of Crozier's poetic oeuvre have been published. On the one hand, Nela Bureu-Ramos, whose article was published in 2010, reflects on Crozier's thematic evolution, taking her 2005 poetry collection *Whetstone* as the point of departure for this analysis. On the other hand, the author of the present dissertation examines the evolution of the symbol of snow as related to the development of Crozier's late style until *The Book of Marvels* (2013). MacDonald's findings are in line with Cooke's analysis of Crozier's oeuvre until 1995 and her observation that Crozier's poetics has evolved dramatically over the years. Specifically, Cooke points out two major developments in Crozier's oeuvre, namely "the sense that with each new collection Crozier gains increasing control of her medium" (94), and a move away from a more sombre worldview in her first poetry collections to a more positive stance in her later works (94). MacDonald, on the other hand, quotes from Stephen Morrissey's review on Crozier's poetry collection *Angels of Flesh, Angels of Silence* in order to explain that Crozier's evolution as a writer involves her increased ability to use humour to openly discuss sexuality, as reflected in Crozier's "Penis Poems" series (249). For her part, Bureu-Ramos posits that the mature Crozier revises classical

themes in Canadian literature in *Whetstone*, while at the same time she is returning to themes already present in her earlier collections (386). Bureu-Ramos concludes that such re-visitation facilitates Crozier's deeper introspection (387). In a similar vein, the author of this dissertation observes a continuity in Crozier's depiction of snow in her poems throughout her oeuvre, but with a significant change in her later work, specifically since her 2011 poetry collection. In this sense, the author of this dissertation relates the new association of snow with grief in Crozier's 2011 collection to the beginning of Crozier's late style, as defined by a renewed thematic creativity.

Other critical works that have studied the development of Crozier's work have focused on the role of nature in her oeuvre. Nonetheless, the effect on Crozier's poetry of her move from Swift Current, her prairie hometown, to North Saanich, a municipality in the Greater Victoria Region, on Vancouver Island, remains unstudied to date although Cooke already suggested such a line of enquiry in 1995 (82). In Carmen Leñero's examination of the role of nature in Crozier's poetry, published in 2010, she claims that Crozier's poetry stems from both her revisitation of memories from a new perspective and her careful listening to the sounds of nature, which she composes into poems while walking; "[t]hus, it is her internal singing, together with her wandering, that gives rise to each verse" (116). In addition, Leñero also highlights the importance of the prairie as symbol, together with the pervading wind and snow of the prairie landscape. Nevertheless, while Leñero notes Crozier's physical change of place from Saskatchewan to Vancouver Island and the different landscape and weather on this island from that of the prairies, she does not analyse any possible thematic evolution in Crozier's poems. This dissertation intends to fill such a void in the study of Crozier's oeuvre on the basis that Crozier's thematic concerns have continued to evolve since Cooke's and MacDonald's respective studies were published, and that such a development includes an

enlargement of subject matter as inspired by her life on Vancouver Island, among other sources of inspiration.

The originality of this doctoral dissertation is twofold, namely it is the first study that examines the formation process of Lorna Crozier's late style, and that imbricates literary gerontology with ecocriticism. Although there exist scholarly essays on Crozier's work from an ageing studies perspective (Bureu-Ramos, "Stubborn Radiance" and "Our Pathway") and from an ecocritical point of view (Schwarz; Rose), this dissertation combines both critical apparatuses in unprecedented ways. Such a joint theoretical framework allows for an examination of Crozier's portrayal of sexuality – which has been analysed from the prism of abuse (Boire) and masculinity (MacDonald) – as an experience that encompasses both the differences in the embodiment of sexuality throughout the life-course, and the role that emplacement plays in such experiences. A combined theoretical approach is used in order to fulfil the aims of this dissertation, in which notions of both place and embodiment within the field of gerontology are interwoven with parallel notions within the field of ecocriticism. While such theoretical imbrications have been created in order to analyse Crozier's oeuvre, they stand on their own and can thus be applied to other contexts and authors.

This dissertation has been structured in the following manner: Chapter one comprises the theory chapter, which develops the interrelationships between notions of place and notions of ageing. On the one hand, the place dimension of ageing within environmental gerontology, which examines the effects of older persons' place attachment and environmental stability on their identity and behaviour, is adapted for the study of literature through its combination with notions of sense of place, as examined within ecocriticism. Building on notions of sense of place as fostered by the older individual's contact with the natural environment, Diego Sánchez-González and Vicente

Rodríguez-Rodríguez broaden the traditional conceptualisation of the three levels of environmental analysis in environmental gerontology in order to incorporate the effects that the natural environment has on ageing individuals. Similarly, ecocriticism incorporates notions of sense of place that relate to literature's ability to rethink the human relationship with nature towards attitudes of environmental sustainability. This combined approach has proven extremely useful not only in terms of examining depictions of sense of place throughout Crozier's oeuvre, but also to structure the chapters of this dissertation that focus on the analysis of her work. On the other hand, embodiment theories in ageing studies are imbricated with embodiment theories in material ecocriticism, namely an ecocritical perspective which focuses on the twofold premise that matter is shared between humans and nature and, therefore, both humans and nature are part of a continuum, and that all matter has an agentic capacity. Both conceptualisations of embodiment are partially grounded on their common respective origins in Donna Haraway's feminist theories, which place the body as the meeting point of human and non-human agencies. Such an interconnection between embodiment theories in ageing studies and material ecocriticism allows for an examination of the effect that corporality has for the personae's self-perceptions of ageing and the influence that place-based natural elements play in such perceptions throughout Crozier's poetry. The theory chapter finishes with a section on pre-existing studies that point towards possible interconnections between gerontology and ecocriticism, chiefly by Harry R. Moody and Andrew Achenbaum, and Barbara Humberstone, respectively.

In order to examine the complex interplay of notions of sense of place and embodiment, the analysis chapters adopt the three levels of environmental analysis, as used in environmental gerontology, for Crozier's oeuvre. The different layers of sense of place in Crozier's work are closely connected to a number of both landscape and weather

tropes, which have been associated with the three levels of spatial analysis in the following manner: On a micro-level, sense of place refers to the home and the garden, while on a meso-level it encompasses the prairies; finally, on a macro-level, sense of place applies to Canada as a whole, and the world at large.

The micro-level of environmental analysis comprises chapters two and three. Chapter two examines the portrayal of sense of place and emplaced embodiment in the garden trope. The analysis of Crozier's symbol of the garden is contrasted to that of Boyd's, and examines the three levels of interaction between human and non-human beings that the garden trope in Crozier's oeuvre encompasses, namely (i) interaction that is enmeshed in the garden as symbol of the ageing process; (ii) an interaction in which the garden trope offers depictions of gender and sexuality; (iii) interaction between human and non-human beings. Chapter three looks into the depiction of the emplaced embodiment of sexuality in a home-based context. The main contention is that the interconnection between sexually-active personae and non-human nature allows the speakers, especially the female ones, to both learn from nature and gain agency as individuals. In addition, such an imbrication also allows for a criticism that ranges from socio-cultural prejudices towards certain sexual practices to illicit forms of sexuality.

The meso-level of environmental analysis, which corresponds to the prairies and its inhabitants in Crozier's work, is examined in Chapter four. This chapter examines sense of place and emplaced embodiment in the prairie trope and its associated symbols, namely drought, wind, and the combination of wind and snow. The main contention in this chapter is that Crozier's oeuvre depicts a strong sense of place for the prairies which results from resilience to its harsh weather conditions. Such a portrayal is stable throughout Crozier's work, although new meanings associated with symbols related to

the prairies have appeared in her latest collections. As such, Crozier's emplaced embodiment of the prairies is still a source of creativity in old age.

Finally, the macro-level of environmental analysis refers to Canada, and ultimately, to the world at large in Crozier's oeuvre. The macro-level of environmental analysis is articulated in Chapter five, which examines one of the major symbols in Crozier's work, namely light. This chapter argues that light is primarily emplaced on the prairies in Crozier's literary universe, but reaches beyond both the regional and the national through her ekphrastic poems. The emplaced embodiment of light both allows for communion with the non-human world and provides a criticism of the ill-treatment of non-human nature and of social prejudices regarding embodiment throughout Crozier's work.

Most importantly, each chapter incorporates an analysis of the evolution of each of the selected symbols and their associated thematic concerns throughout Crozier's poetry in order to establish the formation process of her late style. The examination of the continuities, discontinuities, and new approaches to recurrent tropes and subject matter in Crozier's poetry offers fertile ground to explore both Crozier's creativity throughout her career and her literary stance in relation to the interplay between master narratives of ageing and place in Western societies, and especially, in Canada.

The conclusions chapter interconnects the findings of the four analytical chapters as regards the formation process of Crozier's late style, in terms of the evolution of trope, theme, form, style, and genre. While the symbols of the garden, the prairies, and light, and the theme of sexuality have become leitmotifs in Crozier's work, the passage of time and the change of location have resulted in the discontinuity of some themes associated with such tropes and the incorporation of new meanings, especially as regards the growing relevance of ageing corporealities along Crozier's own process of ageing into

old age. Furthermore, several avenues of future research are suggested, notably the development of Crozier’s late style in the upcoming years, given Crozier’s enduring creativity in old age.

CHAPTER 1

Intersections of Place and Time in Lorna Crozier's Works

"I don't see how anyone can write about anything else other than the place that shapes them even though the imagination also shapes that place into more than the literal."

(Lorna Crozier, "Seeing Distance" 149)

"Development always happens in time and place," environmental gerontologists Hans-Werner Wahl and Frank Oswald claim ("Theories" 621). Such an apparently obvious statement is central to understanding Crozier's poetry and its development throughout her writing career. Crozier's oeuvre to date spans more than forty years, since the publication of her first poetry collection *Inside Is the Sky* (1976). Every new poetry collection Crozier has published since 1976 has included poetic reflections on the experience of the ageing process at each stage of the life-course, hand in hand with a strong attachment to the place where she was raised (Saskatchewan, her first family home in Saskatoon, the prairies, etc.) as well as the place that became her new home at middle age (British Columbia, her home as an adult, her garden, etc.).

Crozier's life-long sense of place, as reflected in her works, illustrates the relevance that place has in the ageing process. The strong emotional ties that we often attach to the places we inhabit, what environmental gerontologists call "the place dimension of aging," play a crucial role in shaping not only our own identity but also our behaviour (Wahl and Oswald, "Theories" 621-622). Although identity formation is a life-long process affected by the places we inhabit and relate to, place is especially prominent in old age. This is related to the fact that late in life the places we inhabit may become

challenging in terms of space. This is often due to bodily constraints or reduced mobility, as older individuals may have to relocate to a nursing home, thus having to abandon the often-craved idea of remaining in their present communities and homes, namely to age in place. Environmental gerontologists argue, following Mortimer Powell Lawton, that being able to spend the latter years in the life-long residence "assist[s] older adults to preserve their sense of identity" not only because of place attachment, but also because being familiar with the house and the neighbourhood allows them to have environmental stability. Such stability allows older individuals to navigate their environment safely, which increases their sense of well-being (Scharlach 608). On the other hand, seniors may find themselves having to live in an old house that they do not have the means to maintain, or they may be constrained to live in a deprived neighbourhood they would rather abandon but lack the economic means to do so. As social gerontologist Chris Phillipson argues, "'ageing in place' in cities – and especially deprived inner-city areas – creates significant risks for older people" (964), such as age-segregated neighbourhoods (966), "the degradation of low-income housing" (967), and high rates of criminality, which may hinder senior citizens' mobility (967).

All these examples testify to the complexity of the interactions between place, identity, and behaviour in old age, as well as to reasons why place may either hinder or promote our identity as individuals along the life-course, and especially in old age. Environmental psychologists Leila Scannell and Robert Gifford's claim that "[p]lace bonds . . . provide continuity over time" (6) is relevant for the study of Crozier's works in order to elucidate the ways in which both the personae's respective identities and behaviours in Crozier's poems are shaped by place throughout time. Sense of place has also been crucial for environmentalists since the 1960s and has become a milestone for many ecocritics, who claim that "the affective ties with place which arise out of

identification [are] part of processes of individual and collective identity-construction" (Goodbody 57). Likewise, environmental psychologists have long researched the concept of place attachment – i.e., the connections between people and the environments that are meaningful to them – as captured in a number of models of place attachment. Even though identity is strongly shaped by the places people inhabit, a sense of place may not develop in individuals who do not feel safe or comfortable in their neighbourhood, town or village (Scheidt and Norris-Baker 254).

In the light of the relevance that place has for both ecocriticism[2] and environmental gerontology, it seems appropriate that Crozier's portrayal of place is approached from an interdisciplinary perspective that integrates both fields of study. Even though each research area has interpreted the concepts of 'place' and 'environment' from different perspectives, the present dissertation will make apparent the many shared correspondences in order to offer a broader understanding of place in relation to ageing. Interdisciplinarity is, in fact, inherent to both environmental gerontology[3] (Schwarz 16; Wahl and Gitlin 494) and ecocriticism (Bartosch and Garrard 4). In other words, this intersection between the two fields of study is in line with their respective tenets. Therefore, it is a natural step forward in the development of both ecocriticism and environmental gerontology, as well as the parent field of gerontology. As gerontologist Scott D. Wright and sociologist Dale A. Lund have stated, "the gerontological literature

[2] As explained in the summer course entitled "Introducción a las humanidades ambientales" held by the University of Alcalá de Henares (25-27 June 2018) and led by Dr Carmen Flys Junquera, Dr Diana Villanueva Romero, and Dr Scott Slovic (as a guest speaker and workshop leader), experts in the field are working towards the creation of definitions to add nuance, if necessary, to the terms 'environmental humanities,' 'environmental studies,' and 'ecocriticism' in their shared concern to analyse the relationships between the human and non-human worlds and their representations in literature and other artistic modes.
[3] Environmental gerontology's inherent interdisciplinary nature has been acknowledged by some of the most prominent scholars in the field. While Hans-Werner Wahl and Gerald D. Weisman state that environmental gerontology "has been strongly … driven by a psychology-based perspective" (619), Rick J. Scheidt and Paul G. Windley claim that environmental gerontology encompasses "a loose confederation of disciplines (e.g., psychologists, sociologists, allied health professionals, architects, community planners, social policy makers)" (105).

has not examined the natural environment … [understood] as the biotic (e.g. flora and fauna) and abiotic (e.g. topography, geology, geography, climate) landscape ecology or bioregion that includes humans as part of the ecological community" (Wright and Lund 230-231)[4], a claim also made by ageing studies scholar Ulla Kriebernegg ("Putting" n.p.). The interconnection between the fields of gerontology – specifically, literary gerontology because of its application to the analysis of poetry – and ecocriticism encourages a more holistic view of the heterogeneous realities experienced by individuals in the different environments in which their existence unfolds throughout their life-courses.

1.1. The Place Dimension of Ageing

The place-related concerns for senescence that environmental gerontology examines are relevant points of entry to the interrelationship of tropes of place and time in the analysis of late style in literature. As such, the present dissertation offers an adaptation of theories of environmental gerontology for the study of literature, by means of offering linkages between issues studied in ecocriticism and in literary gerontology, respectively.

Environmental gerontology understands place as the different environments in which our lives unfold. In other words, environmental gerontology emphasises the socio-physical contexts in which the ageing process occurs in order to understand "the interrelations between aging persons and their environments and how these relationships

[4] Wright and Lund have also noted that there have been a number of precedents to the inclusion of the natural environment in research discussions on ageing issues. Namely, Talbot and Kaplan's study (1991), which analysed the importance for older people to live surrounded by nature; a conference, whose proceedings were titled *The Aging of the U.S. Population: Economic and Environmental Implications*, in which the importance of stewardship (or responsibility in making use of) of natural resources was discussed in direct connection to the ageing of the US population (Wright and Lund 232). Finally, the conference "An Aging Population, An Aging Planet, and a Sustainable Future: Thinking Globally, Acting Locally" (Ingman et al.) is of particular importance to the topic of this discussion, as "it explored ways in which older people can help societies meet ecological and social challenges" (233), as well as the subsequent publications (Ingman et al.) by the same authors participating in the conference (Moody, "Environmentalism" 1).

shape aging outcomes" (Wahl and Gitlin 494). Specifically, as Keith Diaz-Moore asserts, the concept of place in environmental gerontology has been an important focus of research because of its "relationship to identity, the self, and agency" ("Ecological Framework" 183). The relevance of place in environmental gerontology is attested by the various models that have been developed since 1990, when Lawton – whose theories are at the basis of environmental gerontology's research – triggered the production of theory in environmental gerontology by criticising its stasis (Wahl and Weisman 616).

Of salience is Lawton and Nahemow's Adaptation Model, also known as the Ecological Model of Environment and Aging, which was first developed in 1973. The model measures a person's competence to adapt to different types of environmental press, namely situations in the environment that require the individual to adapt to them. The underlying assumption beneath the theory is that an individual with high levels of competence will be able to adapt to a broad range of environmental press, whereas a person with low levels of competence will find it difficult to adapt (Schwarz, "M. Powell Lawton" 13). The following four models (or frameworks) vouch for the import of place in environmental gerontology research as well as research in the closely-related field of environmental psychology. They are presented in order of publication, i.e. from the oldest to the most recent theories. However, the subsequent summary does not intend to be a comprehensive list of models of environment and ageing. In its stead, it offers an insight into relevant models of environment and ageing which examine notions of place attachment in relation to both agency and personal identity throughout the life-course, and especially in old age. Such notions of place attachment are not only akin to notions of sense of place as examined in ecocriticism, but they also help to bridge the gap between ecocriticism and ageing studies.

Hans-Werner Wahl and Frieder R. Lang's 2003 Socio-Physical Space Over Time

(SPOT) defines older individuals' relationships to their environment. SPOT consists of two interdependent dimensions, namely agency and belonging. Sense of belonging refers to the ways in which place attachment shapes identity (Geboy et al. 46). Place attachment is understood as "a set of feelings about a geographic location that emotionally binds a person to that place as a function of its role as a setting for experience" (Rubinstein and Parmelee 139). Wahl and Lang's theory posits that, for adults, agency is more important than belonging, but as individuals age, agency loses some bearing, whereas sense of belonging increases. Therefore, the young old individual is likely to have a balanced sense of agency and belonging. However, as individuals reach old age, agency becomes increasingly less important, while belonging acquires still more prominence. SPOT theory, Geboy et al. argue, is in line with Parmelee's and Lawton's 1990 interdependent dimensions of autonomy and security (47). In turn, the agency/autonomy dimension and the belonging/security dimension imply "third agers' efforts to maintain residential normalcy" (Geboy et al. 52). This refers to Stephen M. Golant's 2011 concept of residential normalcy, and its interrelated constructs of zone of comfort and zone of mastery. Residential normalcy refers to individual-environment fittingness, which is achieved by older adults when they experience both "pleasurable, hassle-free and memorable feelings" (comfort zone) and "competence and in-control feelings" (mastery zone) (Golant, "Out of Residential Comfort" 26).

Deepening the understanding of place attachment from an environmental psychology perspective, Leila Scannell and Robert Gifford have formulated the Person-Process-Place (PPP) model, as a "synthesis of [a number of definitions] of the place attachment construct" (8). Scannell and Gifford acknowledge the fact that "person-place bonds have become fragile as globalization, increased mobility, and encroaching environmental problems threaten the existence of, and our connections to, places

important to us" (1). The relevance of place attachment for ageing individuals on a psychological level lies in the model's emphasis of an overlap between individual-level and group-level place attachment. Scannell and Gifford underscore the importance of the experience of place, rather than place itself, in the emotional process of place attachment at an individual level (2). At the group level, "attachment is comprised of the symbolic meanings of a place that are shared among members" (2). Regarding the place dimension of place attachment, place attachment is social and comparable to sense of community (4) and is therefore closely connected to place identity (5).

In Crozier's oeuvre, as in the works of many other Canadian writers of place, place identity is dependent on the symbolic meanings attached to both the prairie environments and prairie towns (Swift Current, in Crozier's case), as well as a collective sense of identity as Canadian. That is, symbolic meanings attached to the prairies are not merely personal, but are directly connected to the construct of a Canadian sense of national identity. As Tony Tremblay argues when examining the role of place in Canada,

> [w]hen the locus of economic power (namely, labour and industry) was concentrated in nations, the bias of place served the dominant cultural interests of states, thereby legitimizing identifications with home, region, and country that people learned for the last four hundred years. (28)

While notions of place have traditionally been used to build a sense of national identity, today's globalised world promotes notions of *placelessness* (Tremblay 29), which involve both a devaluation of place and homogenisation. However, as Tremblay argues following literary critic Patricia Yaeger's theories, "places are not just the sites of our being, but also of our becoming, thus integral to both personal agency and political action. Reclaiming place is therefore refusing that it (and we) be reduced to folklore" (36-37). In this sense,

ecocriticism follows the changing paradigms in globalisation studies that can be observed in Roland Robertson's seminal concept of 'glocalization,' namely that "[t]he global is not in and of itself counterposed to the local. Rather, what is often referred to as the local is essentially included within the global. In this respect, globalization . . . involves the linking of localities" (Robertson 35). Glocalization thus goes beyond globalisation as homogenisation, and taps into the adaptation of the global to the local.

Scannell and Gifford divide the process dimension of place attachment into: Affect, behaviour, and cognition. Place attachment as affect represents the wide spectrum of feelings that a significant place may arise in individuals, from love to hatred. Place attachment as behaviour refers to both proximity-maintaining behaviour and therefore length of residence and return to place or relocation to similar places (4). Finally, place attachment as cognition refers to the (re)construction of connection to place through memory (3), a process that is also known as literary remembering, a technique that writers use to bring memories of place to life. As ecocritic Axel Goodbody notes, "literary remembering . . . can . . . be understood as a *performance* of the past, an active production of 'lived reality,' through the selection and arrangement, synthesis, and dramatic intensification of past events" ("Sense of Place" 58). Literary remembering, as will be argued in the analysis, and as the introductory quotation by Crozier to this chapter suggests, is a technique used by Crozier in her works.

In close keeping with place attachment is psychologist Susan Clayton's development of the notion 'place identity' into the term 'environmental identity' to explain the incorporation of nature as part of one's self-identity. Clayton defines environmental identity as:

> part of the way in which people form their self-concept: a sense of connection to some part of the nonhuman natural environment, based on history, emotional

attachment, and/or similarity, that affects the ways in which we perceive and act toward the world; a belief that the environment is important to us and an important part of who we are. (45-46)

According to Clayton, a person's environmental identity is significant when the experiences with the natural world have both a strong emotional impact on the person and have an effect in the person's self-perception (46). Clayton further clarifies that it is by comparing our behaviour to that of non-human entities, which is usually straightforward, because it is based on primitive instincts in the case of animals, that we can discover our own human identity (50). In addition, "the natural environment also may be able to encourage a strong and positive sense of self" (50) because of (i) a greater sense of autonomy – there are no constraints as to appropriate social behaviour in nature – and therefore a person can be him/herself in nature; (ii) a sense of relatedness or connection to nature, be it at a spiritual dimension or at the level of surrounding nature contributing to a sense of well-being; (iii) and competence, a feeling which results out of checking one's physical and mental ability to thrive in a natural environment, such as the sense of competence achieved after climbing a mountain (50-51). The concept of environmental identity will prove of uttermost importance for the analysis of Crozier's oeuvre, because of Crozier's emphasis on place as one of the most significant elements which shape the persona's sense of self. Crozier's portrayal of environmental identity will have to be connected to the socio-cultural meanings attached to nature in the Canadian West, as Clayton underscores the part that social identity plays in personal environmental identity (53).

Akin to place attachment is environmental gerontologist Diaz-Moore's Ecological Framework of Place (EFP). As Diaz-Moore claims, "[t]hrough human action, places

become experienced and people attribute certain qualities to those place experiences" ("Ecological Framework" 186). Building upon prominent concepts in environmental gerontology and connecting them to developmental science theories (183), the EFP intends to "further our understanding of how the dynamic system between person, place, and time impacts quality of life experienced through the life course" (184). Relevant to intersections of time and place is Diaz-Moore's underscoring of the time dimension as deeply affecting place, as some of the features of the physical setting change over time (e.g. the individual's relationship to the dining room of a nursing home at different times of the day), or along the life-course (186-187). In line with Wahl and Lang's SPOT model (2003) and Wahl and Oswald's influential person-environment (PE) fit (2010), Diaz-Moore emphasises individuals' agency when carrying out activities in the environment ("Ecological Framework" 194).

Despite the changes observable in Crozier's poetic personae throughout her works, their sense of self remains connected to the natural environment wherever the personae are. Therefore, Crozier's personae's growth as individuals and their psychological well-being are presumably related to a continuous interrelationship with nature. In order to validate this initial hypothesis, the following subsection aims at reviewing what the literature claims regarding the life-course development of people alongside their contact with outdoor natural spaces.

1.1.1. The Three Levels of Environmental Analysis as Based on Healing Gardens Research

According to Hal Kendig, "[t]ime dimensions and active use of space are essential for understanding aging individuals and microenvironments as well as changing populations and macroenvironments" (611). The terms 'microenvironment' and 'macroenvironment'

are constructs which environmental gerontology has borrowed from psychologist Urie Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (1979). Bronfenbrenner posited that human development is influenced by five interdependent systems, namely the microsystem (e.g. home, school, work); the mesosystem (the interconnections among a person's microsystems); the exosystem (e.g. external decisions or actions in which the person has no saying, but which also affect the person), the macrosystem (social, economic, and cultural environments in which the person lives); and the chronosystem, that is, the time dimension (Diaz-Moore, "Ecological Framework" 193).

Drawing from Bronfenbrenner's systems, environmental gerontology has divided place into three levels in order to analyse the relationships between ageing individuals and the places they live and spend time in, namely "the macro (urban and rural environments, regions and landscapes), meso (neighbourhood, public space) and micro (personal, housing, and institution) levels" (Sánchez-González and Rodríguez-Rodríguez "Introduction" 2).[5]

Diego Sánchez-González and Vicente Rodríguez-Rodríguez's edited collection of essays, entitled *Environmental Gerontology in Europe and Latin America: Policies and Perspectives on Environment and Aging* intends to widen the understanding of the macro level in its close relation to the micro level. That is, the collection intends to enlarge the few discussions on the man-made and natural environments related to ageing individuals by means of resorting to those studies that emphasise the importance of natural elements, such as vegetation, natural light and the sounds of nature in promoting the health of older persons ("Approaches" 19). In other words, the collection aims at gaining deeper insights in the effects of the physical and social environments in healthy ageing ("Approaches"

[5] Definitions of the macro level have been diverse. For instance, the macro level has been understood as the policy-level in relation to environmentally-friendly communities (Calkins 69), and as population, age structure, household size, urbanization and population density (Liddle 286), among others.

12). Sánchez-González and Rodríguez-Rodríguez's collection of essays can be regarded as a response to Kendig's critique of the "astonishing paucity of research on the macro-environments of neighbourhoods, regions, and urban-rural divides that are so significant in structuring experiences of aging" (612). In this sense, Sánchez-González and Rodríguez-Rodríguez's collection charters new grounds regarding "the effects of urbanisation, globalisation and climate change on active aging in place" (xx).

Sánchez-González and Rodríguez-Rodríguez's centrality on the physical environment understood as nature departs from usual understandings in environmental gerontology of the physical environment as the built (or designed) environment. Graham D. Rowles and Miriam Bernard's landmark edited collection, *Environmental Gerontology: Making Meaningful Places in Old Age*, aptly illustrates this point. As stated by Bernard and Rowles in their closing chapter, the current emphasis of environmental gerontologists is on "the design of both residential and public spaces … [so that] older people [can] transform the spaces of their life into places that sustain meaning and enhance well-being" (284). Public spaces such as parks are not usually analysed regarding natural elements, but the focus is on "intergenerational interaction" (285) and how "environmental barriers to mobility" (288) hinder intergenerational integration and communication. Broadening the scope of environmental gerontology research by means of including an understanding of nature different from that of built space, Sánchez-González and Rodríguez-Rodríguez's close attention to nature resonates with environmental humanities' concerns in their examination of the interrelationships humans establish with the natural environment in all its spectrum – from the clearly man-planted nature, such as parks and gardens, to the wilderness of the forest and the poles. As Sánchez-González and Rodríguez-Rodríguez note, their novel approach is inspired by previous research by Denise Gastaldo et al. ("Therapeutic Landscapes") and Susan

Rodiek and Benyamin Schwarz (*Outdoor Environments*). The therapeutic value of landscapes and natural elements that these two examples posit is part of multidisciplinary bodies of research conducted by health geographers, horticultural therapists, landscape architects, environmental psychologists, physicians, etc., namely the healing garden school, the horticultural therapy school, and the cognitive school.

As Ulrika A. Stigsdotter and Patrick Grahn explain, healing garden research examines the therapeutic value of specifically-designed healing / restorative gardens. Its core belief is that humanity is biologically attuned to nature because of our ancestral past in which we lived on hunter-gathering efforts, and therefore natural stimuli relax us and relieve us from stress because they make us feel at home.[6] In addition, horticultural therapy claims that greenery has a restorative influence on cognitive functions, because when observing nature our brain does not get tired, as it processes nature as a whole. Thus, contemplation of nature saves our brain the effort of using its higher consciousness centres. Furthermore, nature makes fewer demands than people or animals. That is, when a person is ill or is undergoing a process of healing from a trauma, nature helps the person because it balances his/her own levels of ability and control of the environment ("What" 62-63).

While healing gardens focus mainly on a passive experience of nature, horticultural therapy – at the other end of the spectrum – argues in favour of engaging with gardening as a health promotion activity. Horticultural therapy posits that gardening stimulates many cognitive processes and that it promotes physical exercise (Stigsdotter and Grahn, "What" 63). Encompassing the benefits of both healing gardens and horticultural therapy, the cognitive school argues that "the garden or the wild nature with

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[6] Such a belief is closely related to the biophilia hypothesis, first proposed by Edward Osborne Wilson in 1984. The biophilia hypothesis is based on the belief that humans are genetically programmed to respond to stimuli in nature with certain adaptive emotional responses in order for us to survive in the wilderness, as is the case of hunter-gatherer societies.

its shapes, colors, odors, etc., plus the activities that can be carried out there, can restore a person to a more positive view of himself and his capacities" (Stigsdotter and Grahn, "What" 63). Relevant to the analysis of Crozier's oeuvre and the interdisciplinary approach being adopted is the belief that the relation between a visitor and a healing garden is one of interdependence, in which nature and culture become one (Stigsdotter and Grahn, "What" 67; Kavanagh and Musiak 315). Of import is also Stigsdotter's and Grahn's assertion that a garden consists of four dimensions, namely the three dimensions of space, plus time (64). This analysis of the connection between space and time alongside a person's experience of nature is also common in the environmental humanities, which often examine the evolution of the literary characters in relation to the cyclical changes of nature, and the salience that nature receives in texts (ecocentredness) as shown by the characters' amount of detailed observation of the changes in natural environments over the years.

Recently, the three areas of research, or schools*,* as Stigsdotter and Grahn refer to them, have become closer as they often work together in interdisciplinary collaborative projects (Stigsdotter and Grahn, "What" 61). In fact, as Stigsdotter and Grahn affirm, the best healing garden is that in which visitors / users balance their passive observation of nature with the levels of activity carried out in the garden ("What" 68). Much of the research on both horticultural therapy and healing gardens has catered to the specific needs of patients with cognitive impairment, mainly dementia and Alzheimer's disease (Diaz-Moore, "Exploring"; Edwards et al.; Hickman; Ory-Hernández; Rodiek and Schwarz; Smidl et al.; Söderback et al.; Zeisel). Nevertheless, a number of publications focuses on positive effects of therapeutic gardens for the general population (Marcus and Sachs; Souter-Brown; Stigsdotter and Grahn, "What"; Stigsdotter and Grahn, "A Garden"; Kavanagh and Musiak), and specifically for the aged (Berto; Dahlkvist et al.;

Detweiler et al.; a section in Gerlach-Spriggs et al.; Heath and Gifford; Pachana et al.; Rodiek). However, as Susan Rodiek criticises in her article, research on the benefits of healing gardens for older populations is scarce (13). The present dissertation will approach such an under-researched area from a literary studies perspective in order to examine the restorative qualities of spending time in gardens throughout the life-course as depicted in Crozier's poems. Special attention will be paid to the extent to which the formation of Crozier's late style is influenced by the healing properties of man-planted nature, which are identified by horticultural therapy research.

One of these identified healing properties is the reduction of stress levels (Stigsdotter and Grahn, "A Garden"; Rodiek; Berto) – a result that Rodiek and Schwarz also found in patients with dementia –, and how frequent visits to gardens help prevent stress (Stigsdotter and Grahn, "A Garden"). The amount of greenery a person is exposed to is seen as key to the restorative quality of healing gardens, regardless of socio-economic status, gender, or age (Stigsdotter and Grahn, "A Garden"). Specific research on people with dementia concludes that horticultural therapy reduces problematic behaviours (Zeisel), improves patients' mood (Smidl et al.), and significantly reduces agitation (Edwards et al.); restores attentional capacity (Diaz-Moore, "Exploring") – a result that Berto also finds in the general population –; improves quality of life (Edwards et al.; Rodiek and Schwarz; Söderback et al.) and reduces depression (Edwards et al.); enhances physical well-being (Rodiek and Schwarz; Söderback et al.), improves levels of involvement and spontaneity (Smidl et al.); enhances emotional, cognitive and/or sensory functions (Söderback et al.); and increases social participation (Söderback et al.).

According to Gastaldo et al. the concept of therapeutic landscapes can be extended from actual experiences of physical place to place-related memories of home (especially in the case of immigrants), a construct which Gastaldo et al. have termed 'therapeutic

landscapes of the mind,' building upon previous related concepts by Allison Williams, Michel Foucault ("Technologies"), and Nikolas Rose. Gastaldo et al.'s research found that the evocation of home through "selective memory of particular places . . . provides a therapeutic coping mechanism for 'missing' the places of home" (160). The concept of 'therapeutic landscapes of the mind' – which will be analysed alongside the similar concept of literary remembering – will be relevant for the analysis of Crozier's oeuvre because of her acknowledgement that many of her poems on the prairies are drawn from memories, a statement which is supported by the fact that she continued writing about the prairies long after she had moved to British Columbia.

Gastaldo et al.'s construct of 'therapeutic landscapes of the mind' serves as a link between the macro level and the micro level in Crozier's works, as it involves the effects that natural environments have in the personae. The garden, which belongs to the micro level of spatial analysis, will be analysed following healing gardens theory. As a perfect blend of natural and cultural environment, the garden in Crozier's works is often interwoven with the ageing experience and provides a number of emotional and psychological benefits to the personae who cultivate it. Place attachment to the garden adds to the general sense of both well-being and self-identity that the garden provides for the ageing personae.

1.1.2. An Ecocritical Approach to Sense of Place

The notion of sense of place – which Scannell and Gifford understand as synonymous to place attachment (3) – has not only been researched by environmental psychologists and gerontologists, but it has also received critical attention from the environmental humanities. Since the inception of ecocriticism in the early 1990s, some of the founding members of the American Association for the Study of Literature and Environment

(ASLE), notably Scott Slovic, Lawrence Buell and Glen Love, have argued in favour of "the role of literature in fostering a sense of locality and place" from an ecocritical viewpoint (Goodbody, "Sense of Place" 56) in order to become aware of the local environment's needs and endangered condition, as well as to encourage activist efforts towards place preservation (Slovic, "Editor's Note" 235). Besides the articles devoted to sense of place in specialised journals like *Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment* (*ISLE*), *Ecozon@,* and *Environmental Humanities,* by a number of environmental humanities scholars, the recent publication of the collection of essays entitled *Sense of Place: Transatlantic Perspectives*, edited by Axel Goodbody and Carmen Flys-Junquera attests to the increasing significance of the study of sense of place from an ecocritical perspective.

Ecocritic Ursula K. Heise advances ecocriticism's claim of the need to promote a sense of place by stating that it is not enough to foster a sense of place and local belonging by means of literature to reduce environmental damage, but literature must reach beyond and promote a sense of planet by means of a feeling of global belonging or identification. Such a discourse is also significantly examined by researchers on the Anthropocene.

The humanities have adopted the term Anthropocene – which has become commonplace since 2010, according to environmental scholar Timothy Clark (1-2), – to refer to "all the new contexts and demands – cultural, ethical, aesthetic, philosophical and political – of environmental issues that are truly planetary in scale" (Clark 2). According to Clark, the Anthropocene is an intellectually-challenging concept, as it requires thinking at a planetary scale (13) – thus forcing us to think beyond "our 'normal' scales of space and time" (30) – due to the global environmental issues it is concerned with. As a result of thinking at a global scale, the human species becomes, for the first time in history, a planetary agent (14-5). Therefore, the Anthropocene demands a "new reflexivity as a

species" (16). Clark wonders, however, whether this change in the imagination involving an awareness of the interconnection between all living organisms, as celebrated by the environmental humanities, will have the necessary strength to transform "environmentally destructive modes of life" (18). In other words, Clark questions ecocriticism's efficacy in helping solve the environmental crisis by means of reimagining nature and the human relation to it (19).

Clark's warning regarding the limits of cultural representation as well as the critical scope of ecocriticism notwithstanding, sense of planet as an extension of sense of place is crucial in order to foster a new critical perspective to respond through critical analysis of literary texts to the global environmental crisis. The intersections between the ageing process and the effects of the natural environment in Crozier's personae as proposed in this dissertation, which are at the base of the formation process of Crozier's late style, benefit from different approaches to sense of place. Actually, many writers of place today depict in their works their concerns regarding the threats to their (local) environment, as posed by the global environmental crisis. In other words, writers of place no longer only focus on the particular places they inhabit, but often write about planetary environmental concerns, which in turn are highly likely to affect their local environments, too. As environmental scholar Jenny Kerber argues, writing the prairie nowadays

> is less about forging an explicit or 'authentic' connection between particular landscapes and certain modes of expression than it is about making an ethical commitment to place in a self-conscious manner . . . thinking through the connections of one's immediate place to other places and times, recognizing that no region or regional consciousness functions in isolation. (148)

Another relevant theoretical approach not only to sense of place within the environmental

humanities but also for the study of (Canadian) literature with a focus on place is the one formulated by Axel Goodbody ("Sense of Place"). In his essay, Goodbody argues in favour of connecting cultural memory studies with ecocriticism in order to gain new "insights into the cultural and textual construction of places" (55). Goodbody highlights "the affective ties with place which arise out of identification, as part of processes of individual and collective identity-construction" (57). It is in the latter sense that Goodbody links ecocriticism with the theories posited by preeminent cultural memory studies scholars Maurice Halbwachs, Jan and Aleida Assmann, and Pierre Nora, whose theories have in turn been at the basis of constructs of national identity (Lowenthal 320; László et al. 69). Specifically, Goodbody draws on the following constructs from cultural memory studies: 'collective memory,' 'cultural memory,' 'figurations of memory,' and 'lieu de mémoire' / 'places or realms of memory.'

Halbwachs coined the term 'collective memory' to refer to "the relationship with the past of social groups and cultural communities in rituals and customs, verbal communication, the media, and institutions" (57). Goodbody sees the Assmanns' notion of 'cultural memory' within Halbwachs' understanding of identity construction as dependent on historically-formed sociocultural relations. 'Cultural memory' could be defined as "cultural knowledge [that] lies in patterns of thought, narratives, and images giving meaning to the past, and converting past experiences into a basis for individual and collective identity in the present" (58), which Goodbody connects to the notion of literary remembering, as defined above. The Assmanns also coined the term 'figurations of memory,' understood as a "constantly evolving archive of narratives and images deriving from the Bible, Greek myth, fairy tales, history, world literature, etc." (59). According to Goodbody, the notion of figurations of memory is relevant to sense of place because it centres on places which (re)define human ties to nature (59). Nora's 'lieux de

mémoire' refers to those sites, in the French context, "where [cultural] memory crystallizes and secretes itself" (qtd. in Goodbody 60). Be they actual places or social constructs, Nora understood them all as resulting from "an imaginary process that codifies and represents the historical consciousness of France" (61). Goodbody uses this combined theory of cultural memory studies and sense of place to examine the human relationship to place in two novels, namely Peter Handke's *Repetition* and Volker Braun's *Groundless Sentence*. Goodbody's conclusion is that despite the danger in falling into the trap of nostalgia as a result of attachment to place, "literary lieux de mémoire can clearly serve an important function as localizations for a utopian vision of human reconciliation with nature which would otherwise lack concrete embodiment" (65-66). Such literary lieux de mémoire or figurations of memory, Goodbody argues, tap into both collective memory and place identity in order to show that places are imbued with ideological, mythical, ethical, and political undertones (65).

Notions of sense of place as imbricated with the aforementioned concepts within cultural memory studies are extremely relevant for the study of how any writer of place interprets and rewrites the narratives and place-related social constructs that provide collective identity. This is especially true in the case of Canada and the Canadian prairies, whose writers often engage in career-long efforts to de-mystify their natural environments as they are charged with attached notions of gender, class, cultural authority, politics, etc. (Kerber 118-120; Calder and Wardhaugh 16). Alongside notions of cultural memory, ecocritics often build upon Yi-Fu Tuan's concept of topophilia to analyse the sense of place of the writers' works they are examining.

1.1.3. Yi-Fu Tuan and Topophilia

The place theories developed by preeminent cultural geographer Yi-Fu Tuan have

certainly influenced the contemporary study of human bonds with place, that is, sense of place or place attachment. Tuan called these affective ties to place 'topophilia.'

In *Topophilia: A Study of Environmental Perception, Attitudes, and Values*, Tuan reflects upon the complexities of "human love of place" (92). In order to understand such complexities, three main aspects should be considered, namely: (1) the type of connection to the environment, ranging from a merely aesthetic one to one based on physical contact; (2) previous (historical) experience of the environment; and (3) culturally-constructed relationships between the urban, the rural, and the wilderness (92).

Regarding the first aspect, 'the appreciation of landscape,' to use Tuan's terminology, may be more or less long lasting. At the least enduring end of the spectrum there is the experience of enjoying beautiful views and feeling nature with the senses (sensing the breeze, touching the cool water of a lake, etc.). Tuan adds that the feelings arising as a response to these experiences may be more enduring if something memorable having to do with the individual happens in this natural context. However, as Tuan laments, "physical contact with one's natural environment is increasingly indirect and limited to special occasions" (96), often implying a recreational use of nature rather than one of lived experience. Towards the more long-lasting end of the spectrum, topophilia is likely to be strong in farmers and peasants, as they depend materially on the land, and therefore the land represents hope and is imbued with memories of experience working on it (97). Probably in order to avoid falling into the trap of a romanticised view of the rural, Tuan notes that topophilia among the agrarian population is also conditioned by socio-economic status. That is, the farm labourer's, the small farmer's, and the rich land owner's respective love to place ranges from a more physical to a more metaphorical type of feeling, and from a more personal to a more profit-based relationship. Besides this, lands which are hard to cultivate and to which stories of hardship are attached result,

surprisingly, in a stronger topophilic sentiment, because of feelings of self-accomplishment for having survived despite extremely unfavourable conditions. This first layer of topophilia is closely related to the Canadian prairies and Crozier's personal background: first, as a person being born in the years following the terrible droughts on the Canadian prairies, known as the dustbowl years, in the 1930s; second, Crozier's depictions of the natural environment contain both landscapes as setting to the personae's actions, and actual experience of nature. However, it is true that Tuan's view clashes with traditional cultural constructs of nature in Canada, and especially on the prairies, which regarded nature as the enemy that had to be conquered and tamed (Calder and Wardhaugh 11) in order to survive (Atwood 33-34, 41).[7] Such animosity against the natural environment arose from the experiences of hardship the first European settlers of Canada underwent; as a result it gradually became ingrained in the narrative of Canadian national identity. Such cultural construct of nature as enemy was present in literature from the later part of the nineteenth century until the mid 1960's, as Northrop Frye claims:

> Most of the poetry by E.J. Pratt [(1882-1964)] has been a kind of summing up of the first phase of Canadian poetic imagination. In that phase Canada appeared … as a country of isolation and terror, and of the overwhelming of human values by an indifferent and wasteful nature (10-11).

In line with such a change in attitudes towards nature, Crozier's depiction of the natural environment and the prairie landscape in her poems breaks with traditional views in Canada of 'nature, the monster,' as Atwood calls it, and nears in its stead Tuan's topophilic feelings for place.

[7] Such claims were originally posited by both Northrop Frye in his influential collection of poetry collections' reviews *The Bush Garden: Essays on the Canadian Imagination*, published in 1971, and Margaret Atwood in *Survival: A Thematic Guide to Canadian Literature*, published in 1972.

Regarding the second aspect, which involves topophilia resulting from the personal experiences lived in place through time, Tuan examines two instances. On the one hand, the love for home and the sense of security that it provides, as exemplified by older individuals' reluctance to leave their life-long homes to move to a better-equipped location (99), a characteristic that (environmental) gerontologists have widely researched. On the other hand, Tuan analyses the inscription of the past on the land itself, especially as experienced by indigenous populations, such as Australian aborigines. While such a concern does not become a major theme in Crozier's work, indigenous populations, their knowledge about the land and their struggles are present in some of Crozier's texts. Canada is a post-colonial country with indigenous populations (First Nations, Inuit, and Métis) still fighting for their rights,[8] and facing high environmental risks due to the extraction of fossil fuels, among other resources. Crozier is aware of indigenous populations and their claims, but she is also conscious of the dangers of cultural appropriation. Thus, her direct allusions to Canadian indigenous peoples mostly entail her interactions with her indigenous acquaintances and friends.[9] A notable exception, which links to Tuan's idea of the inscription of the past on the land, is the prose poem "Air" (2013). In this text, Crozier lists the massacres of Jews in Nazi concentration camps alongside the Wounded Knee and Cypress Hills massacres of indigenous peoples in the

[8] Stephen Collis defines Canada and its poetry with Daniel Heath Justice's term "paracolonial," in order to stress the "continuation of colonial structures and practices into the supposedly postcolonial era" (85). His examination of the works of major postcolonial poets in Canada reveals that they all engage in efforts to decolonize contemporary Canadian literature (95). Other scholars from a variety of disciplines refer to Canada as a neo-colonial country (e.g. McKenzie et al., Knopf, Varcoe and Dick, and Tauri) because of a number of governmental practices ranging from "neocolonial racism in the judicial system [to the fact that] Canadian history is learned and taught from the perspective of competing national longings and belongings, based on narratives of settler cultures, French, English, and otherwise, to the exclusion, dismissal and even denial of Canada as a colonial and neocolonial state" (Emberley 213, xiv).

[9] Crozier's direct allusions to indigenous populations are present in ghazals #9 and #11 in the section "If I Call Stones Blue: Ghazals," in the poem "Poem about Nothing" in *The Garden Going on without Us* (1985), and in the poem "Naming the Light" in the poetry collection *Everything Arrives at the Light* (1995), in the prose poems "Air" and "Lamp" in *The Book of Marvels* (2013), in the introduction to *The Wild in You* (2015), the dedication in *The House the Spirit Builds* (2019), and in her explanation about her becoming aware of what residential schools actually entailed for indigenous peoples (48) and her mention of her First Nations friend, the fellow poet Kevin Paul, (136) in her non-fiction book *Through the Garden* (2020).

USA and Saskatchewan, Canada, respectively. She claims: "Air has a long memory. It insists we don't forget." Hence, Crozier underscores the role of history in the shaping of the land and its socio-cultural matrix. Furthermore, Crozier's attunement to the natural world as well as her literary use of images relating to therianthropy, that is, the mythological ability of shape-shifting into animal form, in her poems place Crozier's poetry close to indigenous people's beliefs as regards love of place.

As for the third aspect of topophilia, Tuan claims that even nowadays many sectors of society view the city as opposite to the countryside, although "raw nature or wilderness" (109) is different from the countryside, which Tuan terms "the middle landscape" (109) following Leo Marx's terminology. That is, the countryside is generally located between urban areas and natural environments. Such a statement is controversial, though. Landscape architect and planner Anne Whiston Spirn claims that "cities are part of nature… as the city [is not] merely a human construct, [but] a living, changing landscape" ("One" 45, 51).[10] Whiston Spirn refers to the underground rivers, for example, as natural elements planners and engineers should consider before planning and building sections of a city. In relation to the rural-urban divide, Tuan holds the view that "it is the expansion of the countryside, rather than of cities, that poses the immediate threat to wilderness" (112). However, Tuan notes that the use of the word nature is currently used to refer to both the countryside and the wilderness, and that this is because nature has lost most of its awe-inspiring power, being reduced to descriptive adjectives such as charming and picturesque. It is in this sense that Tuan claims that nature is now equated to landscape (132-133). Crozier's oeuvre demonstrates Tuan's first point of this third aspect, as she does not establish any degrees of naturalness between the open prairie space and the cultivated garden. Moreover, Crozier's depiction of the natural world is not merely

[10] Anne Whiston Spirn made this claim originally in her award-winning 1984 book *The Granite Garden*.

picturesque or charming, but extremely complex in the relationships established between the personae and diverse natural environments.

In *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience*, originally published in 1977, Tuan further argues that space and place are two necessarily entwined notions, as place provides security and stability, but we are only aware of this if we confront it with space, which implies "openness, freedom, and threat" (*Space and Place* 6). That is, in line with prominent current geographer John Agnew's theories, space and place form "a continuum from generalized space to particularistic place" (Low 23). The notions of security and stability that place offers according to Tuan can be understood through Agnew's theory, in the sense that one of Agnew's understandings of place is "as locale or setting where everyday-life activities take place [such] as workplaces, homes, shopping malls, churches" (qtd. in Low 23). Such complementary understandings of space and place will proof useful in order to examine Crozier's transformation of the vastness of the prairie space into place by means of identification of and close attention to every detail in the prairie landscape. In this sense, Tuan posits that getting to know a place intimately involves both direct experience of place as well as an abstract knowledge of it, or to phrase it in Tuan's own words, "places are … known both directly through the senses and indirectly through the mind" ("Place" 153). The meaning we attach to places that are important to us, or as Tuan refers to them 'centers of meaning to individuals,' is dependent on "the quality of human awareness" ("Place" 165). That is, living in a place for a long period of time does not necessarily result in sense of place, but the constructs of place that we create by means of accumulated experience through the course of time demand a deep involvement in place ("Place" 164).[11] Tuan further explains that even though

[11] Tuan's understanding of place and its distinction with space is in line with anthropological approaches. As Marc Augé claims, place is regarded as relational, historical, and closely connected to identity (77). Place is constructed by means of both the individual and collective relations a person or a community has with a given space over time, which in turn shapes this person or community's shared identity (53-54).

inhabiting a place for a long period of time may allow us to come to know a place intimately, it is only when we distance ourselves from that place that we can reflect on the lived experience in that place with hindsight (*Space and Place* 18). In this sense, it will be relevant to consider Crozier's reflection upon her experience in Swift Current and the prairies after her move to British Columbia, an analysis which will go hand in hand with the analysis of Crozier's literary remembering.

1.2. The Materiality of Emplaced Embodiment

Human narratives are commonly both embodied and emplaced. That is, the characters or personae in any given story or poem have a body through which they feel and experience the world around them, and especially the places they inhabit, throughout time. As Jonathan Watson claims by rephrasing a statement by Merleau-Ponty, "the body is our point of insertion into the world, our point of view upon the world" (109). This line of thought suggests that embodiment and emplacement are two interrelated factors. That is, the ways in which a person experiences physically the place that surrounds him or her, especially in the case of nature, depend on the person's experience of his/her ageing body. In other words, the natural environment is likely to both be perceived differently and to acquire new meanings with the physical (and psychological) changes that the ageing process entails. The interconnected web of relations between embodiment and emplacement suggests the need for a combined theory that draws on new materialism, according to which the materiality of the body becomes enmeshed with the materiality of the physical (natural) environment. In order to understand the intricacies and relevance of such an entanglement of the bodily experience of the ageing human being in the material setting of both wild and man-planted nature – as especially relevant to Crozier's oeuvre –, a close look at both embodiment theories and the focus on the body that material

ecocriticism proposes will prove useful.

Theories on embodiment and ageing originated in the cultural turn towards a more somatic society, as medical sociologist Bryan S. Turner has called it (Gilleard and Higgs, "Aging" 17). Turner explains that the "medical and demographic developments" (*Regulating Bodies* 12) that took place throughout the second half of the 20th century "lend weight to the need for a new concept of modern societies as somatic" (12), especially considering the neglect of the body by social theory prior to Turner's studies of the body and society[12] (64-67). By the notion of somatic, Turner refers to the new focus on the regulation of bodies, which ranges from sexual health campaigns to concerns regarding the effects of global pollution on the world's population (12-13). Turner also pioneered in understanding materialism as "human embodiment and embodied practices" (5). Chris Gilliard and Paul Higgs acknowledge Turner's early contributions to the materiality of embodiment, while also drawing on feminist Donna Haraway's concept of the body as social agent: "The body as a social agent…refers to its materiality being an inseparable element in the expression of personal and social identity . . . [Thus,] 'embodiment' is a term that signifies the body as a vehicle of social agency" (Gilliard and Higgs, "Aging" 17).

Gilleard and Higgs's turn to Haraway's theories is relevant for the proposed combined notion of emplaced embodiment,[13] in the sense that material ecocriticism also bases its theories on Haraway's tenets on human agency. Specifically, material ecocriticism draws on Haraway's concept of 'naturecultures' by which Haraway means

[12] More recently, economist Hervé Juvin has used the phrase 'the coming of the body' in his book by the same title *The Coming of the Body,* published in 2010, as complementary to Turner's notion of the somatic turn. Juvin provides an analysis of contemporary Western societies, which criticizes the excessive attention paid to the body in such societies in detriment of all the other emotional, psychological and spiritual dimensions of life.

[13] The term "emplaced embodiment" has been inspired and developed from Barbara Humberstone's "Embodied Life-Long Learning in Nature, Narratives and Older Bodies – 'Quit or Crash'" (7), as is explained in the Antecedents section.

that, to quote from Serenella Iovino's explanation, "the dimension we materially (and semiotically) share with nonhuman beings is a cohabitation of stories" ("Steps" 136). Haraway's cohabitation tenet implies an encounter between human and non-human agencies. It is important to clarify at this point that the agency of non-human others must not be understood as human intentionality, as Stacy Alaimo underscores ("Material Engagements" 72), but as the "agentic power of matter," to use Iovino and Serpil Oppermann's words ("Material Ecocriticism" 82). That is, material ecocriticism holds as a central tenet the belief that "matter possesses agency [because] it acts out and causes changes," as Maris Sõrmus explains ("Naturalcultural Hybridity" 45). Sõrmus provides some examples, namely "bacteria and viruses inhabiting the human body, the effects of pollution, and the movement of toxins or food" (45).

The understanding of matter as agentic by material ecocriticism is also based on Jane Bennett's concept of 'vibrant matter' (*Vibrant Matter*). Bennet posits that matter is not "passive stuff, … raw, brute, or inert" (vii). Therefore, the usual distinction between objects as containing "dull matter" (vii) versus living beings as full of "vibrant life" (vii) is subverted. Bennet draws on Bruno Latour's notion of 'actant'[14] as "a source of action that can be either human or nonhuman" (qtd. in *Vibrant Matter* viii), as well as on a number of philosophical ideas,[15] in order to argue in favour of "the capacity of things – edibles, commodities, storms, meals – not only to impede or block the will and designs of humans but also to act as quasi agents or forces with trajectories, propensities, or

[14] 'Actant' is one of the most important concepts in Actor-Network-Theory (ANT), of which Bruno Latour is one of its main proponents, alongside Michel Callon and John Law. ANT draws attention, from a sociological point of view, to the web of relations necessary for any scientific and technological advancement to take place. One of the main tenets in ANT is the fact that all agents (actants) forming a network – be they objects, human beings or non-human beings – are considered at the same level. That is, all actants are regarded as having the same amount of agency (Latour, *Reassembling*).

[15] Bennett acknowledges the following philosophers as crucial for the development of her theory of vital materialism (another name for 'vibrant matter'): Spinoza, Nietzsche, Thoreau, Darwin Adorno, Deleuze, Bergson, and Driesch (*Vibrant Matter* viii). Bennet also specifies the inspiration that Henri Bergson's claim of "a latent belief in the spontaneity of nature" had for the development of her theory (qtd. in *Vibrant Matter* viii).

tendencies of their own" (viii). Natural elements like wind or sunlight act as quasi agents in some of Crozier's poems, albeit often in a metaphorical way.

Further elaborating upon Bennet's notion of vibrant matter and inspired by material feminist tenets on corporeality, Iovino and Oppermann suggest that because of the complex interplay of agencies in human embodiment, "the body is a privileged subject for material ecocriticism" ("Material Ecocriticism" 84). In the sense that the body is "a material palimpsest in which ecological and existential relationships are inscribed" (84). Iovino and Oppermann's understanding of material embodied identities from the point of view of material ecocriticism runs parallel to the (self)perception of embodiment alongside the ageing process, as researched by embodiment and ageing studies scholars. Such complementary notions of embodiment allow for a reading of the body as a meeting point of agencies and perceptions, which in its continuity with place – to alter a statement by Alaimo (*Bodily Natures* 11) – becomes a prominent element in notions of an emplaced embodiment. Crozier's depiction of corporality is in line with such notions, as her personae's bodies are often continuous with the natural environments they become enmeshed in.

In order to unravel the socio-cultural meanings attached to the body as examined by both embodiment and ageing studies, and material ecocriticism, respectively, separate sections will be devoted to the specific body-related concerns of each field of study. Proceeding in this way a more nuanced understanding of the proposed notion of emplaced embodiment will be attained.

1.2.1. Emplaced Embodiment in Ageing Studies

"Our bodies are the permeable boundary between our individual sense of self and the society in which we live," explain Deborah L. Tolman and colleagues (759). This means that the body is both personally and culturally constructed. Following this line of thought,

embodiment theories define embodiment as the "experiences in and through our aging bodies," as Laura Hurd-Clarke and Alexandra Korotchenko summarise (500). The converse is also true, as "the experience of aging is an inherently embodied process" (Liechty et al. 15). In other words, changes in bodily shape and functioning are intrinsic to the ageing process.

In order to consider all the aspects that are relevant to the emplaced embodiment of ageing, the following subchapter will discuss current theories on the embodiment of gender in old age; disembodied narratives of ageing, and embodied abjection in the fourth age; and the embodiment of sexuality in middle age and old age; all of them relevant theories for the analysis of Crozier's thematic concerns as depicted in her oeuvre.

Bodily transformations are especially noticeable in old age, often because of embodied experiences of illness in later life (age 75+) – also known as the fourth age – (Gilleard and Higgs, "Ageing Abjection" 135). Despite the similarities in the physical changes of ageing-into-old-age bodies, the way that each older individual perceives his/her own embodiment of ageing into old age is different. Cassandra Phoenix and Andrew C. Sparkes distinguish between two major types of perceived embodiment in later life: one based on the reproduction of age-related stereotypes, and another one based on the challenge of ageist stereotypes. As shown by different studies, ageist stereotypes in relation to self-perceptions of embodiment are widespread among the population and throughout all age cohorts (Hurd-Clarke, *Facing Age*; Vares; Slevin; Levy).

The prevalence of ageist stereotypes regarding embodiment can be explained by what Margaret M. Gullette claimed in her 1997 seminal text *Declining to Decline*, namely that the decline narrative is the dominant narrative of ageing in contemporary society; a belief that is generally agreed upon by ageing studies scholars (e.g.: Twigg, "Body"; Katz and Calasanti, "Critical Perspectives"; Hepworth's *Stories of Ageing*). Therefore,

embodiment is more often than not portrayed from a self-ageist[16] point of view, especially regarding the visual assessment of the ageing body. As a result, overcoming age-related stereotypes becomes a daunting task for the ageing individual (and for the society at large, although this latter aspect is beyond the scope of the present dissertation). In fact, to quote from Kathleen Slevin, "[r]esistance to old age is not surprising. It makes sense. It is a way of fighting invisibility, of resisting exclusion, of trying to maintain positive cultural capital" (1017). Nevertheless, acceptance of bodily change is also common. According to research, the degree of acceptance of an individual's ageing body is influenced by two major factors, namely gender, and social class – the latter is especially salient in the case of women – (Dumas et al.). Crozier's poems challenge self-ageist stereotypes, mainly from a female perspective, and promote attitudes of self-acceptance of the changes in the body that ageing into old age entails.

Regarding the embodiment of gender in old age, Jonathan Watson argues that "[e]mbodiment provides the ground on which the dynamics of gender are made personal and the tensions of agency and structure are realized" (109). According to Watson, male embodiment is comprised of four interdependent levels, namely normative, pragmatic, experiential, and visceral embodiment. Normative embodiment refers to individuals' ideas of what a healthy and an unhealthy body looks like. That is, normative embodiment is related to appearance and socially-established constructions of fitness (117-118). Pragmatic embodiment, on the other hand, is not related to the physical body, but it encompasses the ability of the male body to carry out social and family roles, such as being fit enough to work, and play with one's children. Because of its emphasis on functionality, pragmatic embodiment is generally favoured over normative embodiment

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[16] I have decided to include the term 'self-ageist' because of its brevity and straightforwardness. Although its use is not widespread within literary gerontology, it has been used by medical scholars such as Maria Pavlou and Mark Lachs, and medical writer Marilynn Larkin as a synonym of the terms 'aging self-stereotypes' (Becca Levy) and the common phrase 'internalised ageist stereotypes.'

(118-119). Experiential embodiment is concerned with the feelings related to the experience of one's body, such as well-being, and is usually perceived (i.e. experienced) fragmentarily. In other words, the men interviewed in Watson's study, when asked about the experience of their bodies, responded regarding a specific part of their body, such as a pulled muscle (119-120), and not regarding their bodies as a whole. Finally, visceral embodiment has to do with the participants' personal views of genetic inheritance and the likeliness to suffer from an illness despite leading healthy lives (120-121).

In the specific case of older men and their sense of embodiment, research shows that older men are less concerned with body image than older women[17] (Liechty et al. 9) because they perceive that changes in appearance in older age are "natural . . . and beyond their control" (8-9). In other words, older men are generally more likely to be content with the changes in their bodies than older women. Actually, older men are more focused on the functionality of the body, namely "health and physical ability" (Liechty et al. 11). In other words, older men tend to favour notions of Watson's pragmatic embodiment level. This may be due to (traditional) constructions of gender, according to which men see concerns in body image as a gendered issue; that is, belonging to women and femininity (Hargreaves and Tiggemann; Liechty et al.). This is not to say that body image is equivalent to embodiment, yet they are interrelated issues (Liechty et al. 3).

For older women, on the other hand, appearance has been found to be the main dimension of embodiment (Fairhurst; Laz; Vares 515). Nevertheless, women also have strategies to challenge ageist stereotypes. For instance, the perception of wrinkles as "markers of accomplishment" (Furman 115) in order to resist beauty norms that regard older women's bodies as unappealing (Hurd-Clarke, "Beauty" 440). Despite the fact that

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[17] However, as Liechty et al. underscore, there is a paucity of research on embodied masculinities (4). In close keeping, Esnaola et al. claim that "more precise knowledge is required regarding men's body dissatisfaction (21).

appearance continues to be a major concern for ageing women (Baker and Gringart; Oberg and Tornstam; Slevin; Bedford and Johnson), research has also suggested that, like ageing men, "the means by which older women evaluate their bodies shifts from appearance to physical function [as a result of] the onset of health issues" (Hurd-Clarke and Korotchenko 498).

The self-perception of embodiment by ageing women has also been related to socio-economic status by Alex Dumas, Suzanne Laberge and Silvia M. Straka. Dumas and colleagues found that women from upper-social classes regarded age-related bodily change with dissatisfaction, because earlier in life they had granted great value to bodily appearance. Thus, they now viewed their changing bodily shape as demoting. Working-class women, on the other hand, had undergone higher degrees of hardship throughout their lives, and therefore, they were better equipped to accept changes in body image (898). As they entered later life, however, women from all social classes showed greater degrees of acceptance towards bodily appearance, disassociating themselves from youthful ideals of beauty, and embodying age in a more inclusive way (899). Such an inclusive embodiment of age was related, in the case of women from upper classes to sustaining an image of elegance and good taste – especially as regards dress and hairstyle –, whereas working-class women prided themselves in their ability to maintain a clean and neat appearance (889-890) despite economic hardship. In other words, "low income was a key factor in giving a low priority to their appearance" (889).

In order to elucidate the ways in which ageing women maintain their social value Dumas and colleagues link their findings (883) to Pierre Bourdieu's notion of 'habitus,' according to which "socially acquired, embodied systems of schemes of disposition, perceptions and evaluation . . . orient and give meaning to practices" (17). That is to say, for the upper-class women Dumas and colleagues interviewed, identity is highly

dependent on the ability to embody upper-class style, manners, and looks. On the other hand, for most of the interviewed lower-class women identity is not shaped by their looks, but by their meaningful relationships to relevant others. However, this finding cannot be overly generalised, because Dumas and colleagues found exceptions in lower class women, some of whom placed great emphasis on their appearance. In such particular cases, a correlation between lower-class women's former careers in customer service and the fashion industry – in which being well-groomed is often required – and their current concerns with bodily appearance in old age was established (890).

Despite the differences in self-perception of both women's embodiment and body image according to social class, Laura Hurd-Clarke stresses that women in general face strong social pressure to mask the signs of ageing in order to avoid invisibility and social marginalisation (*Facing Age* 31), in line with Simone de Beauvoir's claims in her seminal text on ageing, *The Coming of Age*. The reason behind such strong social pressure to 'age well,' to use John W. Rowe and Robert L. Kahn's term – as criticised by Stowe and Cooney (48) –, lies in the socio-cultural belief in Western societies that the embodiment of youthful standards of both fitness and beauty is a matter of personal choice (Biggs 19; Ylänne et al. 52; Cardona). Therefore, lack of attainment of this idealised embodiment of youth results not only in an "appearance failure" but also in a "moral failure" (Hurd-Clarke, *Facing Age* 62; Hepworth, *Stories* 40). Thus, older women, as Hurd-Clarke explains, are often confronted with the daunting psychological task of having to accept such socially-imposed appearance and moral failures (61).

Hurd-Clarke further clarifies that some older women apparently circumvent frustration at their impossibility to attain neither a youthful embodiment nor an attractive appearance by means of priding themselves in being both healthy and able-bodied. However, Hurd-Clarke advocates that such pride in their own health assets, at a closer

look, is not a sign of the overcoming of socially established expectations of older women's embodiment and body image – (62-63), but it is rather a sign of personal resignation to "exclusion, invisibility, and social devaluation" (67). Other studies have, nevertheless, obtained different findings from Hurd-Clarke's. For instance, Anne Quéniart and Michèle Charpentier posit that the women they interviewed did not associate old age with social isolation, as they continued being socially active (1002-1003). Furthermore, the women in Quéniart and Charpentier's study did not feel subjected to social standards of ageing and femininity, as what they actually valued was their continuous ability to be autonomous, independent, and to be able to maintain both physical and intellectual health (1002). In a similar vein, Marika Tiggermann and Alice McCourt's study of positive body image and its evolution across the lifespan found that "greater age among women was associated with greater body appreciation" (626), in line with earlier findings by Peter Öberg and Lars Tornstam ("Body Images" and "Attitudes"). The reasoning behind this statement is, according to Tiggermann and McCourt, that older women tend to value their health and able-bodiedness over their physical appearance (626). That is to say, even though older women may "experience some level of body dissatisfaction [, they] also appreciate and respect their body in other ways," as Tiggermann and McCourt note (626). This is precisely one of Crozier's strategies to overcome age related prejudice in her poems.

One way in which levels of body dissatisfaction in older women (and also older men) are both experienced and reinforced is by what Kathleen Woodward refers to as the mirror stage of old age. That is, women (and also men) who avoid their reflection in the mirror because they do not feel identified with it, as they associate their sense of self with an image of themselves at a younger age. As a result, "[o]ld age can … be described as a state in which the body is in opposition to the self, and we are alienated from our bodies"

("Mirror Stage" 104). According to Woodward, such an alienation is caused by the fear of upcoming death when seeing an old body, which is a sign of Western culture's "negative assessment of old age" (*Aging* 66). The anxiety that is produced by the unrecognizable image in the mirror is likely to be traumatic and result in feelings of loss of one's self-identity. Consequently, those older individuals that have internalised such ageist attitudes often decide, in order to avoid the social gaze, to withdraw from social gatherings and stay at home instead (L. Marshall 59). Thus, they increase their social isolation and are more likely to suffer from a decrease in their cognitive abilities and to have a shorter life span than those who have a more positive sense of self in old age (Levy, qtd. in L. Marshall 57).

Similar to Woodward's construct of the mirror stage of old age, Mike Featherstone and Mike Hepworth developed the concept of the mask of ageing in order to explain the mismatch between self-perceptions of a youthful inner self and the aged appearance of the outer body. Such a mismatch results in some "tension . . . between the external appearance of the face and body . . . and the internal . . . sense . . . of personal identity which is likely to become more prominent in our consciousness as we grow older" (382). Such a lack of identification with the external body encapsulates disembodied narratives of ageing, which are related to the notion of an ageless self (Öberg and Tornstam 634-635). Regarding disembodied narratives of ageing, Emmanuelle Tulle advocates for the need

> to imagine a new ontology of ageing which does not trap older people in the dichotomy of bodily decline and frailty or disembodied selves but, on the contrary, makes room for alternative constructions of the mind/body relationship, opening up new modalities of agency which are controlled by older people themselves. (6)

In what concerns the term "the ageless self," medical anthropologist Sharon Kaufman explains that "when old people talk about themselves, they express a sense of self that is ageless – an identity that maintains continuity despite the physical and social changes that come with old age" (*Ageless Self* 7). On the contrary, Molly Andrews, in line with both Öberg and Tornstam's, and Tulle's pieces of research, claims that agelessness is "one of the most successful forms of ageism" ("Seduction of Agelessness" 75), as it involves "the belief that we can somehow wish [old age] away [by means of] … 'passing' as young" (77). Such a discriminatory attitude towards ageing, Andrews explains, is promoted by our Western youth-oriented societies, according to which one may feel forever young in spirit despite the old appearance of his/her ageing-into-old age body, thus reinforcing the Cartesian mind/body split (77-78). Thus, agelessness is a self-effacing attitude which simultaneously disempowers the old and reinforces a system of oppression that marginalises those who are no longer young. At the same time, agelessness, in its denial of embodiment, hinders the possibility for continued human development in old age (79), "strip[ping] the old of their history and leav[ing] them with nothing to offer but a mimicry of their youth" (81).

In a similar vein, Leni Marshall argues in favour of "the continued evolution of the psyche later in life" (53). Marshall revisits both Lacan's and Woodward's theories of the first and second mirror stages. Using the term "méconnaissance," which stands for a misrecognition of one's own image, Marshall contends that "accepting the misrecognition of the second mirror stage . . . offers people the opportunity to create those selves anew" (52). This may happen when one does not hold on to the young body as the only expression of one's self-identity, and when one values the new skills that the body can perform thanks to life-long experience, for instance in the case of actresses and dancers (55). That is, méconnaissance has the potential to render the older individual aware of the

lack of wholeness of the self that the first mirror stage constructs. This poses a psychological challenge to the older person, which Marshall claims may result in a "*clarity* of vision that was missing in the younger self" (69). As a result, Marshall argues in favour of the possibility of not only accepting but also appreciating one's aged body, an attitude that Crozier fosters in her work. Crozier engages with the mirror stage of old age and the mask of ageing in a small number of her poems, as socio-cultural and gendered attitudes that she ultimately aims to deconstruct.

Nearing Marshall's theory of méconnaissance, empirical studies on self-image and age identification have obtained results that differ from both the mask of ageing and the ageless-self theories. For instance, Peter Öberg and Lars Tornstam found in their study with Swedish men and women of different ages that "the presumed discrepancy between the inner youthful self and the outer ageing mask was not shown to be a general pattern among the respondents" (641), as body dissatisfaction often decreased with age. Öberg and Tornstam explain this mismatch between the theory and the empirical data by means of both considering the variables of personal development and maturation, which the theory does not seem to encompass, and the respondents' individual experiences of ageing as different from the ageist attitudes favoured by consumer culture (641-642). In a similar vein, Monica Ålgars et al. in a study of Finnish men and women aged 18 to 49 years conclude that "it is insufficient to merely study how age affects general body image because adults might become more satisfied with some aspects of their bodies as a function of age and less satisfied with other aspects" (1112). Ålgars et al.'s findings are in line with Hurd-Clarke's in that physical ability in old age is valued over body image, as discussed above. Likewise, Igor Esnaola et al. in their study of body dissatisfaction according to gender and age conclude that although gender is a more precise predictor of

body dissatisfaction than age, the older women in their study (aged 55+) were the ones better skilled at coping with socio-cultural pressures regarding body dissatisfaction (21).

In spite of the divergence found in the different studies on self-perceptions of embodiment and body image, findings collectively suggest a rich diversity of ageing experiences that clearly demystifies the social homogenisation of later life (Quéniart and Charpentier 1002). However, there is a notable exception to such diversity, namely embodied abjection in the fourth age. As Julia Twigg explains, "[t]he distinction between the Third and Fourth Age is qualitative not chronological. Although often taken to approximate to the ages of 50-75 and 75+, the distinction is in fact qualitative. In this the body is key, for it is the onset of serious infirmity that marks the point of transition" (64).

Chris Gilleard and Paul Higgs, who develop the notion of embodied abjection from Julia Kristeva's concept of abjection, understand abjection as "decay, disease and impurity that embodies the capacity to disgust" ("Ageing Abjection" 135). As such, the expectation in Western societies is that "the abject [is] excluded from the collective gaze" (Marshall, "Looking Glass" 62). The shame associated with abjection stems from the old person's inability to control his/her body functions. As a result, the older individual is socially displaced from being regarded as an autonomous subject, to becoming an object of care (Gilleard and Higgs 136). Gilleard and Higgs criticise the fact that while medical advancements and a more comfortable and healthier lifestyle have allowed for increasing numbers of older individuals to reach old-old age in Western societies, this has not resulted in the empowerment of fourth-agers. On the contrary, "an intensification of 'real' old age [has been met] with even less capacity to transgress the abjection that is associated with frailty and the loss of agency . . . symbolized by the fourth age" (135). In order to avoid the common equation of abjection with a threat to both personal agency and self-identity (136), Gilleard and Higgs explain that society demands the older person to

display the intention to exert personal agency (139). Drawing from Bill Hughes et al.'s feminist theory according to which closeness and intimacy – i.e., mutual relationships – are basic for both survival and thriving, Gilleard and Higgs posit that abjection can also "be redeemed through caring" (139). That is, intimate care has the potential to shield the older individual from both social isolation and otherness (140). This allows Gilleard and Higgs to claim that abjection has the potential power to transgress the sociocultural objectification of the fourth age. Such a transgression would nonetheless be more thorough, in Gilleard and Higgs' own words, if the "frailty and fragility of the fourth age [served] to remind us of our common humanity and the universal vulnerability of our bodies and our relationships" (141). A number of poems in Crozier's oeuvre tap into filial care and love as redeeming the social abjection commonly attributed to ill fourth agers. The gendered embodiment of such an "ontology of human vulnerability," as Gilleard and Higgs phrase it (135), is also salient when considering sexuality in middle to old age.

Sexuality is a sensory experience which is both embodied and emplaced. As Aline C. Gubrium and Miriam B. Shafer explain following Foucault's theories on sexuality, it is crucial for emplaced experiences of sexuality "to explore what '[feels]' good and bad, desirable and undesirable, and informed by needs and limits according to intimate relationships and practices, specific cultural contexts, local histories, and genealogies on sexuality, kinship and family making, and citizenship" (659). As such, the relationship between mind, body, and place, Gubrium and Shafer argue, is essential in order to promote sexual education, health, and well-being (659).

Notions on the embodiment of sexuality are based on Michel Foucault's and Judith Butler's respective theories about the social construction of bodies and sexuality (Tolman et al. 762). Foucault claimed that dominant social discourses regulate bodily experiences, such as sexuality or fertility, through the individual's subconscious interiorization and

reproduction of such normative discourses by means of "acts of self-surveillance and self-discipline" (762). Butler, from her feminist stance, contends that gendered bodies are socially created by means of 'performativity;' that is, by repeating the same pattern of "compliant productions of femininity by women, masculinity by men, and heterosexuality by everyone" until it is seen as normal embodiment (763). Enlarging Foucault's and Butler's foundational theories of embodiment and sexuality, current notions portray the complex and ambivalent social discourses surrounding sexuality and ageing.

On the one hand, successful ageing discourses promote sexuality as essential to ageing healthily (Sandberg, "Affirmative" 11), setting "youthful standards of sexual function and attractiveness . . . as an . . . imperative" (B. Marshall, "Graying of 'Sexual Health'" 406). Such an ideal of 'sexual fitness' in old age helps to establish the boundary between the third and the fourth age by means of creating anxieties about health risks and decline (405, 407). Sexual functionality in old age – often measured in terms of penile-vaginal penetration – also stems from the medicalisation of sexuality in old age, which has been especially prominent since the introduction of Viagra in 1998 (Marshall and Katz, "Forever Functional" 44). Such medicalisation of sexuality, according to Barbara Marshall, has resulted in the definition of what functional and dysfunctional sexuality is in line with pharmaceutical interests (cited in Tolman et al. 773). Jane M. Ussher et al. criticise such biomedical intrusion in the sexual embodiment of post-menopausal women and claim that "women are able to adopt non-medical strategies to address any embodied changes experienced by themselves, or their partner, including challenging the very definition of 'sex', and exploring a range of sexual activities" (462).

On the other hand, current youth-oriented Western societies consider youthful bodies – "young, slim, healthy, toned, and wrinkle-free appearances" – sexually appealing, while older bodies, "especially aged female bodies," are regarded as being

both asexual and undesirable (Hurd-Clarke and Korotchenko 496). In this line, Tiina Vares in her study of reactions of both male and female aged individuals to images of partially naked ageing women bodies in films received responses of shame and disgust (509), which were especially salient in the female respondents. Such a generalised negative attitude attests to the respondents' internalisation of age-related social prejudices, which render images of elderly (female) nudes unwatchable (509). Woodward's notion of unwatchability ("Inventing"), as read by Vares, is closely related to that of the male or public gaze, according to which changes in the physical appearance of middle-aged women following the climacteric often have the effect of setting them aside "towards the margins of heterosexual desirability," rendering them invisible (Ussher et al. 457). Nuancing this statement, Josephine Dolan celebrates the new visibility of post-menopausal female Hollywood actresses with a note of caution ("Smoothing Wrinkles" 344), as such new visibility "is fully embedded in the production, reproduction, and embodiment of a complex nexus of feminized discourses of 'successful aging' that incorporates and naturalizes ideologies of deferred retirement, cosmeceutical enhancement, and chronological decorum" (350).

In a similar vein, Thomas Walz claims that while the representation of older people's sexuality in both the media and in literature is undergoing some change towards accepting the aged as sexually active, the vast majority of "popular media, magazines, film, and television are reluctant to depict older persons in terms of their sexuality [because] their love lives . . . are believed to be of little interest to . . . their dominant markets, the young and the middle aged" (101). Vares, like Dolan and Walz, focuses on new portrayals of later life sexuality, namely images of sexy seniors, which Vares refers to as 'sexy oldies.' Vares states that while the new representations of sexually active seniors carry the potential to "challenge both the invisibility and the unwatchability of

later life sexuality" (505), their portrayals are limited in a number of ways. First, the sexual relationships depicted are usually romantic. Second, the older actors engaging in sexual activity are young-looking. Third, the double standard of ageing is present, as older men are both portrayed as more sexually active than older women, and old men engage in sexual relationships with younger women. Fourth, sexual intercourse is not shown explicitly, only suggested (505).

Qualitative research with older individuals suggests, however, that the lack of and (mis-) representations of embodied sexuality in old age in the media differ significantly from the actual reality. Longitudinal studies on the embodiment of sexuality by older individuals have shown that most older persons remain interested in sexuality throughout their lives, and in some cases, are more sexually satisfied in later life (Walz 109; Thorpe et al. 164; Sandberg, "Affirmative" 14; Ussher et al. 462), although their levels of sexual activity are sometimes hindered by lack of sexual partner and illness (Walz 109). Ageist prejudices regarding female sexuality, however, position the climacteric as the onset of sexual decline (Ussher et al. 449). Thus, the master narrative of decline affects women already at middle age, as also depicted in Crozier's poetry.

The hormonal and physical changes that the menopause entails have often been regarded as stripping women of their womanhood, with biomedical discourses offering hormone replacement therapy as the solution to such supposed sexual decline (Ussher et al. 450). Nevertheless, hormonal changes in the menopause have not been proven to reduce sexual desire, while both socially-constructed ideas of normative male and female embodiment of sexual practices, and self-expectations of "decreased sexuality [and] . . . sexual attractiveness . . . have been associated with decline in sexual response and activity" (Ussher et al. 457). Therefore, in order for older (female) individuals to fully enjoy their embodied sexuality Jane M. Ussher et al. recommend "embracing the changes

that menopause and midlife can bring" (463). Nonetheless, the renegotiation of the embodiment of sexuality in middle and old age is not only dependent on the individual woman, but it is also highly dependent on her sexual partner's construction of sexuality. Coital sex may be welcome and even requested by some older women. However, the construction of penile-vaginal contact as normative heterosexual sexuality may lead older women to feel compelled to adhere to intercourse in order to fulfil their husbands' needs despite feeling in pain because of vaginal dryness. Conversely, some other senior women may reject any kind of sex or sexuality because of a number of reasons, such as sexual discomfort, lack of exploration of non-coital sex, lack of interest in sex, construction of sexuality as not important, etc. (Ussher et al. 454-455).

The two contradictory views on sexuality, namely the 're-sexing' of ageing bodies – to borrow from Barbara Marshall's words – promoted by both successful ageing discourses and biomedical industries, and the slow process of erasure of taboos regarding sexuality in old age, offer complex messages that older individuals need to negotiate (Thorpe et al. 157). Linn Sandberg proposes an alternative framework in order to avoid such social dualism of success versus decline in the embodiment of later-life sexuality, namely 'affirmative old age' ("Affirmative" 13-14). Sandberg, whose affirmative old age theory is based on her qualitative studies with older persons' narratives of ageing, bases her claims on feminists Elisabeth Grosz and Rosi Braidotti's theories on corporeality. Sandberg's theory is based on the belief that bodily changes occurring alongside the ageing process need not be understood as decline, but as difference (19). That is, older participants in Sandberg's study showed a continuous (re)negotiation of positions regarding the embodiment of sexuality in their changing bodies (23). As such, the participants often first experienced bodily change as loss and decline, but later on exerted agency by means of finding creative ways to experience pleasure. Thus, they both

challenged and redefined previously internalised normative conceptions of masculine and feminine embodiment of sexuality (24). In this sense, Crozier's poetry – in her creative depiction of ageing sexuality in all its complexity – may be useful in order to help ageing individual readers to both challenge stereotypes towards sexuality in old age and to re-negotiate their own sexualities.

1.2.1.1. Late Style(s) in Older Writers: Literal and Literary Embodiment of Ageing into Old Age

The materiality (i.e. lived experiences) of late-life embodiment, in all the above-mentioned complexity, informs the works written by older writers in a number of ways. Such an influence is unique to each individual author, but it is also highly dependent on socio-cultural context, time period, gender, etc. (Hutcheon and Hutcheon, 11). The impact of the ageing process on the writers' late works is often studied through the prism of late style[18] in order to examine the writer's continuity or discontinuity in thematic concerns, the quantity and quality of works the author published in his/her later years in comparison to the rest of his/her career, etc.

Contrary to Western socio-cultural beliefs depicting late life as a time of physical and mental decline, age critic Kathleen Woodward posits, when examining the later careers of modernist poets, that "new ways of thinking" may appear in writers' old age (*At Last* 12). Woodward borrows Erikson's conceptualisation of wisdom as the specific strength obtained in the eighth and last stage (age 65+) of psychosocial development, and defined by Erikson as an "informed and detached concern with life itself in the face of death itself" (*Life Cycle* 61), in order to elaborate her theory of the "meditative mode" of

[18] Although the notion of late style can be applied to the last works of any artist regardless of the age in which s/he passed away (Hutcheon and Hutcheon 1), for the purpose of this dissertation only those traits relating to the late works of older writers will be considered.

writers in old age. Such a meditative mode is defined by Woodward as involving both a "balance between mind and world . . . and . . . an active shaping of language" (*At Last* 170), which results from a life-long learning process. Such a balance is achieved through contemplative life, which should not be understood as inaction, but rather as "stillness . . . to be still and yet moving: a symbol of wisdom" (170). According to Woodward, the wisdom in the poets whose late works she examines has been attained by means of "having recognized, and accepted, the 'other'" (172); that is, they have accepted their older selves despite socially-promoted discourses of decline in late life, which discriminate against older people.

Similarly fighting against ageist stereotypes, literary gerontologist Anne M. Wyatt-Brown proposes a three-fold model of late-life fiction which aims at countering the homogenisation of senescence by means of "expand[ing] our understanding of the many ways in which artists react to the experiences of growing older" ("Another Model" 50). The three ways that ageing authors have to adapt their writings to the new life circumstances brought about by the ageing process from midlife onwards, as Wyatt-Brown contends, are the following: The first way is characterised by thematic continuity, in the sense that the older writer dwells on the themes s/he developed at the beginning of her / his literary career. The major issue that the writers following this first model may have to address is a possible stagnation at middle age, when they may no longer find the themes they established in their youth enticing. However, some writers do manage to adapt to mid-life transformations and are able to cast a new light on their primary themes (50-51). Lorna Crozier's late style partly gravitates towards the latter option within this first model, as will be analysed in ensuing chapters.

The second way involves a catharsis of sorts following a psychologically challenging life event, such as a period of depression, illness, and bereavement, among

others. That is, the process of overcoming such a painful experience has a strong impact on the writer; an impact which is often translated into a rekindled creativity leading to radical change. Such change is different in each writer whose late style belongs to this second group, some examples being a change in theme, and a change in genre (52). Crozier's late style is also imbued by notions of Wyatt-Brown's second category, with new subject matter being introduced following the emotionally challenging yet unavoidable life-course transition of parental loss at (late) middle age.

The third way includes those authors who have achieved fame and who, in their senescence, see how their readership has increased exponentially in number. As such they can afford to "speak their minds . . . [,] to use these narratives as a means to pass on their wisdom and experience to those who will follow" (53). As Wyatt-Brown explains, this "legacy for the next generation" (53) corresponds to Erikson's grand-generative function in old age. Erikson defines this function as "a later version of . . . the generative stage that preceded old age" (*Life Cycle* 63), characterised by parental and didactic roles, among others (70). Another relevant characteristic of Wyatt-Brown's third model, shared by some writers, is "a new simplicity [, in terms of style,] prompted by a sense that time cannot be wasted" (55).

Nearing Wyatt-Brown's second model of late-life fiction, literary critic and public intellectual Edward Said proposes a view of late style which draws on critical theorist and philosopher Theodor Adorno's notion of late style, as developed in his analysis of Beethoven's late pieces. Specifically, Said argues that artists acquire a new idiom when they approach death (*On Late Style* 6). This new idiom, which he refers to as late style, leads authors not to a harmonious ripeness and conclusive thoughts, but rather late style

> has the power to render disenchantment and pleasure without resolving the contradiction between them. What holds them in tension, as equal forces straining

> in opposite directions, is the artist's mature subjectivity, stripped of hubris and pomposity, unashamed either of its fallibility or of the modest assurance it has gained as a result of age (148).

Besides the common internal oppositions to be found in late works, Said also underscores the relevance of the awareness of the proximity of death to late style, which becomes a recurrent theme in the artists whose late works Said analyses (114). Another important point that Said has found common in all the musical and literary authors whose late works he has examined is related to the high quality of late works. For instance, when describing Beethoven's late masterpieces, Said claims that they are "late to the extent that they are beyond their own time, ahead of it in terms of startling newness" (135). In addition, Said contends that this technical or formal genius is sometimes inextricably linked to understandings of art that are not typical of the particular historical periods in which authors live (136). Therefore, the novelties produced by authors in their late styles are often due to their reviewing and re-reading of styles typical from previous historical time periods, which they then depart from to create a totally new style (92-93, 134, 136).

Drawing on the impact of the renewed attention to late style following the publication of Said's *On Late Style* in 2006, pulmonologist and cultural semiotician Michael Hutcheon and cultural theorist Linda Hutcheon argue against the critical construct of late style in its singular form.[19] Hutcheon and Hutcheon claim that the generalisations regarding late style as present in the late works of older writers are reductionist and ultimately ageist (3). That is, generalisations are not comprehensive, as there are as many late styles as writers (4, 11). In addition, the homogenisation of older individuals has been widely criticised as a form of ageism, as age is only one factor among

[19] The title of this subsection, namely "Late style(s) in older writers…" has been borrowed from Hutcheon and Hutcheon's view on the plurality of late styles of elderly artists.

many others, such as socio-cultural attitudes towards the ageing process and gender (3, 7, 11), to which social class, ethnicity, and sexual orientation could be added. Moreover, the characteristics that late works have in relation to a given author's life-long works are defined by critics. This means that "what we call late style is less a manifestation of artistic creativity than a 'discursive product of art history' . . . at a certain time and place" (5).

Theories of embodiment and ageing, together with the simultaneously literal and literary embodiment of ageing that notions of late style(s) refer to, are likely to provide further insight into the complexities of corporeality and its emplacement by means of drawing on the material turn[20] in ecocriticism.

1.2.2. Emplaced Embodiment in Material Ecocriticism

The lived experiences and perceptions of our human bodies are not stable, but suffer changes throughout the life-course and are highly dependent on both the spaces we inhabit and the places that are meaningful to us. In the same vein, the natural world "is not constant in form, structure or proportion, but changes at every scale of time and space" (Botkin 62). Such parallel understandings converge in the proposed notion of emplaced embodiment, which is going to be further developed in the following subchapter by means of exploring the entanglement of (aged) human with more-than-human bodies as discussed by material ecocriticism.

As leading ecocritic Scott Slovic explains, "environmentalism and embodiment

[20] Spearheaded by philosopher Manuel de Landa and feminist Rosi Braidotti, the material turn refers to the introduction of ideas of materialism in academia in the 1990s (Iovino and Opperman, "Theorizing" 452). As Christopher Breu claims, the material turn functions "[a]s a corrective to the cultural and linguistic turns that preceded it, . . . working to demonstrate the limits of both textual and social constructivism as dominant paradigms for work in the humanities" (7).

studies have converged in recent decades" ("Editor's Note" 620). Such a joined effort has been achieved through the work of those scholars engaged in the so-called fourth wave in ecocriticism, namely material ecocriticism. Specifically, as feminist materialist Stacy Alaimo claims, material ecocriticism is concerned with the production of novel understandings of the ways in which the human body inhabits and relates to the natural world (114). Alaimo's theories are of uttermost importance for the proposed notion of emplaced embodiment, as she considers "bodies and places [to be] continuous" with each other (11). Alaimo further argues that "the material world… [is] never merely an external place but always the very substances of ourselves and others" (qtd. in Iovino 139). Such a blurring of boundaries is described by Alaimo in her notion of 'trans-corporeality.' As Alaimo explains, trans-corporeality understands the body not as an entity in itself but rather as a "system within systems" (Alaimo 10). That is, "[i]magining human corporeality as trans-corporeality, in which the human is always intermeshed with the more-than-human world,[21] underlines the extent to which the substance of the human is ultimately inseparable from 'the environment'" (Alaimo 2). Alaimo regards trans-corporeality as a movement across bodies, which intends to reveal an understanding of the non-human world as both alive and agentic, in line with Bennett's notions of vibrant matter. That is, material ecocritics believe that "matter is not a passive resource for human manipulation and consumption" (Alaimo 142). In line with Alaimo's notion of trans-corporeality, philosopher and environmental studies scholar Serenella Iovino argues that the body should be understood "as a process of embodiment [, as] the human self is a process of interacting agencies rather than a fixed, immobile, and self-referential identity"

[21] Ecologist and philosopher David Abram coined the term 'more-than-human' in the book *The Spell of the Sensuous: Perception and Language in a More-Than-Human World*, published in 1996. Ecocritics have adopted the term and use it as synonymous with 'non-human' (also spelled 'nonhuman'), which is the term used in this dissertation. Nonetheless, the term 'more-than-human' is embedded with connotations of humanity's belonging to the natural world and our dependence on it to survive (Abram 23, 153-154).

(138). Such a statement, Iovino acknowledges, is also shared by philosopher and ecologist David Abram, who contends that the body is actually a place of sorts, too. In the sense that the body, in the same way as place, is often affected by external agents (Iovino 144).

Material ecocriticism is also concerned with the interactions between matter and discourse. In this vein, matter is understood as text, since matter is believed to possess 'narrative' power (Iovino 83). As Oppermann aptly puts it, "the storied matter encompasses the whole of the material ecological relationships that produce meanings interlaced with human destiny" ("Material Ecocriticism" 57). Such a theoretical position is based on feminist theorist Karen Barad's concept of "intra-action," as Oppermann acknowledges ("Material Ecocriticism" 65). Barad defines intra-action, which she also refers to as intra-activity, by explaining that "what we commonly take to be individual entities are not separate determinately bounded and propertied objects, but rather are (entangled "parts of") phenomena (material-discursive intra-actions) that extend across (what we commonly take to be separate places and moments in) space and time" (32). Actually, the notion of 'storied matter' is akin to the older human body, whose creases, wrinkles, and marks of different sorts tell the story of life-long embodied and emplaced experiences.

Barad names such spatial and temporal boundary crossings of matter "entanglements of spacetimemattering" (32). Barad's notion implies, according to Oppermann, a change of "focus from interactions between humans and nonhumans to intra-actions between the material world and human discourses" (Iovino and Oppermann, "Theorizing" 467). Such intra-actions, as well as human discourses, are mediated by means of language. That is, to use foremost structural linguist Ferdinand de Saussure's concepts, language shapes the material world or 'signified' by means of words or 'signifiers.' However, as Christopher Breu notes, "language and the object world [cannot

be treated as if they were] unproblematically related" (184). What Breu resists from the linguistic turn as promoted by Saussure "is the notion that the referent can be fully adequate to that which it refers" (184). Nevertheless, it is precisely this inherent tension, according to Breu, the one that allows for literature and the arts to "access" the material. As such, Breu posits, "we can look at art as a guide for how we should engage the material" (198).

Resonating with Breu's understanding of literature as suggestive of ways in which we can grasp the material, and in close keeping with Barad's notion of spacetimemattering, ecocritic Heather I. Sullivan formulates the concept of "dirt[22] theory." Sullivan claims that "[t]he nuances of dirt imagery reveal much about our fundamental understanding of bodies as well as their immersion in the radically local and mobile environments that are always with us but never entirely under our conscious control" (528). Sullivan explains that because of humanly-produced world-wide pollution, soil can be both life-sustaining and contaminated by toxins (516), which Sullivan refers to as "dirty nature" (515). This means that, in dirt theory, the traditional dichotomy of a pristine nature versus a dirty humanity does no longer hold true, thus underscoring one of the major ecocritical tenets, namely that humans are not separate from nature and vice-versa (515). In Sullivan's own words, "[d]irty nature is always with us as part of ongoing interactions among all kinds of material agents" (515). Sullivan's dirt theory is relevant to the proposed understanding of emplaced embodiment because rather than emphasizing the role of place alone, it focusses on the interconnection of "ongoing processes through time and across place" (516). Such processes involve dirt moving around continuously because of weather elements such as wind and because of humans carrying it around both stuck on our bodies (e.g. dust) and as part of our bodies

[22] By the term "dirt" Sullivan refers not only to life-sustaining soil, but also to contaminated soil, both in urban and in rural environments (517).

(e.g. microscopic organisms that inhabit dirt) (516, 519).

1.3. Existing Intersections of Time and Place

The link between ageing studies and ecology has been developed in the last decade by Harry R. Moody (Moody, "Environmentalism"; Moody "Eco-Elders"; Moody and Achenbaum), probably in response to Wright and Lund's academic article "Gray and Green?: Stewardship and Sustainability in an Aging Society." The connection between ageing and environmental studies was established by Moody as a response to both the negative future prospects that result from climate change, and the social and economic pressure that our Western societies will suffer in the near future because of the unprecedented rate of population ageing.

Moody maintains that the natural environment is an ageing issue because elders have an obligation towards future generations. Such an obligation stems from the fact that older people have had access to cheap energy resources during the second half of the twentieth century. The rapid depletion of fossil fuels will imply two main issues: On the one hand, a sharp rise in the price of such energy resources will hinder future generations' access to them; on the other hand, it will also result in the pollution of the Earth at an unprecedented rate. Therefore, the ecological footprint that older individuals will leave to future generations is not a very hopeful one. The awareness of such an unpromising legacy is what, according to Moody, may motivate the old to preserve the natural environment, or at least what still remains of it. Moody further explains that legacy motivation may arise from the virtue of care, as proposed by Erik Erikson's theory of the stages of psychosocial human development. Specifically, Moody reworks Erikson's

quality of generativity in adulthood[23] to apply it to old age in the sense that the urge to safeguard people's own children can be enlarged into an urge to protect the Earth for future generations. In Moody's own words, "to respond to the simultaneous challenge of an ageing society and a threatened global environment, we will need a new form of generativity that extends to the planet as a whole" (Moody, "Eco-Elders" 72).

Elders' motivation to engage in protecting the environmental legacy may be further promoted by thinking in terms of "Eco-Elders" as the Ideal Types (Weber),[24] or senior heroes, of our times. An Eco-Elder, according to Moody, would be a senior citizen who would like to be a gatekeeper of the future, a memory keeper, who would hold the quality of grand generativity, who would possess a wise sense of judgment, who would like to continue learning throughout his / her life, and who could carry out actions of 'late freedom'[25] as a result of disengagement from work duties. The idea of ageing which lies behind the concept of 'late freedom' is that in old age there are no careers to develop or small children to raise. However, much as a greater amount of freedom is available to many older individuals, vast numbers of them are requested to take care of their infant grandchildren.[26] Besides, many older individuals may not be able to engage in

[23] According to Erikson, adulthood contains the oppositional binary of generativity vs. stagnation. In Joan M. Erikson's words, generativity means "the generation of new beings as well as of new products and new ideas, including a kind of self-generation concerned with further identity development" (67). Joan M. Erikson considers periods of stagnation or inactivity common in the life of any adult person (67). The quality arising from the confrontation of generativity versus stagnation is that of care. That is, an adult person wishes to care for his / her family and projects.

[24] German sociologist Max Weber (1864-1920) conceptualised the term 'ideal type' as the core idea behind any social reality. In Hans H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills' words, "the much-discussed 'ideal type' […] refers to the construction of certain elements of reality into a logically precise conception" (*From Max Weber* 59). Therefore, two basic notions derive from Moody's definition of Eco-Elders as Ideal Types. Firstly, that seniors who act in favour of the protection of the natural environment already exist by self-definition of the term 'ideal type.' Secondly, that senior citizens who act following the ideal type of the Eco-Elder may not necessarily fit perfectly in the definition of the term. Therefore, it follows that it is not essential to fulfill all the objectives and attain all the personal qualities of an Eco-Elder, but simply to be environmentally friendly and have the Eco-Elder features in mind.

[25] The conceptualisation of old age as 'late freedom' was first established by Austrian gerontologist Leopold Rosenmayr in 1983.

[26] Giorgio Di Gessa, Karen Glaser, and Anthea Tinker claim that there is a "widespread provision of grandparental childcare in Europe" (166). Similarly, Karsten Hank and Isabella Buber report that almost half of the grandparent population both in Europe and the USA help in the caring of their grandchildren (Hank and Buber 55). According to Hank and Buber, the age peak in which grandparents provide grandchild

environmental activism as a result of their impeding health.[27] Therefore, in practical terms, only a small percentage of the senior population is able to enjoy their own 'late freedom.' Hence the number of older citizens who would actually be able to become Eco-Elders might be lower than expected by Moody.

Moody acknowledges that his conceptualisation of the Eco-Elder has been inspired by Swedish sociologist Lars Tornstam's theory of gerotranscendence, which reinforces Moody's scheme. However, Moody does not develop the reasons that led him to consider gerotranscendence a suitable frame of reference for his own theory. Tornstam admits that his argument is not a scholarly invention, but it is based on comments made by a number of ageing individuals from different social classes and backgrounds. Tornstam's theory also wishes to escape the dualism of successful ageing versus disengagement. Tornstam criticises successful ageing because it is often synonymous with being active and productive after retirement, so it is, in fact, an application of middle-aged values to old age. Thus, successful ageing disregards the specific idiosyncrasies of later life (*Gerotranscendence* 3). At the opposite end of the spectrum, disengagement theory "assumes an inherent and natural drive to disengage mentally and socially when growing old" (*Gerotranscendence* 9). Hence, it undermines any possible agency on the part of the aged. Accordingly, Tornstam proposes the alternative middle ground of gerotranscendence and its corresponding gerotranscendent individual. In Tornstam's own words, "the gerotranscendent individual […] typically experiences a redefinition of the self and of relationships to others and a new understanding of fundamental, existential

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care is 60-69 years, decreasing at age 70+ (65). In relation to these data, the USA 2010 Census informed that 4.9 children in the USA were raised solely by their grandparents, a figure that doubled the one obtained in the 2000 Census. In 2016, the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) webpage stated that "[a]cross the United States, almost 7.8 million children are living in homes where grandparents or other relatives are the householders, with more than 5.8 million children living in grandparents' homes" [Accessed 25 May 2016]. Therefore, in six years' time the number of children living in a house headed by a grandparent has increased by almost three million, if we compare it to the USA 2010 Census.

[27] According to the 2015 report issued by the US Department of Health and Human Science, in 2014 a 21.7% of the population aged 65+ report to suffer from fair or poor health.

questions" (*Gerotranscendence* 3). The implications are that older individuals select both the people and the activities they wish to spend time with more accurately. Such a tendency goes hand in hand with the usual need to dispose of material objects and superfluous relationships, which in turn implies that the gerotranscendent individual wishes to spend more time alone thinking. Time spent in 'positive solitude' may lead to a new understanding of life and even a sense of communion with the universe (*Gerotranscendence* 3-4).

Distantly related to Moody's theory as Tornstam's statements might seem, they are, in fact, closely connected if seen through the lens of ecocriticism. Moody has interconnected a gerontological theory with ecological activism. As such, Tornstam's gerotranscendent individual would realize the importance to preserve the planet for future generations and the need for his / her involvement as an active agent in helping save the natural environment, during his / her time of meditation in positive solitude. The gerotranscendent individual, according to Moody, would consequently select activities related to protecting the natural environment and making their local population aware of their ecological footprint, which directly influences the health of the planet. Thus, they are acting as gatekeepers of the future. In addition, those seniors who enjoy a greater amount of late freedom may wish to participate in environmental awareness campaigns which entail long hours of preparation, travelling abroad or the participation in demonstrations. What is more, gerotranscendent individuals, according to Moody and Andrew Achenbaum, are also life-long learners interested in training or studying to fully comprehend the planet's functioning, including its ecosystem dynamics. Furthermore, they may wish to share some of their spare time with younger generations in order to explain to them the changes they have seen in the natural environment throughout their lives, hence performing the role of memory keepers.

Moody and Achenbaum further claim that legacy motivation may also be found in religious ethics and, specifically, in the values of solidarity, sustainability and stewardship. Although the use of religion as an ultimate persuading resource may be regarded by some scholars as a forced one, the specific American context from which Moody and Achenbaum posit their theory is a strongly religious one.[28] Therefore, it is no wonder that Moody and Achenbaum have tried to string a personal cord while calling for proactive environmental action on the part of the old. According to Moody and Achenbaum, the value of solidarity means extending the biblical commandment[29] to help one's neighbour to future generations and not only to people but also to the environment. Sustainability means showing gratitude for having received the planet from our predecessors, and therefore taking action to preserve the environment so as to be able to pass it on to future generations in a good condition. Finally, stewardship refers to the responsibility to become aware of global warming and to fight against it (Moody and

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[28] The 2014 US Religion Landscape Study conducted by the Pew Research Centre found that 70.6% out of the 35,000 Americans interviewed from all 50 states claimed to be Christian believers. Likewise, *The Wall Street Journal* published a special issue in 2015, based on the official numbers published by *The Official Catholic Directory*, which claimed that "about 25% of the overall [U.S.] population identify as Roman Catholic" and that "Catholics comprise the largest religious group in 35 states." Available at: <http://graphics.wsj.com/catholics-us/> [Accessed 30 May 2016] According to the 2015 Pew Research Centre Study, however, the current percentage of Catholic believers is 21%. Whereas 25.4% are Evangelical Protestant and 15% Mainline Protestant. Available at: <http://www.christianitytoday.com/gleanings/2015/may/pew-evangelicals-stay-strong-us-religious-landscape-study.html> [Accessed 30 May 2016]

[29] The connection between ecology and Christian values which Moody and Achenbaum maintain draws on a pre-established set of beliefs. As Yasmeen Farooq-Khan argues in her ecofeminist analysis of Margaret Atwood's and Alice Walker's works which conform her doctoral dissertation, "some Judeo-Christian theologies have attempted to elucidate biblical precedents for good stewardship on Earth" (27). Although Farooq-Khan is perfectly aware of the fact that Christianity is often viewed as an anthropocentric religion, which has favoured male dominance on both the natural environment and women – as Lynn White Jr. has also claimed when tracing the historical roots of our ecologic crises –, she further explains that there have been views within the Christian religion which have been in line with ecology. Namely, the Puritan belief that the natural world has been created by God and therefore it is sacred; and St. Francis of Assisi's doctrine, which promoted human humility towards the world so that all species could live in harmony and thus avoid man's anthropocentric dominance (34). Nowadays, attitudes of stewardship towards our planet are also promoted by Christianity, as Pope Francis's encyclical letter Laudato Si' (24 May 2015) exemplifies. In it, the Holy Father Francis encourages believers to take care of our home, mother Earth, in the face of ecological crisis.

Achenbaum).[30]

In line with the proposed imbrication of gerontology and ecocriticism in this dissertation, a significant connection between ageing studies and notions of embodiment, and the environment and notions of emplacement, has been recently established by the sociologist of sport and outdoor education Barbara Humberstone in her 2018 article entitled "Embodied Life-Long Learning in Nature, Narratives and Older Bodies – 'quit or crash'." As Humberstone acknowledges, few studies in outdoor research have considered the "subjective emplaced embodied experience; that is, how the body learns to become older within particular social, spatial and environmental contexts" (7). In order to help fill this void in the literature, Humberstone argues that research on outdoor studies would highly benefit from considering individual narratives of ageing, by means of which researchers would be able to elucidate how the embodiment of ageing is influenced by practising sport in nature (1-2). In Humberstone's own words, "to understand what it is to age, how individuals experience ageing and how older people make sense of outdoor physical experiences, the subjective perspective contextualised within particular spatial and environmental situations are crucial" (4). The research area of outdoor studies has clear parallelisms with ecocriticism, as to quote from Humberstone, "[c]entral to outdoor studies is the outdoors and the relations of humans with the non-human" (3). Humberstone's approach reinforces such parallelisms, as Humberstone favours the use of creative non-fiction (5) to explore "participants' sentiments, sensations and sensitivities" (4) while doing sport activities in nature. While Crozier's oeuvre is mostly fictional, her poems are often inspired by her daily contact with the natural world, such as her work in the garden and her morning walks in the forest (Mina, "Writing" 220). Such physical

[30] In line with Moody's argument, it is worth noting that the Environmental Alliance for Senior Involvement was founded in 1992 in the United States of America in order to "promote in senior Americans an environmental ethic of expanding their knowledge, commitment and active involvement in protecting and caring for the environment for present and future generations" (Wright and Lund 233).

activities, which she sometimes depicts in her poems, have a direct impact on her ageing personae both in terms of health, and in terms of the older personae's dynamic relationships with the non-human world.

1.4. Concluding Comments on Notions of Emplaced Embodiment

This theory chapter has aimed to enlarge the research fields of literary gerontology and ecocriticism by means of finding common intersections that function as the foundations of a joint theoretical framework. Such theoretical imbrications have been established in order to analyse the formation process of an author's late style – in this case Lorna Crozier's – through the evolution of the depiction of the relationships between the natural environment and the poet's personae throughout the ageing process. The interconnections between gerontology and ecocriticism have mainly encompassed the (sub-)fields of environmental gerontology, theories on embodiment and ageing, and notions of the body in material ecocriticism. Firstly, environmental gerontology's place identity has been connected to notions of sense of place as examined in ecocriticism, as well as recent trends within environmental gerontology which link the macro-level of environmental analysis to the micro-level in order to elucidate the effect that the (natural) environment has in healthy ageing; an endeavour that has already been explored extensively in both healing gardens research and investigation in horticultural therapy. Secondly, the interrelationships between embodiment and emplacement, which have been referred to as emplaced embodiment, have been developed through the common somatic turn in both theories on embodiment and ageing, and material ecocriticism.

Drawing on such intersections between literary gerontology and ecocriticism, the ensuing chapters examine the formation process of Crozier's late style by analysing the evolution of the effect that the natural environment has in the ageing personae at micro-,

meso-, and macro-levels.

CHAPTER 2

Emplacement and Emplaced Ageing Processes: The Garden as a Micro-Level of Spatial Analysis

“One day the door opened to the lovers’ chamber.
The room has become a dense garden,
full of colours, smells, sounds you have never known.”

Leonard Cohen. “You Have the Lovers”

The garden is one of the primary landscapes in Crozier’s poetic repertoire, so much so that Crozier is often acknowledged as “Canada’s veritable poet of the garden” (Boyd 288). Since the first poetry collection Crozier published entitled *Inside Is the Sky*, which was released in 1976 under the married surname Uher, Crozier has made use of the image of the garden with different purposes. In her foundational study of Crozier’s poetry, Susan Gingell examines Crozier’s “prairie garden” (76) as a feminist revisioning of the patriarchal myths of the Canadian West – in which man and nature are regarded as opposites – in connection with the Judeo-Christian myths that are the basis of such a patriarchal mindset. Marilyn Rose nuances Gingell’s analysis by means of underscoring that Crozier’s nature poetry “does not ‘submit’ to nature [as Gingell asserted] so much as work with it, within the great system that is this interdependent world” (60). In her doctoral dissertation, Shelley E. Boyd examines the garden as both symbol and milieu in Crozier’s “garden poetry” (290) as well as in that of other Canadian women writers. Boyd criticises the fact that neither Gingell nor Rose distinguish the trope of the garden from that of nature in general on the grounds that “as an aesthetic form, an actual garden entails a conscious manipulation of nature according to the highly subjective desires and needs of its creator” (293). However, the opposite is also true, as the garden, just like any other

instance of nature, reacts to human interaction in unpredictable ways due to both the many environmental factors that affect it and the elements that constitute it. As cultural studies scholar Susie O'Brien contends when analysing the ecocritical implications of Jamaica Kincaid's *My Garden*, "[c]omposing with nature is in part a conquest, in part a kind of surrender, as the garden, perhaps to a greater extent than any other work of art, is always subject to the contingency of soil, of weather, of animals: subject, in other words, to the agency of the non-human world" (176). In this line of thought, Boyd disagrees with both Gingell, and especially Rose, in their examinations of Crozier's poetry as ecologically-minded. For Boyd, Crozier's garden poems do not highlight a human interconnection with the natural world, but they make use of the symbol of the garden as a means of "defamiliarization (or denaturalization)" (293) in order to challenge a "trope and ideological construct that contains and excludes through subtle inscriptions of power and gender imbalance" (285). Boyd's analysis of the symbol of the garden in Crozier's oeuvre as a subversion of traditional Western gender politics features the evolution of Crozier's garden poetry throughout her career and until 2005. Boyd establishes four phases in Crozier's garden poetry, namely:

> from an early vision of the garden as a site and topic (1976-83), to gardens that operate as humorous, figurative terrains that expose social conventions and taboos through the subversive effects of the fantasy mode (1985-88), to explicit comparisons between the act of writing and the act of gardening – specifically creating and digging in the garden (1992-95), to a 'turning over' or denaturalization of the garden-poet figure herself and her preoccupation with the textual garden as a space of erasure and exclusion (1996-2005). (294)

Boyd's examination of Crozier's garden poetry is highly insightful and relevant for the present dissertation as the evolution of Crozier's writing style is concerned. This

notwithstanding, Boyd's dismissal of an ecocritical analysis of the garden trope is arguably reductionist, especially considering Crozier's recurrent assertion in interviews that one of her aims when writing poetry is to protect the non-human natural world (Philips 145; *Star Talk*). Moreover, Boyd's examination of Crozier's feminist revisioning of the garden by means of defamiliarization is not at odds with an analysis of Crozier's poetry from an ecocritical stance. Indeed, this addition nuances the multi-layered levels of signification that Crozier offers in her poetry. As such, this chapter aims at examining the kinds of relationship that the personae have with the garden in its different levels of attached symbolism throughout Crozier's oeuvre in order to define the saliency of the garden trope in the formation process of Crozier's late style. The importance that the personae grant to the garden as a specific place – that is, their emplacement – together with the different layers of attached symbolism that the garden is imbued with, will be analysed from a threefold perspective. Namely, the interconnection between the garden and the ageing process in section 1, the gendered and sexual connotations attached to the garden trope in section 2, and the human / non-human interaction without a metaphorical use of the garden trope, which includes a critique of human domination of the more-than-human world on several occasions in section 3.

2.1. The Garden and the Ageing Process

As concerns the depiction of the interaction between human and non-human beings in connection with the life-course in the context of the garden, eight poems in Crozier's oeuvre adequately epitomise this category, ranging from Crozier's first poetry collection to her latest one. This fact not only shows the importance of the symbol of the garden in Crozier's work, but it will also prove useful in order to examine the development of the symbol of the garden throughout Crozier's oeuvre as part of the formation of her late

style. Crozier's continuities and discontinuities both in subject matter and in the treatment of theme along her life-course will be analysed at the end of the section in order to focus specifically on how her late style has developed. The eight aforementioned poems depict instances of most of the life stages, particularly childhood, midlife, retirement, old age, and death, in relationship with the garden and its different healing properties. In order to examine such a link, research findings on horticultural therapy and healing gardens, as well as theories on therapeutic landscapes of the mind, will be employed. Such health geography notions examine the beneficial effects of gardening – in the case of horticultural therapy – and of spending time in restorative gardens – in the case of healing garden research – on both the physical and mental health of both older persons from the general population and patients in care homes. The subsequent analysis of Crozier's garden trope throughout the life-course will be nuanced by the findings of both horticultural therapy and healing garden research. In a similar vein, Denise Gastaldo et al.'s notion of therapeutic landscapes of the mind, which examines the emotionally supportive memories of hometown landscapes for immigrants, will be applied to Crozier's poems that reminisce younger selves' memories in the garden once she had emigrated to the distant and climatically-opposite area of Victoria (British Columbia) from the Saskatchewan prairies. The examination of the aforementioned selection of poems will follow the same order as the nine stages of life proposed by psychologist and psychoanalyst Erik Erikson. Specifically, Erikson defined stages 1-4 as defining different moments in childhood, stage 5 as adolescence, stages 6-8 as conforming different phases of adulthood – which was divided into young adulthood, adulthood, and old age, respectively –, and stage 9 as [o]ld age in one's eighties and nineties" (105). In this line of thought, the first poem examined in this section will depict the garden from the perspective of childhood, whereas the last poem analysed will portray the garden in

connection with old age and death. Such a chronological order will prove useful in order to both observe the evolution of the symbol of the garden alongside Crozier's life-course and to define the formation process of her late style.

2.1.1. Gardens in Childhood

The importance of gardens in childhood has been looked into both from environmental psychology perspectives and from healing garden research. Environmental psychologists have often studied the role that greenery plays in both emotional restoration and cognitive development in children. Their findings suggest that natural landscapes "provide children with a way to calm down and refocus attention" (Arbogast et al. 450) and that if children connect to greenery – also known by the term nature connectedness – their cognitive and emotional regulation skills are likely to increase (Bakir-Demir et al. 5). For their part, healing garden researchers claim that "[h]ealing gardens have special significance as places where the inner life of the child can be integrated with the external world, where children can find both stimulation and solace" (Moore 324). Even if healing gardens research especially taps into the needs of children admitted in health care facilities, its findings could be applied to other contexts, too. This is because the properties of children's healing gardens have been based on research on children's environments in general (Moore 326). In a similar vein to healing garden research, horticultural therapy programmes in schools have shown that horticultural activities increase emotional well-being in children (Oh et al. 37).

In the light of these research findings on the importance of gardens in childhood, Crozier depicts the interaction between a child and her vegetable garden in the poem "Potato Planters" as a treasured family experience in childhood. The specific stage within childhood that this poem alludes to is Erikson's stage four, namely school age, as the

poem depicts a child who is learning through play and cooperation to become competent at an adult task, specifically planting potatoes in the family's garden plot in the backyard. This poem belongs to the first section (out of a total of seven sections), entitled "Childhood Landscapes," in Crozier's seventh poetry collection *Angels of Flesh, Angels of Silence* (1988). "Potato Planters" is the only poem in this section which depicts an instance of family cooperation. Namely, the father figure, the mother figure, and the child persona work cooperatively in the vegetable garden. The rest of the poems in the section describe a multiplicity of childhood experiences (e.g. overcoming fear of snakes, criticism of neglected and abused children, a stillborn twin that the young persona misses, etc.) and different views of the world from a child's perspective (e.g. observing the moonlight over the rose bushes and playing with size perspectives, personification of the sky, which only birds take care of, a soul/body split, etc.). Specifically, "Potato Planters" portrays the mother, father and child working harmoniously in the vegetable garden planting potatoes. They work as a team, the father "digs the hole" (l. 1), the mother "drops the potato in" (l. 2), and the child "stamp[s] the earth / with [her] bare feet" (ll. 7-8). This family activity is a childhood memory that the persona remembers as a family tradition: "Always it is May / it is after supper / when my father is home" (ll. 9-12). The persona remembers this family tradition with a certain degree of nostalgia, which is expressed by means of a description of the way her father was dressed and smelled: "still in his workboots / with the steel toes / his hands smelling / of machines and oil" (ll. 12-15). The fact that the father works in an industry in his public domain contrasts with his working in the vegetable garden in the private domain of his home, which bespeaks the complexities of both individuals and environments in the naturalcultural continuum. In ecocritic Serpil Oppermann's own words,

> [t]he conceptual frameworks within which we have defined the human are now

> being replaced by interlinked posthuman and new materialist viewpoints that not only delegitimize the central position of the human among other species by acknowledging the permeable boundaries of species in the naturalcultural continuum, but also recognize the profound interconnections between different forms of life in the composite world where previously had been separations. ("From Posthumanism" 25)

That is to say that, in the context of this poem, both the garden and the gardener father belong to a space which blends the natural with the cultural in an urban milieu in a harmonious way. This is because the child persona is fond of her father's work, as she intuitively knows – as depicted in other poems – that the family atmosphere is good in those months of the year in which her father has a job, whereas this is not necessarily the case when he is unemployed due to the extreme weather conditions. In addition, it must be clarified that the urban milieu featuring in Crozier's poems – this poem included – is almost exclusively that of her hometown, the relatively small[31] prairie town of Swift Current (Saskatchewan). Thus, the poem does not feature any notions of an urban jungle. Ultimately, the childhood memory described in the poem becomes a therapeutic landscape of the mind, in the sense that the persona treasures the recollection of collaborative work in the garden as an activity that strengthened the persona's bonds with both her parents. This is particularly relevant, as there are few poems in Crozier's oeuvre in which the child and teenage female persona engage in activities that strengthen family ties with both her mother and father as a family unit. As Gastaldo et al. explain when theorising the concept of therapeutic landscapes of the mind, landscapes are "relational images [that] . . . may represent our places of origin, or what is healthy and what generates

[31] The estimated population of Swift Current, Saskatchewan, when this poem was published in 1988 was around 15, 000 according to the webpage population.city. Retrieved from http://population.city/canada/swift-current/. Accessed 2 Feb. 2021.

a sense of well-being for ourselves and others" (160). Both nostalgia for happy childhood memories with the family in the vegetable garden and a sense of harmony with the more-than-human world are intensified by the persona's barefoot contact with the earth while planting the potatoes: "I walk behind them / my feet loving the damp earth / my footprints all over the ground" (ll. 21-23). The poem thus encourages the establishment of a healthy relationship with nature – in the form of a vegetable garden –, which helps foster healthy family relationships. That is to say that the healthy family interactions (cultural domain) are built on the family's tending of their vegetable garden (natural domain). Hence, the poem exemplifies how the cultural and the natural domains merge in naturalcultural encounters between humans and the more-than-human world.

2.1.2. Gardens in Adulthood

Progressing through the stages of life, the following stage after childhood with which Crozier's poems engage in connection with the garden trope is an indefinite moment between young adulthood and midlife. This can be observed in "The Apple Tree," which is the first poem in *The Weather* (1983), the first poetry collection that Crozier published under her maiden name after divorcing from her first husband, and her fifth published collection. The poem describes a moment of contemplative observation of an apple tree in full bloom – around which bees buzz and singsong birds chirp and play –, which suggests the beginning of new life after divorce. Contemplative observation of nature is a theme that can be found in several poems in this collection, alongside a critique of hunting of wild animals, and other topics such as the harshness of the weather on the prairies, love in a couple, homage to the dead, depictions of old age, and a retelling of the life story of the first white woman on the prairies in the early nineteenth century. However, this is not the first poetry collection by Crozier in which contemplative observation of nature is a recurrent theme. For instance, this is also the case of *Crow's Black Joy*,

Crozier's second poetry collection.

The speakers' description of the different images of nature they both observe and reflect on in "The Apple Tree" is an idyllic one, which is reminiscent of the garden of Eden. Such a biblical allusion leads the reader to imagine the tree in the garden, even though the word garden is not mentioned in the poem. The unidentified personae ("we") in the poem ("and we laugh / . . . / still we sit", ll. 31, 34) cannot eat apples from the apple tree as it is not yielding any fruit yet. Nevertheless, the symbolism attached to such a tree seems to be both that of knowledge, specifically about the life-course, and that of life, particularly a celebration of mortal life. Therefore, the tree of life in the poem departs from its traditional symbolism, as it is not associated with a source of eternal youth. In the first stanza we have the first reference to ageing in the poem, namely "white blossoms turn / yellow" (ll. 2-3). This indication of the passage of time is retaken in the third stanza, in which the withered petals fall to the ground: "Wind breathes through / the tree, loosens petals / into a butterfly's / brief flight / they light / from birth to death" (ll. 19-24). In these lines, the personae seem to realize the brevity of life in the fall of the petals, or the short life of a butterfly. Such a lesson taught by nature does not embitter the personae, they enjoy in their stead the innocent and simple beauty of the moment in a *carpe diem* of sorts. This can be seen when the personae depict the fall of the petals by the highly sensorial image of "white silk rain" (l. 27), which connotes the delicacy and softness of the petals. Another instance of ageing in the poem can be observed when the personae relate the falling petals to the confetti thrown to a just married couple: "Someone says / *it's just like a wedding / this white confetti*" (ll. 28-30). This quotation refers to Erikson's seventh stage of development within the life cycle, namely adulthood, in which care – both for significant others and for products and ideas – arises out of the crisis between generativity and stagnation. To quote from Erikson, "this is the stage when persons of

very different backgrounds must fuse their habitual ways to form a new milieu for themselves and their offspring" (71-2). Actually, the personae in the poem claim not to believe "in weddings anymore" (l. 33), which introduces the idea that the poem is about hardened individuals who have lost their innocence due to reasons that are not accounted for in the poem. In turn, this is underscored by the apple tree as a symbol of the tree of knowledge. However, in the poem the personae's access to knowledge is acquired by the baptism of sorts that the rainfall of petals from the blossomed apple tree suggests rather than by biting an apple from it:

> still we sit
> where petals
> settle in our hair
> blessings
> in the early
> apple morning (ll. 34-39)

The tree of knowledge that the apple tree in the poem represents does not relate to the knowledge of good and evil in Genesis; the knowledge or even wisdom it taps is that of enjoying the smallest things in life, such as the flowers blooming. This is because, with the observation of the swift fall of petals analysed above, the personae realize that *tempus fugit*, that life goes by so quickly, and yet "[they] laugh" (l. 31) and cherish the moment in nature by feeling blessed by the falling petals. Crozier thus revisits the biblical myth of the tree of knowledge of good and evil in order to offer a more contemporary approach to it, in which marriage is not an option the personae consider and there is no punishment for the attainment of knowledge. Through the examination of this poem, Boyd traces the evolution of Crozier's poetry and contends that "Crozier's garden poems still exhibit disillusionment with the garden trope and a highlighting of its coercive potential, but

Crozier is prepared now to express these ideas in less extreme formulations of figurative garden terrain" (306-307). In other words, the personae highlight the importance they give to a sensorial experience of nature over any metaphorical associations of the garden, especially in its relationship with the life-course. As such, the natural elements depicted in the poem seem to relieve the personae from the anxiety commonly associated to growing older. Thus, the imagined garden in the poem functions as a stress reliever, in line with healing garden research. As landscape architect Kadri Maikov et al. explain in their article – in which they examine a number of healing gardens in order to establish the specific characteristics that a healing garden (or a garden or park that functions as such) should have –, healing gardens are gardens that have been specifically built to promote feelings of well-being that in turn reduce stress and depression levels (Maikov et al. 223).

The subsequent life stage that is present in Crozier's oeuvre in connection with the garden is adulthood, particularly midlife. To the best of my knowledge, there are no studies that specifically describe the role of gardens in adulthood. General research findings on both healing garden research and horticultural therapy would apply. The garden in midlife is portrayed in Crozier's poem "A Good Day to Start a Journal," which is the last poem in the poetry collection *Everything Arrives at the Light* (1995), and is classified under the fourth and last section, namely "Turning the Earth." The poem's main themes are love within a stable relationship, sexuality, and the acceptance of the bodily changes brought about by ageing into middle age. The themes of love relationships in different moments within the life-course and sexuality are recurrent within this fourth section of the collection, which also features non-dominant human relationships with non-human nature. In "A Good Day to Start a Journal," Crozier depicts a middle-aged couple who are deeply engaged in tending their garden. And who, in close keeping with the previously-analysed poem – "The Apple Tree" –, engage in contemplative observation of

their garden and the life that their apple tree nests. This is because paying attention to the more-than-human world that surrounds them rather than to human routine is what matters to them both as individuals and as poets seeking inspiration, as suggested by the last line in this quotation:

> a grocery list and appointments never kept
>
> because the sparrows sing for seeds
>
> in our apple tree, and the spider
>
> at the centre of her web demands
>
> your poet's eye to hold her still. (ll. 4-8)

In the event of the man in the couple's fifty-fifth birthday, the female persona starts writing a journal about the weather and their garden in order to express her love for him:

> Since I cannot say
>
> it right, for you today I must try
>
> to keep this journal. Write:
>
> March, 26, and a little cold.
>
> Write: Overnight the plum tree
>
> has become one blossom. . . . (ll. 40-45)

These lines also suggest, as Boyd claims, Crozier's intertwining of "a gardener's spring digging in the earth and a writer's work of creative renewal on the page" (337). Such a creative renewal, which is connected to the life cycle by means of references to the change of season from winter to spring in the poem, is fostered by a depiction of the ageing process from a positive stance. That is, the persona welcomes her partner's ageing into his late middle age and celebrates it by kissing him all over his body: "You are fifty-five today. I must find / as many ways to tell you, as many places / on your body for my tongue to touch" (ll. 9-11). The sexual undertones that can be observed in these lines offer a

counter-narrative against socio-cultural discourses that normalise women's sexual decline in midlife (Ussher et al. 451). Each reflection on the ageing process is framed within the couple's, especially the man's, close relationship with their garden. As such, the preceding lines are followed by:

> Last spring, our first on the Coast
> you said you'd never had a better birthday
> and wondered why. You'd been working
> in the garden, turning the damp earth.
> On the prairies it would still be frozen
> nine feet down. For a body to be buried,
> the ground is set on fire, bundles of straw smoking.
> Birthdays always bring the old deaths back. (ll. 12-19)

As these lines suggest, the man in the couple enjoyed his birthday because of the weather-permitting access to working in the garden. This was not possible where he used to live, namely on the prairies, because of the longer winters. As horticultural researchers posit, gardening contributes to both physical and mental well-being, and it particularly prevents depression (Ng et al. 2). Accordingly, tending the garden allows the man in the poem to counter the sadness of remembering on his birthday those dear ones that have already passed away. Similarly, the following comment on ageing is framed by a showing-through of feelings, which is somehow triggered by the man's close connection to the land: "Earlier in bed, your hands cold from the soil, / I wept after I cried out, not knowing why" (ll. 30-31). In turn, such feelings of sadness might have also surfaced because of the female persona's remembrance of the death of her mother in-law and the love she professed for her son, as expressed by the jumpers she knitted for her son, and which the son wears to work in the garden. Alternatively, both the awareness of growing older – as

depicted by the man's entering late middle-age – and the death of the man's mother may serve as a reminder of the inevitability of death. In this vein, the persona's shedding of tears symbolises anxiety towards not only her future mortality, but especially her spouse's one. According to psychologists Victor Florian and Mario Mikulincer, "this need to face one's own mortality after a recent loss may lead adults to recognize and deal with the consequences of death for different life aspects, and thereby spread the effects of that loss over most of the components of fear of death" (6). In this light, the source of the persona's anxiety in the poem might be particularly related to future widowhood and its associated feelings of loneliness. As psychologist Kate M. Bennet and gerontologist Christina Victor assert, "[l]oneliness has been reported as a feature of widowhood from the earliest studies" (35). Even though the negative emotional outcomes of ageing into later life – namely loneliness and bereavement – are present in the poem, the ageing process itself is not demonized. In its stead, the love that the couple share – as shown in the poem through their sexualities – allows for a sense of welcome continuity in the affective-sexual area throughout the couple's life-courses: "Fifteen years together and some days / there's such pleasure in our bodies / as they move through the seasons" (ll. 32-34). Crozier uses hyperbolic images in the poem which intend to discard common perceptions of decaying flesh as disgusting, in the sense of Kathleen Woodward's notion of unwatchability of older individual's nudes (*Figuring Age*). As a result, the poem puts forward not only an acceptance of the changes brought about by the ageing process, but also the advantages for the maturity of a relationship to grow old together:

> . . . far
> from the beauty they [our bodies] were born to. Now
> they shine like parchment, worn by fingers,
> by the spittle on the thumb as we turn

a page. (ll. 34-38)

The advantages described in this quotation are in line with Linn Sandberg's theory of Affirmative Old Age, according to which "sexuality and ageing are analysed . . . as positive difference" (19) in order to overcome the common dichotomy within discourses of ageing of the decline narrative versus positive and successful ageing. From this perspective, while Crozier depicts the middle-aged couple's skin as having lost the elastic properties of young skin, she also compares it to parchment, a valuable format on which manuscripts used to be written. In addition, the middle-aged couple's skin is described with the verb "shine," to which only positive connotations are attached. In this case the skin/parchment shines because the pages of their bodies have been turned many times, thus suggesting that their bodies have turned to each other for love and emotional support on many occasions. That is why they can understand each other very well: "We read each other, nearsightedly, / hands and tongues and even toes find where / the skin gives way" (ll. 38-40). Thus, difference in skin characteristics is seen as positive difference in line with Sandberg's theory.

2.1.3. Gardens in Old Age

The subsequent stage in the life-course that is connected to the symbol of the garden is that of old age, as suggested by the depiction of retirement – as a common rite of passage into old age in Western societies – in "Gardens" (1992). As occupational therapist Lori Reynolds concludes in her study of older adults' value of nature and their consequent use of outdoor garden spaces in residential facilities, "[w]hen older adults are relegated to indoor environments, we are ignoring the fundamental need to remain connected with nature, which at a minimum is through window views" (309). That is, Reynolds found that while the use of garden spaces in health-care environments is low despite the many

benefits that older adults ascribe to nature, many older adults in residential care reap the benefits of natural environments by simply observing them from an indoor location (304). Therefore, it is important to acknowledge older adults' both passive and active interactions with nature in order to fully comprehend the importance that garden spaces have for them. This notwithstanding, Crozier's poems focus on active interactions with outdoor garden environments. Specifically, the poem "Gardens" relates fulfilling family relationships to a collaborative tending of the garden. As such, both "Potato Planters" (1988) and "Gardens" (1992) represent the garden trope in a way that is in line with horticultural therapy, as both poems depict the many emotional health benefits for the personae of working in the garden. "Gardens" describes the differences in the types of gardens that can be grown on the West coast and on the prairies due to both the different weather conditions and kinds of soil. "Gardens" is contained under the fourth and last section, entitled "Moving toward Speech," within Crozier's eighth poetry collection, *Inventing the Hawk*. The two main themes in this section are death and environmental awareness, especially as regards both communion with nature and a critique against the killing of wild animals. In "Gardens," the persona explains the situation of an unidentified male she is emotionally close to who is moving to the West coast after retirement:

> Moving away from winter, he retires
>
> to the coast, westering, mile zero
>
> . . . .
>
> On the coast the soil is thin, a linen
>
> napkin over stones. There, he says,
>
>
> he'll grow different things, some basil,
>
> a little thyme. . . ." (ll. 1-2, 11-14)

The differences between the types of soil and the plants that can be grown in the garden on the coast and the garden on the prairies are reminders of the physical distance that separates the adult male from his mother. This is an emotionally challenging situation for the son, who would rather live closer to his mother:

> . . . Back where he was born
> his mother now would be soaking seeds
>
> in a shallow bowl, snow outside the window.
> He'd give anything to be there
>
> crossing time as if it were
> a landscape he had dreamed, a garden" (ll. 19-24)

Lines 22 and 23 suggest that the mother already passed away. That would explain the reason why the son is so eager to travel back in time, even though he knows it is not possible. The son's adaptation to living far apart from his late mother, that is, his inner growth, is linked to the growth of plants for self-sustainment, which fosters a keen connection with the more-than-human world. At the same time, the son's vision of his mother working in the garden demonstrates "the creative potential shared by both gardener and poet in their creation of aesthetic visions of the world (a 'dream' and a 'garden') into being" (Boyd 330). Such an intertwining of time frames (past and present) – which can also be found, albeit in a different way, in the poem "Is Every Poem an Elegy," as analysed below – and poetic and real gardens by the male gardener/poet constitutes a therapeutic landscape of the mind, which helps him cope with his homesickness and grief. The healing memories of gardens as a coping strategy for missing the (late) mother after having moved to a distant location finds a parallel in Crozier's own

life, as she moved to the Saanich Peninsula on Vancouver Island (British Columbia) in 1991 to work at the University of Victoria. As she mentions in her memoir and in some of her poems, the distance that separated Crozier from her mother was often heart-breaking. Crozier also acknowledges the indelible imprint of the Saskatchewan prairies from her youth and early adulthood as a source of inspiration for the pervasive image of the prairies throughout her career, as explained in Chapter 4. It is in this sense that Crozier revisits memories of the relationship she had with nature, prominently that of the prairies more than that of a specific garden, in different stages of her life-course to feel closer to home, among other reasons.

Whereas "Gardens" (1992)[32] depicts the beginning of old age, or what is also known as young-old age, "Rake" and "Wheelbarrow" portray older age in connection to the garden trope. Even though the specific ages of the late-life individuals described in the poems are not made explicit, their efforts at coping with physical frailty suggest that they are in Erikson's ninth stage of development, namely in their eighties or nineties. Both "Rake" and "Wheelbarrow" are contained within Crozier's first collection of poetic prose entitled *The Book of Marvels: A Compendium of Everyday Things* (2013). The collection, whose prose poems are presented in alphabetical order with a different number of prose poems for each letter in the alphabet, presents everyday objects as suitable topics for poetic prose either in Crozier's defence of their aesthetic value or because of their relevance for life on Earth. Both "Rake" and "Wheelbarrow" are framed within the recurrent theme in the collection of old age. In the case of "Rake," it contains instances of social critique against the treatment of the aged in our Western cultures, which is also one of the main themes in *The Book of Marvels*. The poem entitled "Rake" (2013) deals with a common garden tool as an excuse to criticize the age-related stereotypes that are

[32] Whenever a year is added after the title of a poem, the year refers to the year of publication of the collection in which the poem is included.

pervasive in contemporary Western societies, a set of beliefs that leading gerontologist Robert Butler devoted his career to redress (Achenbaum, *Robert Butler*) thus inspiring present-day gerontologists and age scholars to continue such efforts. This prose poem pictures a version of what is widely believed to be the history of the rake. According to Crozier's account, aged individuals were the ones who used their fingers as rakes in ancient times. Since this was a valuable asset, older people were highly esteemed: "The first rake was a hand. The older the better, rachitic fingers permanently bent, a scraping tool of bone and flesh. The aged, then, had a purpose and were not parted from the rest."[33] However, with human development, rakes developed too. As a result, the persona claims that elderly people's fingers were no longer needed, and therefore they lost their social value: "No one mentions . . . the exile of the aged." The poem describes a situation that is unfortunately still prevalent nowadays, namely the devaluation and moral exclusion of the old in Western societies. As sociologist Toni Calasanti asserts,

> Ageism includes categorization, stereotyping, and prejudice, but the most crucial aspect is exclusionary behaviour . . . A focus on exclusionary behaviour highlights social characteristics that help explain the persistence of ageism in the United States despite changing values and beliefs. (8)

Crozier adds further criticism alongside the neglect of the old, specifically the human lack of acknowledgement of what we learn from the animal world. Namely, the fact that humans developed their tools through imitation of animal behaviour, but such teachings of nature were never given credit for in historical accounts: "The next rake was a branch with the right configuration of twigs. A boy watched a crow use a tool, and so he made one, too. . . No one mentions the importance of the *Corvus* in the history of the rake or

[33] There is no reference to lineation because the prose poems were written in sentences rather than lines, as Crozier clarified during our conversations while I was doing a month-long research stay at the University of Victoria, BC, in June 2022.

the exile of the aged." In this prose poem, Crozier makes clear that the way Western societies disregard non-human nature is analogous to the ways the old are ignored. Therefore, this prose poem is highly relevant in order to raise awareness of the shared othering and lack of agency that both nature and the aged have in contemporary Western societies. This is an issue that ecocriticism and ageing studies, respectively, intend to redress. Such efforts, I contend and the prose poem suggests, might be more fruitful through interdisciplinary approaches, such as the ones developed in the present dissertation.

Similarly, "Wheelbarrow" (2013) empowers the aged through a poetic response to William Carlos Williams' Imagist poem "The Red Wheelbarrow," which was included in his 1923 collection *Spring and All.* The first sentence in Crozier's prose poem evidences the intertextuality with Williams' poem: "YES, SO MUCH depends," which is an emphatic repetition of Williams' first line "so much depends." Crozier focuses on this common garden tool, the wheelbarrow, in order to express the old woman's gratitude for it because of its extreme usefulness: "Though it seems commonplace when it's at rest, the woman who guides it from the shed knows the fortitude and beauty of its nature. . . . she coaxes the wheelbarrow with the names her grandmother gave it: *my wooden ox, my gliding horse.*" The old woman relies on the wheelbarrow because of her failing strength as a result of her advanced age: "the woman who carries in her arms less and less each year . . . the slower step, the arthritic hip . . . the stooped back, the breathlessness." The wheelbarrow is said to "accept" the difficulties of its tasks in the garden as well as the woman's bodily decline. Nevertheless, the insistence on acceptance in the poem in relation to the woman's failing body on the part of the wheelbarrow is most likely a call for Western societies to accept senescence as one more stage in the life-course and thus to avoid ageism. The following lines suggest this analogy, which highlights the

importance of feelings of self-worth in old age, too: "One wheelbarrow can outlast a life and, in some cases, feel more useful." In this line of thought, Becca R. Levy has extensively explored the cognitive and physical effects of ageing self-stereotypes. Her findings show "the importance of self-relevance to the operation of self-stereotypes," which in Levy's experiments – to provide an example – resulted in the fact that "older participants exposed to the positive age-stereotype primes outperformed those exposed to the negative age-stereotype primes on the memory tasks" ("Mind" 207). Such an internalised ageism does not seem to be shared by the older woman in the poem, who despite being no longer agile keeps tending her garden with the aid of the wheelbarrow. Therefore, the older woman in the poem is depicted as having a strong connection to her garden. In turn, her persistence in taking care of it offers a vision of resilience in old age. The fact that the woman persuades the wheelbarrow – while at the same time motivating herself – to keep going by "coax[ing]" it with beautiful names in order to reach "Past the late summer flowers to the vegetable patch," indicates that she is enthusiastic about gardening. The old persona's resilience and active attitude are likely to result from her work in the garden, in accord with the many health benefits that horticultural therapy grants to gardening. For instance, the medical team in charge of Kheng Siang Ted Ng et al.'s study on a horticultural therapy intervention group concluded that "HT [horticultural therapy] could potentially be useful for reducing inflammation and protecting neuronal functions in healthy elderly adults" (11).

2.1.4. Gardens and Death

Finally, four poems throughout Crozier's career portray death – the persona's own death, that of parents, and death in general – in connection with the garden, namely "Rebirth," "The Gardens Within Us," "A Good Day to Start a Journal," and "Is Every Poem an

Elegy?" In this line, healing garden research argues that both healing gardens and nature in general contribute towards a healthy elaboration of grief. According to Stigsdotter and Grahn, one of the theories that are at the base of the healing garden school is that "[a] person stricken with a trauma like grief or personal illness needs an environment as well as relations that make less heavy demands" ("What" 62). In this sense, plants and natural elements demand very little as compared to people or animals. Moreover, both greenery and natural elements in either natural settings or designed outdoor spaces become healing agents for those undergoing psychological distress such as grief, in "their stimulating yet soothing qualities of 'difference within sameness' (moving water, breezes in vegetation, visual scanning)" (Cooper-Marcus and Barnes 8).

Among those poems by Crozier that connect death to the garden trope, "Rebirth" (1976) ponders about the persona's own future death. It is the penultimate poem in the collection *Inside Is the Sky*, which was Crozier's first poetry collection and, as such, set many of the themes that would later be developed in her subsequent oeuvre. The topic of death – both of animals and of people – is recurrent in this collection, among other major themes such as the relevance of poetry for the persona, the harsh weather conditions, especially on the prairies, nature in its interrelationship with the persona and her lover, cruelty with animals, the mother figure and the grandfather figure, falling in love, and the end of love. Interestingly enough, many poems have a pair in this collection in terms of poems that are thematically related to each other or respond to each other. These thematic pair poems are sometimes printed together, though not always. As regards "Rebirth," its thematic pair is the poem "Burial," which precedes "Rebirth" in the collection although they are not printed consecutively. In "Burial" the speaker demands to be buried in contact with the ground, wrapped in plant leaves and in a place where she can hear the birds tweeting:

Will you place me in

a bottomless coffin

my back crossed by ropes of grass

. . . .

Will you wrap me in

green foxtails

. . . .

Will you leave the coffin on the hillside where blackbirds trill

in wireless skies   red markers bright

on hot wings? (ll. 1-3, 7-8, 11-14)

On the other hand, in "Rebirth" the persona focuses on the garden plants that may grow from her decomposed human corpse after burial. Thus, it suggests that while the human in the poem, who can metonymically stand for humanity, may die, the Earth will keep alive: "And what shall grow from my body / when I am buried in darkness? / And what shall strive for the light" (ll. 1-3). "Rebirth" becomes a reflection on death, which fosters the persona's self-examination of her personality traits in a life review process of sorts. The persona discards roses, lilies, or crocuses as possibly ever growing out of her dead body, in the persona's association of the flowers with personality traits she does not identify with. The speaker believes that the best option is for her putrid flesh to become a weed, which is not dazzling or fragrant, but "just green" (l. 17). The poem can thus be said to be about the life cycle; that is, about death and new life. On the one hand, the persona seems to undermine herself by means of both choosing the least attractive of all plants, and by defining herself by means of negatives: "Not a rose / for I am not soft, not gentle / Not a lily / for I am not pure, not smooth" (ll. 5-8). However, the adjectives the persona does not identify with are the ones that have traditionally defined the ideal

personality traits of white, middle and upper-class women, namely, delicacy, fragility (Young 77), tenderness and purity. As Simone de Beauvoir explained in her ground-breaking, feminist work, *The Second Sex*, traditional understandings of femininity in the nineteenth century – such as those posited by French philosopher Auguste Comte – regarded woman as a "purely affective being [whose role was] that of spouse and housewife" (160). Therefore, from a feminist stance, the poem suggests that the female persona rebels against such patriarchal ideals of womanhood which understand women as passive objects of beauty, with a role often compared to that of decorative flowers – as the rose, the lily and the crocus mentioned in the poem. On the other hand, if read from an ecocritical viewpoint, weeds are as necessary for the health of ecosystems as any other plant. Actually, the persona remarks on the importance of the green colour of the weed, in the sense that she does not need anything else but to metamorphose into any plant – and thus embody it – in order to experience nature at its fullest: "to feel the hot wind / the dry sun / the sharp stab of insects" (ll. 18-20). The nature that is presented in this poem is not that of a beautified pastoral poem, but one that mirrors reality. As such, in the last two lines of the poem, the persona realizes how swiftly her life as a weed is going to end: "the careless cut / of the gardener's hoe" (ll. 21-22). In this regard, Boyd contends that "[a]s figures of control and destruction, the two gardeners in both poems [namely "Rebirth" and "Backyard Eden"] are unreflective and heedless," which Boyd argues is a strategy to "disturb readers through an ironic refusal to fulfil the expectations of beauty, paradise, and renewal signalled by the titles" (298). The metaphorical value granted to the figure of the gardener in Crozier's first collections works to destabilize gender constructs, and as such does not often reflect the positive associations of the gardener/poet that can be observed in later collections, as Boyd also suggests (300). An exception is "Potato Planters" (1988), in which the father figure tends the garden with his family and promotes

family co-operation and well-being, as explained above.

As regards reflections on death of parents in connection with the garden trope, both "The Gardens Within Us" (1992) and "A Good Day to Start a Journal" (1995) are relevant. "The Gardens Within Us" focuses on the adult persona's coping with the terminal illness and expected future loss of her older father, while in "A Good Day to Start a Journal" the female persona remembers her deceased mother-in-law with sadness, as commented on above. "The Gardens Within Us" belongs to the third section within the collection *Inventing the Hawk*, which is also entitled "The Gardens Within Us." The poem's theme is in line with the main theme of the section, namely the ageing and death of older parents, and the persona's (adult daughter) management of feelings of loss and grief. The collection can be said to be partly autobiographical, as Crozier dedicated *Inventing the Hawk* to the memory of her deceased father, who had passed away in 1990. Crozier was forty-four years old when this collection was published. Crozier's parental loss in early middle age will be significant for subsequent poetry collections in terms of theme as regards the depiction of father-daughter relationships. Parental terminal illness and the adult daughter's coping strategies in "The Gardens Within Us" are presented symbolically via two contrasting gardens: a vegetable garden in which there only remains "A single row of Swiss chard" (l. 1), and, on the other hand, a metaphorical garden growing inside the persona's father, which works as an analogy to the expansion of the persona's father's cancer: ". . . my father's / cancer blooming in his veins. Now the only blossoms are inside" (ll. 12-14). In this case, the analogy of the garden functions as a lyrical way to manage the father's decline at a psychological level; it is soothing to imagine a garden blossoming inside a dying parent, instead of picturing the actual illness in its process of killing him. Thus, the persona creates an imaginary healing garden which is intended to both relieve her traumatic stress from her father's deadly illness, and

comfort her for her future loss. The crucial function that healing gardens fulfil is explained by landscape planners Ulrika A. Stigsdotter and Patrik Grahn when they state that "[h]aving access to a garden at home seems to be of fundamental importance in reducing stress" (3). Likewise, psychologists Yuko Heath and Robert Gifford in their study of the eight therapeutic gardens in a multi-level care facility infer that for family members "going into the garden to connect with nature provides them a good opportunity to be relieved from the stress of having ailing family members" (39). The stanza reporting the cancer growing inside the father in the form of a garden is preceded by the first stanza in which the real garden functions as a presentation of the season, namely the end of summer, and the beginning of the cold. This works on two levels. On the one hand, autumn has been related to the beginning of old age and physical decline since, at least, Shakespearean times (Carr 24). On the other hand, the extinct outer garden contrasts with the blossoming inner garden; thus, the dramatic effect of the cancer-garden analogy increases. The poem closes with a final stanza in which the season parallels the father's health state, and which hints at the father's death and subsequent incineration. Such a method of final disposition of the father's corpse is recurrent in Crozier's oeuvre, as narrated in Crozier's memoir *Small Beneath the Sky: A Prairie Memoir* ("till death do us part" 145-150), and in the poem "Beauty in All Things" (*Everything Arrives at the Light* 16-17).

As different from the previous two poems, in "Is Every Poem an Elegy?" (2019) Crozier does not invite the adult reader to empathise with parental loss; in its stead, this poem relates a shovel to both a garden and death in general. The poem, which is contained within the collection *The House the Spirit Builds*, is in line with two of the main themes in this poetry and photography collection, namely old age and death, and attention to detail in a naturalcultural environment, as all the photographs and related poems were

first drafted by the author at Wintergreen's educational retreat's sustainable facilities, in the Frontenac Arch Biosphere Reserve (Ottawa, Canada). The persona in "Is Every Poem an Elegy?" sees the shovel leaning against the wall and wonders where the gardener who uses it is and what she will need it for: "(Where is the gardener / so careful with her tools– / called to the city, gone for a nap?)" (ll. 10-13). The persona wishes the shovel is used to turn the soil in order to plant "a garden bed" (l. 14) and not to dig a grave. The personified soil, for its part, wishes to be worked on: "the spring-awakened / blameless earth / waiting to be turned" (ll. 16-18). The poem acknowledges the interrelatedness of human and non-human nature in an instance of intra-action, in feminist and new materialism theorist Karen Barad's terms. Barad defines intra-action as

> the mutual constitution of entangled agencies. That is, in contrast to the usual 'interaction,' which assumes that there are separate individual agencies that precede their interaction, the notion of intra-action recognizes that distinct agencies do not precede, but rather emerge through, their intra-action (Barad, *Meeting the Universe* 33)

Following Barad's notion, the shovel and the earth in the poem are not portrayed as separate entities but as entangled phenomena. That is, the shovel's purpose as a tool is to turn the ground, and in turn, the ground needs the shovel to be oxygenated. In addition, the cultural associations that the shovel and the ground share with gardening and corpse-burying constitute a blurring of the agentic boundaries between them. Such an association is related by the persona to her own life experiences when in the title she wonders if all poems are elegies, i.e. tributes to the deceased. Therefore, the shovel and the earth are both interconnected and engage in intra-action through the persona's relationship with them across time and space.

2.1.5. Reflections on Late Style regarding Gardens and Ageing

All in all, Crozier's poems about childhood and family relations that provide emotional stability in connection with the garden have been related to therapeutic landscapes of the mind, whereas poems about future loss and change that imply coping with emotionally challenging life transitions or rites of passage in relation to the garden have been connected to healing gardens. Finally, poems about ageing into later life, in their relationship with the garden, have been associated with horticultural therapy.

As regards the thematic evolution in Crozier's career and the formation process of her late style, death in connection with the garden has been present throughout her oeuvre, and was included both in her first and latest poetry collections. Therefore, a thematic continuity can be observed in the association of death with the garden. Except for the poem "Rebirth," in which Crozier's persona discusses her own death, all the other poems about death in connection to the garden are related to Crozier's own biographical events, such as her father's illness and passing away in Crozier's adulthood or death anxiety at middle age as regards future bereavement. In addition, the four poems about death feature a stylistic continuity, namely the fact that they all move from the presentation of a real garden to metaphorical associations of different garden elements and plants to death.

Regarding other age-related themes in connection with the garden, memories of work in the garden in childhood appeared twelve years into Crozier's career, when Crozier was forty years old. Specifically, the onset of Crozier's father's terminal illness seems to have inspired the poem "Potato Planters," which strengthens the persona's bond with both of her parents and it thus becomes a memento of a fulfilling parental-filial activity to remember her father by once he passes away. Poems about retirement and midlife in connection with the garden were published in the two subsequent collections, when Crozier was forty-four and forty-seven years old, respectively. "Gardens," the poem

about retirement – as an important life transition–, which was written in Crozier's early middle age, is connected to another major life-changing event, namely the move away from her hometown province. On a different note, the poem about midlife, namely "A Good Day to Start a Journal," was both written in Crozier's midlife and depicts common feelings and thoughts in middle-aged individuals, specifically grief following parental loss and death anxiety. Finally, poems about later life in relation with the garden appeared in Crozier's retirement age. The criticism of ageism that such poems convey suggests Crozier's further insight (most likely through personal experience as a young-old woman) of the social stereotypes of older age. Therefore, a new thematic emphasis can be observed in the formation process of her late style. The thematic concerns of such poems about old age thus run quite parallel to Crozier's own ageing process and her reflections about the life-course, which are presented from a positive stance thanks to the healing properties that observation, remembrance, and actual work in the garden foster.

In conclusion, gardens work as catalysts for emotional growth in Crozier's oeuvre. Specifically, gardens enable Crozier's personae to manage feelings of anxiety, homesickness and grief thus becoming both emotionally and psychologically soothing and, ultimately, healing elements. Furthermore, gardens constitute both physical and imagined/remembered places in which the personae gain inner satisfaction by means of relishing both the beauty of the non-human nature in the garden and the feelings of self-accomplishment that tending the garden entail.

2.2. A Diachronic Analysis of Gendered and Sexual Connotations in the Symbol of the Garden

This section intends to examine the portrayal of human / non-human interactions in connection with the symbol of the garden as imbued with connotations of gender and

sexuality throughout Crozier's oeuvre. Crozier explores both gender and sexuality in connection with different tropes throughout her career. Both Crozier's deconstruction and re-inscription of biblical stories from a woman's perspective and her sincere portrayal of sexuality along the life-course are salient examples of the relevance of gender and sexuality in her work. The garden, both in relation to and separate from the traditional connotations of the garden of Eden, becomes not only an apt terrain to deconstruct traditional notions of womanhood but it also fosters healthy interactions between the human and the more-than-human world. As such, the findings in this section are relevant for the formation process of Crozier's late style from a twofold perspective. On the one hand, the findings will be applicable to the evolution of the garden trope throughout her career as a major symbol in Crozier's work. On the other hand, this section's findings will also be relevant for the development of gender, sexuality and human / non-human interaction, both individually and as inter-related themes throughout Crozier's work.

At this point, it is important to remember Boyd's extensive examination of Crozier's garden trope as a "feminist revisionist strategy" (301) throughout her oeuvre. In this sense, Boyd claims that Crozier's sequence of poems entitled "The Sex Lives of Vegetables" within her poetry collection *The Garden Going on Without Us* (1985), "destabilizes 'natural' conventions of gender and human sexuality by offering a different kind of erotic knowledge" (315). That is, this sequence centres on "humorous yet subversive exposures of social taboos" (307), by means of depicting imaginary sexual relationships between garden vegetables. The vegetables in this sequence are presented as either female or male and metaphorically stand for gendered human relationships and give voice to silenced female sexualities. Thirteen out of nineteen of the poems that appear under this second section within Chapter 2 incorporate interactions between humans and vegetables engaged in sensual and sexual behaviours. However, only three

poems depict the vegetable garden per se, namely "Carrots" (99), "Cucumbers" (108), and "Pumpkins" (113). Therefore, these three poems will be examined in this section, while the remaining ten will be examined in Chapter 3, as depictions of sexuality throughout the life-course.

Both "Seraglio" (1985) and "Phallic" (1988) depict the garden as a space of sensual and sexual freedom, respectively, in which the power of the imagination also plays an important role. The poem "Seraglio" offers a gendered view of the garden as a symbol of relief from women's seclusion in Ottoman palaces, as the first line in the poem suggests: "For these women the garden is everything" (l. 1). This poem is part of the third section, entitled "The Morning of the Sad Women" in the collection *The Garden Going on without Us*. The poems within this section are thematically concerned with both the relationship between human and non-human beings and women experiences. "Seraglio" is concerned with the experiences of concubines in the garden of an Ottoman harem or seraglio, as imagined by Crozier. According to Alev Karaduman, few accounts exist of life in a seraglio, with the notable exception of Leyla Saz's memoir (110, 119). This lack of information on the Seraglio was due to the fact that it was such a private and well-guarded place that the Sultan was the only man allowed entrance (111-112). Published in 1925, Leyla Saz's memoir recounts her experiences as the daughter of a physician who was very close to the Sultan, and who was instructed especially in music at the Seraglio. Her strict training in the Seraglio led her to become a successful composer and performer (110). Crozier's description of the attitudes and feelings of Seraglio women in the garden suggests what life for them might have been like without falling into preconceived Western notions of it, which "ar[ose] from the secrecy and censure that surrounded the harem" (Karaduman 111). While the Seraglio garden in the poem is depicted as blooming and bountiful, it is also portrayed as a space that hints at both the concubines' lack of

freedom and their efforts to obtain social status through marriage irrespective of love. As such, Crozier describes the garden, already in line 2, as a place where "[t]he flowers [become] a country of sorrow, of longing, / a language sweet and foreign on the tongue" (ll. 2-3). These two lines allude to the fact that women in the Seraglio were slaves, actually from different European, Asian and African countries (Malieckal 58), who most probably felt homesick as they had to adapt to a new culture, language and religion. The nouns "sorrow" and "longing" (l. 2) imply that these women did not feel happy in their secluded quarters, as the space of freedom they were entitled to was limited, even claustrophobic: "Here paths turn back on themselves / under the perfect circles the trees / are twisted into" (ll. 8-10) Indeed, Crozier emphasises in the poem that despite the luxuries that surrounded them, as depicted by the garden's facilities and food – "Beside pools where carp grow fat on bread / they arrange the perfumed blossoms of their skin" (ll. 4-5) and ". . . Figs and sweetmeats, / blood oranges, black olives, wine." (ll. 12-13) –, these women's charms were their only tools to escape from their "golden cage" (Anhegger in Karaduman 110): ". . . The women seduce / their own reflections, leaves curl inward, / petals close like mouths" (ll. 15-17). In Karaduman's own words, "[t]he concubines who did not become wives or favourites of the Sultan held various positions – depending on their abilities, not only in the harem of the sultan, but also at the palace of his daughters and sisters. In addition, the sultan had them married to government officials" (111). Concerning this point, Boyd claims that the seraglio garden in Crozier's poem does not grant the women any individuality, and, as such, the beauty the garden offers is only superficial:

> The contradiction of the simile "impersonal as desire" exposes the unnatural, corrupt, oppressive atmosphere. Focussed solely on cultivating "reflections" of beauty, the women seem identical and lack true substance. As the harem, the women are denied their individual thoughts, desires, and voices, as the "petals

close like mouths" in the garden. Thus, the garden is not a place of spontaneous, open growth or idiosyncratic beauty (307)

The closure of petals certainly functions as a reminder of the inability for these secluded women to freely voice their own opinions. As Bindu Malieckal has noted, "[a] firm and demanding hierarchy existed in the harem. No female was allowed to violate the hierarchy and behave liberally" (112). Moreover, the poem states clearly that the concubines' seduction games are not usually related to feelings of love or even sexual arousal on their part, as ". . . [t]he women pretend beauty, / imagine passion, …" (ll. 10-11), and "Above garden walls the moon rises / impersonal as desire" (ll. 14-15). In this sense, Malieckal posits that "the seraglio was an elite institution for 'Turkish' women, but despite the 'opportunities' it provided, more than a few would not have chosen slavery as a profession. Slave women could not abandon the harem and could not choose whom to love" (59). Despite the garden being both a limited refuge from their status as slaves and a place to relax from the "very formal training in various arts and science of the time" (Malieckal 11), the poem implies that it stood for all the freedom an Ottoman seraglio allowed for. Therefore, the poem suggests, its female inhabitants highly valued it. It is in this sense that the garden in the poem could be understood as a healing garden of sorts, as it offers the beauty and soothing properties of greenery, the sensory pleasure of rich fruits, and the playfulness of posing in their reflections on the water.

Unlike "Seraglio," "Phallic" (1988) is set in a present-day garden and extols female sexual agency. The poem belongs to the section entitled "The Penis Poems" in the collection entitled *Angels of Flesh, Angels of Silence*, which contains a total of twelve poems that focus thematically on different aspects of male's genitalia. While partly depicting the penis as an object of desire, and in some instances fear, from a woman's perspective, these poems also demystify its symbolic associations. As Tanis MacDonald

claims, the love Crozier's personae profess for the penis "restore[s] [such a] male organ to corporality" (248). In turn, Crozier grants agency to the female gaze in her destabilization of gendered politics of looking for pleasure. In other words, "[a] woman writer who turns the female gaze upon a man pushes against the cultural pressure of not looking, or pretending not to look for fear of appearing promiscuous or aggressive" (MacDonald 251). "Phallic" establishes a word play between the naming of the vegetables tended by the gardener to make them grow, and a hint at male masturbation. On a first layer of meaning, the poem describes the effort of a gardener to grow delicious vegetables: "asparagus (mmmm, lightly / steamed, a touch of lemon), / cucumbers, zucchini . . . how you tend them . . . to make them grow" (ll. 6-8, 12, 15). However, on a second layer of meaning, and especially considering both the title of the poem and the fact that it is included within the sequence The Penis Poems, the text becomes an erotic poem; each vegetable symbolising an erection that the male gardener works on by means of masturbation: "how you coax them / with your gardener's hands" (ll. 13-14). Another possible reading is the speaker's sensual admiration of the gardener's effort to grow vegetables which look phallic to the persona. While this poem is only symbolic in its relation with the non-human world, it depicts sexual thoughts that are triggered by the addressee's work in the vegetable garden. In line with healing garden research, the observer persona enjoys walking around the vegetable garden and observing the greens and both the cooking and sexual connotations she attaches to them. As landscape architects Ulrika Stigsdotter and Patrick Grahn rhetorically ask, "[a] garden that does not bring the visitor a message of life, lust, and cyclic change, that does not convey feelings of calm, safety, strength, beauty or sensual stimulation – is it really a garden, or does it fall outside the definition? We maintain that it is in any case not a healing garden" (61). In the poem, the persona imagines the flavour of each of the vegetables in the garden in

dishes she is particularly fond of and this gives her pleasure. Actually, the connection between the pleasure of food and sexual pleasure enhances the beneficial effects of the persona's stroll in the garden, as she feels elated.

Similarly, the poems "Carrots" (1985) and "Cucumbers" (1985) play with the phallic shape of such vegetables and attribute them human male characteristics. While "Carrots" offers a portrayal of maleness as focused on providing pleasure to the female – "try[ing] so hard to please" (l. 6) –, "Cucumbers" both demystifies anal sex and contains a critique towards male sexual offenders. An important difference between both poems is that "Carrots" presents sexuality in the garden from a neutral perspective, whereas "Cucumbers" depicts the garden as a site in which humans may not be sexually safe.

"Carrots," which is the first poem within the sequence "The Sex Lives of Vegetables," personifies such a root vegetable and depicts it as having intercourse with the soil, which is presented as female: "Carrots are fucking / the earth" (ll. 1-2). The portrayal of the earth as a female character has been common throughout the centuries in Western cultures, especially since Greek times. In Greek mythology, the Earth was embodied as Gaia, a female deity who was the mother of all. The Greek's conception of Gaia as a mother goddess of all life is at the origins of the phrase Mother Earth. As such, the soil has nurturing qualities which have been associated with feminine characteristics. Ecofeminists defend this connection because it is the one that, according to scholars and activists like Vandana Shiva, empowers women – and especially those from poverty-stricken regions – to survive through natural resources while protecting the natural environment. Shiva further argues that these women's efforts defy patriarchy (as Crozier also does throughout her oeuvre), as it puts both the earth and women at risk. Ecofeminist Maria Mies uses the term "the colonial metaphor" (Mies and Shiva 56) to explain the situation ecofeminism intends to overcome by stating that the present-day relationship

between man and nature and man and woman is tantamount to the relationship between the coloniser and the colonised; a relationship which is based on violence. While Crozier's depiction in the poem acknowledges such a history of male domination, it moves away from essentialist notions of female as carer and male as destroyer of nature. As such, the carrots' intercourse with the earth contrasts with the ungendered persona, who walking in the garden, only thinks about carrots as an ingredient in different recipes:

> While you stroll through the garden
>
> thinking *carrot cake,*
>
> *carrots and onions in beef stew,*
>
> *carrot pudding with caramel sauce*,
>
> they are fucking their brains out (ll. 11-15).

For Boyd, "the casual 'stroll' of the 'you' . . . signals a reversal of agency, as the carrots transform from being sexual subjects to oblivious objects of consumption – a shift that unravels their supposed supremacy over the terrain and their own endurance as 'A permanent / erection' [(ll. 2-3)]" (319). In this sense, "Carrots" fosters female agency, even if the reference to the earth as feminine is a human construct.

For its part, "Cucumbers" warns humans who pick such vegetables in the garden to be careful when they do so: "Watch it / when you bend to pick them" (ll. 8-9), as the cucumbers are personified as sexual offenders. Specifically, cucumbers are presented in an analogous way to those people who expose their genitals in public, namely flashers, as they both conceal themselves behind leaves before they make their sudden appearance:

> Cucumbers hide
>
> in a leafy camouflage,
>
> popping out
>
> when you least expect

like flashers in a park. (ll. 1-5)

On the one hand, the poem becomes a piece of social critique regarding exhibitionists. On the other hand, the poem grants cucumbers agency, as they are described as "hav[ing] an anal / fixation" (ll. 7- 8). In this sense, Crozier reverses the usual depiction of vegetables both as objects to be eaten and as a natural sex toy employed by humans. The humorous tone that the hyperbolic image of cucumbers as sodomizers suggests allows for anal sex to be presented as an apt subject matter for poetry; thus, sodomy is liberated in the poem from its condition as a taboo topic in many cultures and sub-cultures. As couple and family therapist Doreen Hardy claims in her doctoral dissertation, anal sex is a long-held social taboo that hinders the prevention of anal-related diseases.

On a different note, "Pumpkins" are depicted as part of a sexualised vegetable garden which does not contain any phallic associations. The poem presents these vegetables as intrinsically humorous. Hence, the fact that humans carve a grin on them for Halloween suggests the human understanding of such a vegetable's own nature:

Pumpkins are the garden's

huge guffaw.

Toothy grins

splitting their cheeks

long before

you carve a face. (ll. 1-6)

The poem is full of images of the garden, which activate the senses of sight, touch and hearing. Namely, the jack-o'-lantern suggested in the previous quotation is a recurrent visual image throughout the poem. For its part, the sense of touch is depicted in the personified pumpkins' movement on the soil: "They roll on the ground / holding their sides" (ll. 7-8). Finally, the sense of hearing is present throughout the poem with the word

‘guffaw’ (l. 2), the simile between the sound of laughter and the sound of moving water crashing against the walls of a container: “rising in waves slapping / drum-barrel chests / like water in a bucket” (ll. 10-12), and the repetition of the verb ‘laugh’ in the last two stanzas (stanzas 3 and 4). All these images show the poet’s minute attention to the vegetable garden, which is transformed through metaphor into a locus of sexuality, as is implicit in the following lines:

> They are laughing
>
> the last laugh
>
> the ludicrous genital
>
> tug and pull of things
>
>
> laughing with the moon-mad
>
> melons
>
> spilling like breasts
>
> from the earth’s popped buttons. (ll. 13-19)

Lines thirteen and fourteen suggest an image of death which can be related to the use of pumpkins in Halloween as the eve to All Saints’ Day and the remembrance of our deceased beloved ones. Lines eighteen and nineteen, as was the case in “Carrots,” depict the soil as feminine. This poem is thus in line with Crozier’s usual portrayal of sexuality from a heterosexual perspective. An exception to this would be the poem “Cucumbers,” in which the fact that the gender of the addressee is not specified together with its reference to anal sex may suggest a homosexual encounter.

As regards the thematic and stylistic evolution of Crozier’s poetry in connection to the garden trope, the gendered and sexual connotations in the symbol of the garden have been identified only in two collections in Crozier’s early middle age – published at

age thirty-seven and at age forty, respectively. Therefore, no differences in either style or the treatment of theme can be observed. In all cases, the garden has been presented as a metaphor for human sexuality and the poems combine the description of work in the garden and the description of the garden itself, with the persona's observation of the garden features. Moreover, the poems analysed from both poetry collections feature a combination of more playful with more serious topics in relation to gender. While there is a lack of continuity of the portrayal of sexuality in connection to the garden trope from a gendered perspective in Crozier's later poetry, it must be remembered that Crozier has indeed reflected on sexual encounters in relation to the garden in later collections, as analysed in the first section of this chapter. One of the possible reasons for the lack of continuity of the gendered politics of the garden in Crozier's work might be that Crozier wished to explore the connection between gender and sexuality from a different perspective, which did not include the garden either as a symbol or as a milieu. To elucidate this point, the evolution of Crozier's portrayal of sexuality in its relationship with gender will be further developed in Chapter 3.

In conclusion, the symbol of the garden in Crozier's oeuvre is associated with the deconstruction of patriarchal understandings of both male and female sexuality. On the one hand, Crozier's work counters stereotypes related to femininity through representations of the garden that empower women. On the other hand, Crozier's poems intend to demystify traditional representations of the phallus from a woman's perspective through suggestive images of sexuality in the vegetable garden. As milieu, Crozier's gardens mostly engage with the personae in their healing properties. That is, the personae tend the garden with care and in their observation of the fruitful results they gain a sense of freedom, which is often imbued with the sensual pleasures of eating such self-grown vegetables.

2.3. Human / Non-Human Interactions in the Garden

Finally, the ensuing section will examine the interaction between the human and the non-human world in the context of the garden throughout Crozier's work. In connection to the main aim of the chapter, this section will explore the continuities and discontinuities of both theme and style from a diachronic perspective in order to observe the formation process of Crozier's late style. While the interaction between human and non-human beings permeates Crozier's oeuvre, the number of poems that depict such an interaction in the specific context of the garden is limited to the ones discussed in this section. One of the reasons why this may be the case is that the garden is a microcosm that has been historically deeply influenced by the biblical garden of Eden. Therefore, Crozier, in her love for non-human nature and her subsequent call for human stewardship of the natural environment in her poetry in both implicit and explicit ways, may have found it necessary not to restrict her call for environmental awareness to the garden setting. More specifically, this section will encompass the analysis of the following sub-themes: A critique of the ill-treatment and taming of wild animals; an encouragement of material entanglement between human and non-human beings; human humility towards non-human nature; and the denial and granting of agency to non-human beings, which will be analysed in connection to the other sub-themes rather than as a separate sub-theme due to its inextricable relationship with them. Such thematic concerns are not only part and parcel of Crozier's poetic work, but they also are some of the main tenets of ecocriticism. Nevertheless, Crozier's oeuvre predates the creation of ecocriticism, as Crozier's first poetry collection was published in 1976 but the field of ecocriticism was not established until roughly two decades later, in the early 1990s (Villanueva, "Reflections" 68-69).

2.3.1. Animal Mistreatment

Regarding the first sub-theme in Crozier's depiction of the interactions between the human and the non-human world in the context of the garden, a strong critique towards the ill-treatment of animals together with a critique of the denial of non-human agency can be observed in the poem "The Fattening" (1976), which belongs to Crozier's first poetry collection. Cruelty with animals is one of the recurring themes within this collection. The poem explains the story of a man who violently separates a chick pigeon from its mother: "His blunt fingers pinch / the mother's neck and toss her / to the rafters of the coop" (ll. 6-8), and who sells the seventeen baby rabbits of a deceased mother rabbit. In the garden where he walks with his girlfriend, the violence towards non-human nature continues, as expressed through the choice of words: "With a sharp blade he slices through stems / of three peonies / a red a white a pink / to scent my room" (ll. 22-25). The poem clearly presents humans who mock the possible agency of non-human animals, as "The man is amused / at the ballooning threats . . . [t]he male cropper pigeon puffs" (ll. 4-5, 1), when the pigeon is trying to defend his family. The man does not respect the more-than-human world in any way, as he only takes advantage of both animals and plants but does not show any gratitude, humility or mercy of any kind. The persona seems horrified at his behaviour, yet she accepts his flower gift. Thus, in a way, she is an accomplice of his wrongdoing. In Boyd's words, "physical aggression and subtle coercion render the garden a terrain constructed solely for oppression" (296). Crozier seems to suggest that humans have become so used to treating animals as a mere source of food that we no longer see that they are also sentient living beings. In this line of thought, Shakespearean and ecocritic scholar Simon C. Estok contends that "[p]erhaps one of the reasons animals have largely been left out of the kinds of environmental discussions ecocritics have had is that they are, for many people, food and clothing objects" (*Theory*

69).

A critique of the taming of wild animals is presented in close connection to a critique of animal ill-treatment in "The Magpie Dance" (1995). The poem belongs to the fourth section entitled "Turning the Earth" (*Everything*). Its theme is not recurrent in this section, which is mostly centred on love relationships, especially from a woman's perspective. The critique set by "The Magpie Dance" is in line with Crozier's critique of the treatment received by animals in circuses, as Crozier posits in the poem "Santiago Zoo" (*Everything* 73), since the magpies are described as being afraid of being shot at if they did not continue dancing to the woman's music:

> after several days as if they sensed
> the possibility of boredom, the hard
> beads of a pellet gun glinting in her eyes,
> each leaned forward, raised one foot,
> tapped the taut blue air,
> lowered the foot, then raised the other,
> on and on in a circle dance. One learned
> to clap its wings, another twirled on toes,
> head thrown back like a figure skater. (ll. 8-17)

Crozier's critique of the metaphorical taming of the magpies in the poem draws the reader's attention to a number of ethical questions regarding the human relationship with the more-than-human world. Firstly, the poem questions the extent to which humans are entitled to kill non-human animals, especially when it is not a matter of survival. This is depicted in the poem in the fear that the magpies show of being fired at by the woman. Secondly, the dangers in anthropomorphising animals are depicted, as shown in the poem by the understanding of the birds' movements by the woman as human clownish tricks

and skating postures. That is, the woman is denying the magpies their own animality. Nonetheless, Barad claims from a material ecocritical perspective that anthropomorphising can be useful in order to uncover underlying noxious anthropocentric assumptions (*Nature's Queer Performativity* 27). Thus, Crozier criticizes the human tendency – in this case, that of the woman in the poem – to understand non-human nature from a human perspective that suits human needs and likes rather than those of non-humans. Thirdly, the categorisation of animals in different scales of value depending on socio-cultural constructs related to each animal is criticised. Specifically, the poem condemns the granting of more value to singsong birds than to magpies because of the different kinds of melodies they produce or because of their eating habits, as the following lines suggest:

> She told her neighbours
>
> she drummed to scare the magpies.
>
> Certainly there were none in their gardens –
>
> how plump the peas this year, how sweet
>
> the songbird's singing! (ll. 18-22)

It is in this sense that both Crozier's "The Fattening" (1976) and "The Magpie Dance" (1995) are better understood in the light of ecocritic Adam Dickinson's concept of "lyric ethics." Namely, Dickinson states that "the terms of engagement with the world that ecocriticism calls for . . . are far more ethically rendered in a lyrical, or more specifically, metaphorical approach to matter" (36) than artistic "representations that offer direct reference to environmental crisis" (35). In this vein, Crozier's use of metaphor in order to suggest a strong criticism towards the ill-treatment of animals in "The Fattening" and her use of symbology in "The Magpie Dance" so as to criticize both the taming of animals and speciesism provide a point of entry for any reader to not only the materiality of non-

human nature but also the interconnections between humans and non-humans.

2.3.2. Human / Non-Human Entanglement

As regards the encouragement of a material entanglement with the more-than-human world, the poems “Backyard Eden,” “Gloves” and “The Garden at Night” suggest a literal intertwining, whereas the poems “Lala” and “The Magpie Dance” depict a metaphorical entanglement. In fact, the notion of entanglement is at the core of material ecocriticism. Indeed, one of its main tenets is that nature is interconnected with culture in what Iovino terms the naturalcultural (76). In addition, matter constitutes both the “materiality of the human body and the natural world” (Iovino 135). As such, all material processes are interconnected and, therefore, there is a continuum between human bodies and the non-human natural world (Alaimo 156).

In “Backyard Eden” (1976), the first poem in which a garden is pictured in Crozier’s oeuvre, Crozier hints at overlapping layers of meaning surrounding the image of the garden. On a first layer of meaning, the poem is a critique to perfectly ordered human-planted nature, which the human gardener tends carefully while keeping a physical distance from it. That is, the woman in the poem does not touch the soil with her own hands, but wears gloves. She does not let any weed grow tall, kills lice with poison, and does not allow the robins to come close so that they do not feed on the strawberries. In other words, the human being in the poem avoids any entanglement with the actual matter of the non-human world. In its stead, she values her garden for its symbolic meaning, namely the vitality that the plants bring to an otherwise monotonous city landscape: “She marvels at her color creation / in the greys of the city” (ll. 13-14). For the gardener persona, her perfectly ordered garden functions as a healing garden of sorts that enlivens her otherwise dull cityscape. Indeed, according to landscape architects

Maikov et al., both colour richness and personal work in the garden are important factors to create a personal experience of the garden and thus maximise its healing properties (224). A second layer of meaning is established by the aesthetic value given to the colourful garden, which for Boyd "seems to recreate the desired result of a perfect Eden" (299). However, the poem ends on a dramatic note suggesting the end of such human-encouraged beauty because of the upcoming winter: "Yesterday / there was a frost" (ll. 21-22). Boyd reads this ending as suggestive of Crozier's rendering of "the archetype of paradise [as] impossible, as this backyard Eden is already lost to the past" (299), as the last lines of the poem suggest. All in all, while the poem values the vitality that a well-tended urban garden offers to the human viewer, it encourages a more thorough material contact with non-human nature in order not only to benefit from its visual splendour but also to establish more meaningful embodied connections; an idea that is actually developed in the later poem "Gloves."

"Gloves" (1985), which is part of the fourth section in *The Garden Going on without Us* alongside the poems "Garden at Night" and "In Moonlight," reverses the images depicted in "Backyard Eden" in order to establish gardener gloves not as a barrier between the human body and the soil and plants, but as a site of material entanglement:

> Imagine all those gloves
>
> stripped of flesh and bone
>
> buried deep in the earth
>
> . . . .
>
> One glove holds the roots of a rose
>
> like a tangle of veins. In another
>
> a stripped beetle builds a world from everything
>
> the hand has touched. (ll. 5-7, 10-13)

As such, the poem “Gloves” lends itself perfectly to an examination through the lens of ecocriticism, and particularly material ecocriticism. The gloves do no longer belong to the human domain alone and, as such, they are not separated from the gardens’ biota anymore. To borrow from the terms Oppermann has used in her conceptualisation of the imbrication between posthumanism and new materialism, the gloves in the poem show “the permeable boundaries of species in the naturalcultural continuum” inasmuch as “the other-than-human agency . . . is not a biological category only” (“From Posthumanism” 25). In its stead, Oppermann argues, posthuman ecocriticism “includes such material agencies as biophotons, nanoelements, and intelligent machines that are expressively agentic, story-filled, efficacious, and co-emergent with homo sapiens” (“From Posthumanism” 23). The fact that plants grow from the gloves demonstrates the gloves’ agency in their role as providers of the plants’ necessary nutrients. As such, the gloves have acquired ‘a new life,’ as compared to their past use as inanimate objects for human use; as the final words of the poem suggest, they are no longer kept in “the shed where they hung for years / from a nail like caught bats” (ll. 23-24).

On a further layer of meaning, the poem connects the ageing process and retirement to the gardeners’ use of gloves in their work in the garden, as the first lines of the poem already suggest: “The gardeners, old-country and tired, / plant their worn and loamy leather gloves / the tannin good for growing” (ll. 1-3). In this sense, the poem depicts an instance of emplaced embodiment, too. The poem thus establishes a material entanglement between human objects and the more-than-human natural world as signs of the gardeners’ emplaced embodiment, which have been forged from accumulated horticultural experience throughout the life-course: “. . . Hollow fingers / slightly bent, an abacus of leather / knuckles, cracked palms – lifelines gone mad” (ll. 7-9). As evoked by the preceding lines, the gloves acquire the characteristics of the ageing hands of their

owners. In addition, the gloves are personified as remembering their connection with the land they tended, in a life review of sorts:

> Other gloves pass memories like prize squash
> from hand to hand: the year of the bad frost,
> the wind storm that pulled up the radishes,
> the tomato blight. These are the ones
> that want to go back to the hoe and trowel,
> the sweat white on their palms
> when the work was done" (ll. 16-22)

The experiences of both success and hardship depicted in these lines are embedded in the gloves and by extension in the gardeners' minds. All these memories suggest feelings of topophilia – i.e. "the human beings['] affective ties to the material environment" (Tuan, *Topophilia* 93) – in the garden tender, although such a link is not made explicit in the poem. Despite the gloves' retirement – and the poem suggests in the initial lines of the poem the gardeners,' too – from their gardening efforts, these life-long emplaced stories are the ones that make the gloves (and the gardeners) miss gardening and the self-pride that they obtained from this activity.

A material entanglement between the human speaker and the non-human natural world of the garden can also be observed in "The Garden at Night" (1995), which is the poem that precedes "The Magpie Dance" in Crozier's collection *Everything Arrives at the Light* and is contained under the same section number four. In this poem, Crozier presents a fable of sorts of the behaviour of animals and vegetables at night, when humans cannot see them. In Rose's words "what one wishes to discover is . . . a parallel and companionate world to our own that generates and lives by its own light, a world that human consciousness is sometimes privileged to enter partially" (7). The protagonists are

radishes, potatoes, tomatoes, and a mole, and the poem plays with light and darkness. Radishes are described as producing light: "Under the earth / radishes … / light their lanterns, spreading a watery glow / throughout the garden" (ll. 1-5). The mole is referred to as "he" and is described with human characteristics, as it "thinks he is the chosen one" (l. 8) because "all his paths [become] suddenly / diffused with light" (ll. 9-10), the light radishes are said to have produced. Such a personification of the mole is both a reference to the Bible, as Jesus is referred to as "the chosen one" by God according to the Gospels (Isaiah 42:1), and to Plato's Myth of the Cavern, as "Digging to the surface / for the first time / the mole thinks he's found / another world . . . / in his dark myopic eyes" (ll. 21-24, 27). That is, even though the mole can only see the shadows of a minimal part of the surface, it believes to know much more. This is precisely the attitude that humans who are not aware of the fact that the more-than-human world is what sustains life on our planet have. Therefore, the poem functions as a subtle critique against those who are blind to the world that surrounds them. While the poem's anthropomorphising of the mole could be criticised as anthropocentric, Crozier's use of anthropomorphism is in line with Estok's argument according to which anthropomorphism "transforms and transfigures our understanding of the animals being described [and is, therefore,] extremely useful" ("Theory" 68). The several potatoes that grow from a healthy potato plant are described as "potatoes build their constellations / row on row like a child / trying to understand / the solar system, / each planet connected by a string" (ll. 11-16). These lines suggest that the poem (the moral of the story) is ultimately intended to awaken the curiosity of those readers who are not usually in close contact with a garden or an orchard, so that they may have first-person experiences of non-human nature, and thus discover for themselves the real world of the radishes, moles, potatoes and tomatoes.

Likewise, both "Lala" (1979) and "The Magpie Dance" (1995) encourage a

metaphorical material intertwining with the non-human world as promoted by the two female personae in the poems. “Lala” offers a view of a woman whose use of nature is directed towards healing. The poem belongs to the poetry collection *Crow's Black Joy,* in which interconnection with the more-than-human world is a common theme, alongside sexuality, love relationships, the writing of poetry and pregnancy/fecundity. As an herbalist of sorts, the woman in “Lala” “steals the flowers / [to] place them where / they are needed” (ll. 2-4). Even though she also cuts the flowers, the language is completely different from the one in “The Fattening.” Here the woman is in tune with the non-human world, as when she was “. . . caught / . . . in a country garden” (ll. 12-13) by its male owner, she “waved a poppy heavy with scent / and he became a bee” (ll. 16-17). Hence, by means of the ‘magic’ of nature the man who was threatening for the female persona because he “clamped a huge hand on [her] shoulder” (l. 15), has metamorphosed into a non-human animal. As such, it has become in tune with both the woman and the more-than-human world: “Now he stores honey in my ear, / dances me to the exotic blossoms / in fields buzzing” (ll. 18-20). As a bee, the former man can co-exist with the female persona in a symbiotic relationship; that is, the bee makes use of the woman's ear to keep its honey, and the woman makes use of the bee to guide her to unusual flowers. Although the situation described is highly imaginary, it functions as a fable of sorts or a mythological account of therianthropy (i.e. the mythological ability of humans to metamorphose into non-human animals through shape-shifting); the moral being that it is important for human and non-human animals to establish healthy, non-harmful interrelationships. Moreover, this fable poem also taps on notions of trans-corporeality. That is, through the man's metaphorical process of embodiment of a bee, he comes to value the ancient wisdom of the use of plants for healing. Therefore, the man's shape-shifting stands for the broadening of his mindset, which has allowed him to grasp the

entanglements between the human and the non-human world.

In turn, "The Magpie Dance" (1995) explains the story of a woman who "drums in her garden / to scare away the magpies" (ll. 1-2), which hints at the ritualistic use of drums in indigenous cultures. However, instead of fleeing, the magpies have learnt "how to dance" (l. 5), as previously explored above as regards a critique of the taming of wild animals. The woman's communion with the magpies is highlighted in the last stanza, in which it is described how the birds dance to the beating of the woman's heart:

> Towards summer's end, her drums inside,
> all she had to do was sit in the garden,
> sometimes the boy beside her,
> and the birds dropped down without a cry.
> On a patch of flattened peas and leaves of cabbage,
> they stepped, flapped, and shuffled
> to the muffled beating of her heart. (ll. 35-41)

Even though this is an imaginary communion, not a realistic one, the poem becomes a mind opener as regards a sense of interconnectedness with all kinds of creatures. The poem can also be read from an ecofeminist stance, which ecofeminist Karen Warren defines in the following way: "Ecological feminism [or ecofeminism] is the position that there are important connections between how one treats women, people of color, and the underclass on one hand and how one treats the nonhuman natural environment on the other" (xi). An ecofeminist reading of the poem encompasses the depiction of the woman and the child in the poem as two outcasts from society: "No one ever listened to him / a strange and lonely boy who kept / a gopher in his pocket" (ll. 29-31). On the one hand, the woman is granted agency, as she teaches the birds as a mother showing her offspring how to do this synchronised dance, how each to develop a different skill, and how to

behave properly. On the other hand, the boy is described as being sensitive to the more-than-human world, as he "said he heard another sound, / a dark under-rhythm, / a different sort of knowing / that moved beyond a woman's hands" (ll. 25-28). In turn, the woman functions as a mother-of-sorts for the alienated child. Thus, the poem, as read from an ecofeminist perspective, empowers traditionally disempowered members of society who are attuned to the non-human natural world.

2.3.3. Humility towards Non-Human Nature

Humility towards non-human nature is fostered by Crozier in the poems "Garden at Night" and "Garden, Night, Listening," in which the human personae observe the garden at night carefully. In addition, "Garden at Night" as well as "In Moonlight" acknowledge non-human agency. In order to shed some light on Crozier's presentation of humble co-existence with non-human nature by means of poetry, nature writing critic J. Scott Bryson's seminal definition of ecopoetry will prove useful. Even if the poems described in this section do not deal with ecological catastrophe as is often the case in ecopoetry, Crozier's humility towards non-human nature is present throughout her work. In the introduction to his edited volume of critical essays, entitled *Ecopoetry: A Critical Introduction*, Bryson defined ecopoetry as a "subset of nature poetry [that] takes on distinctly contemporary problems and issues" (5) and whose second characteristic, namely "an imperative toward humility in relationships with both human and nonhuman nature" (6) is in line with Crozier's poetry. As regards non-human agency, material ecocriticism believes in the agency of matter. More specifically, ecocritics Dana Phillips and Heather I. Sullivan contend that "human beings are 'actors' operating within material processes that include multitudes of other 'actors,' the majority of which are not human" (446). Some of Crozier's poems, in their portrayal of entangled agencies between humans

and non-humans, align with material ecocriticism's tenets.

Such is the case of "Garden at Night" (1985), which portrays the garden in darkness as a place where the non-human living and non-living beings are exposed. "Garden at Night" belongs to section number four entitled "The Garden Going on without Us," which besides the previously examined sequence of The Sex Lives of Vegetables focuses on the human relationship with non-human nature. An image of inaction is presented in the first stanza of the poem: "leaves flood the yard" (l. 1) and "[g]ourds / float like jellyfish" (ll. 2-3). Non-human agency is, nevertheless, granted in the second stanza, in which "[t]his far from the ocean / only plants know / such darkness" (ll. 5-7). This personification refers to the fact that plants grow long roots deep down in the earth, where there is no light, in order to obtain water, especially in the dry Canadian prairies. The unacknowledged persona in the poem observes the garden at night and recognizes an understanding of the world unavailable to human beings, thus the symbolism of the garden in "Garden at Night" is associated with humility towards non-human nature and, in turn, ecocentrism.

Likewise, the poem "In Moonlight" (1985), which belongs to the same section as "Garden at Night," depicts the speaker's humility towards the more-than-human world. The speaker admits his/her own shortcomings as a human right in the first stanza ("just beyond the mind's / clumsy fingers" (ll. 2-3)), while it recognizes the soil's continuous work to grow plants and therefore its lack of rest: "The earth's insomnia" (l. 5). The speaker also acknowledges non-human agency ("Something moves / . . . / It has to do with seeds" (ll. 1, 4)) beyond human control ("The garden going on / without us // needing no one") or observation ("to watch it") (ll. 6-9). The speaker in Crozier's poem even asserts that it is neither human observation the one the earth needs to conduct its functions, nor the moon's. Such a claim is triggered by the poem's time frame, which – like the one

in “Garden at Night”– is the night-time, as suggested by the title to the poem. While this statement might not be scientifically true in the sense that lunar rhythms have been proved to have a direct effect on the growth of plants – as traditional folk lore has it in many cultures – (Zürcher 1, 4), the poem’s denial of the effect of the moon on the growth of seeds functions as a reinforcement of the earth’s own potential.

Finally, the poem “Garden, Night, Listening” (2011) taps into a direct (or phenomenological) experience of the constructed garden landscape. Although poems set in the garden are not abundant in *Small Mechanics*, the poem’s main theme can be classified under the recurrent subject in this poetry collection of observation of the non-human world and humility towards its teachings. The persona in “Garden, Night, Listening” describes the few things she[34] can see and can and cannot hear in the darkness of the garden. Namely, the nocturnal birds the persona’s cats can hear, whose sound escapes the persona; the quick glimpse of the persona’s lover that she catches when he lights a cigarette in the darkness of the garden; and the silence of the water in the pond, which is personified as “listening” (l. 15). The poem highlights the ability of non-human beings and elements, specifically the cats and water, to listen to the more-than-human world; while humans are described as incapable to capture, despite their efforts, the same sounds:

> The two cats at my feet hear what I cannot –
>
> the silence and not silence of its many wings –
>
> even when I shake my head so the bones
>
> start their shift, hammers and anvils

[34] I use the pronoun she for the persona even though the gender is never made explicit in the poem, because it is coherent with other poems in which a couple is described in the garden. In addition, Crozier seldom writes about homosexual couples, an exception being the affair between two girlfriends depicted in “The Summer of the Large Hats” (*What* 24-26). At any rate, the gender of the persona is not relevant in this poem, as what is essential is the attentiveness of the human being towards the non-human world.

in the small factories of the inner ears (ll. 1-6).

The poem thus shows humility on the persona's part towards the more-than-human world in the persona's acknowledgement of her lesser faculties. This poem is also an example of emplaced embodiment, in the sense that the persona wishes to embody through sensorial perception the sounds of the more-than-human world that surrounds her. In this sense, Crozier's poem is in line with the poetry of her contemporary Canadian poet Don McKay (b. Owen Sound, ON, 1942), particularly in his poetic attentiveness to the sounds of nature. As Hugh Dunkerley explains when examining the poetry of Don McKay, "[p]oetic attention is first of all a listening" (213). Crozier's own poetic attention, as reflected in the poem, recognises the "foreign-ness that remains foreign" (McKay 97) in the more-than-human world, and therefore, our human inability to fully grasp or represent non-human nature despite our willingness to do so.

2.3.4. Reflections on Late Style regarding Human / Non-Human Interactions in the Garden

As regards the evolution of theme alongside Crozier's oeuvre in what the poems analysed within this section are concerned, a general continuation of subject matter can be observed despite some nuances in Crozier's different life stages. As regards style, while continuity is present in the second and third sub-themes, a clear change in tone can be noticed in the first sub-theme, namely the critique of the taming of wild animals in connection to the garden. This first sub-theme, which is present in two poems published nineteen years apart – in Crozier's young adulthood and middle age, respectively –, features an equally effective criticism of the domestication of birds. However, the tone is less aggressive with the passage of time. Namely, while in "The Fattening" (1976) the man in the poem is said to ". . . pinch / the [pigeon's] mother's neck and toss her / to the rafters of the coop" (ll.

6-8), in "The Magpie Dance" (1995) the magpies only start performing a choreography of sorts out of the fear they have of humans and guns, not because the woman in the poem has either threatened them or wishes to tame them: ". . . as if they [the magpies] sensed the possibility of boredom, the hard / beads of a pellet gun glinting in her [the woman's] eyes, / each leaned forward, raised one foot, / . . . / on and on in a circle dance" (ll. 9-12, 15). Actually, Crozier herself already acknowledged this fact in a 1985 interview with fellow Anglo-Canadian writer Doris Hillis: "I do think I have developed a sense of humour and this may have modified some of the bitterness of my earlier poetry" (11). Such a self-reported change in tone is better understood through the development of emotion regulation along the life-course. According to psychologists Peter Zimmermann and Alexandra Iwanski, "emotion regulation includes all processes that are involved in changing current or expected emotional states regarding their intensity, quality, duration, speed of elicitation, and recovery in the service of adaptation" (182). Specifically, Crozier states at age thirty-seven that her tone had changed from the one she employed in her first poetry collection (1976), which she published at age twenty-eight. Crozier's emotion regulation of anger involves the use of humour as an adaptation strategy. Such an emotion development from her young adulthood to a more mature moment in her adulthood before middle-age is in line with findings in the field of emotional regulation. Particularly, Zimmermann and Iwanski found that adaptive emotional regulation of sadness, fear and anger increase from pre-adolescence to middle-age (185).

Regarding the second sub-theme, namely the encouragement of material entanglement with the non-human world in the context of the garden, it was present in five poems: two poems published in young adulthood, one poem published in early middle age, and two poems published at middle age. All poems within this second sub-theme encourage human direct physical connection with the more-than-human world.

Nevertheless, we can observe an internal evolution, as the first published poem "Backyard Eden" (1976) suggests that the clear separation between the human persona and her plants is a problem, while the subsequent poem "Lala" (1979) suggests a solution by means of a fable of sorts and its metaphorical entanglement. However, it is not until "Gloves" (1985) that Crozier presents a real entanglement between a human tool to work in the garden and the garden itself. At middle age, though, Crozier returns to the fable-type poem to present two different instances of imaginary communion between the human and the non-human world. While this lack of ultimate material entanglement with the non-human elements and beings that inhabit the garden might be understood as a poetic conscious or unconscious choice, Crozier's critique of the human lack of both attention and close connection to the greater world that sustains us all seems to be at work in these poems.

Finally, as regards the third sub-theme, namely humility towards non-humans the three poems (two published in Crozier's early middle-age and one in Crozier's young-old age) that discuss this issue present human shortcomings – that is, our lesser faculties and senses as compared to those of animals – and highlight the agency of non-human nature.

2.4. Chapter Conclusions

In Chapter 2, the three types of interaction in the context of the garden that are present in Crozier's oeuvre have been examined from the combined lens of ageing studies and ecocriticism, and with the additional insight that both healing garden research and horticultural therapy add to the specific context of the (vegetable) garden. The aim has been to examine how Crozier's personae's emplaced embodiment in the garden, as depicted by the human personae's different interactions in the garden, have presented continuities and discontinuities throughout Crozier's oeuvre in order to establish the

formation process of Crozier's late style. Specifically, the three types of interaction in the garden as depicted in Crozier's poetry encompass an interaction with the garden in connection with ageing, an interaction with the garden that reveals gender issues, and an interaction between humans and the more-than-human world in the context of the garden.

In what concerns the human interaction with the garden as related to the ageing process, two main types of interaction have been found, namely work in the vegetable garden and contemplation of the non-human world in the garden. In addition, instances of metaphorical interaction have also been observed. These three types of human/non-human interaction have all proven to be beneficial for the ageing personae in the poems, especially from both psychological and emotional perspectives, and from a physical perspective in one of the poems. As such, the gardens in the poems function as healing gardens in the case of real gardens and as therapeutic landscapes of the mind in the case of imaginary and remembered gardens. The positive health outcomes of tending a garden as depicted in the poems analysed have been related to the findings of horticultural therapy. The beneficial effects of tending, contemplating and imagining/remembering a garden have been defined by Crozier for individuals in all life stages except for adolescence, as present in poems written by Crozier throughout her oeuvre. Crozier's life-long depiction of the garden is likely to have been inspired by the different gardens that she has helped to tend throughout her life-course. The analysis also reveals, as portrayed in the first and last poems analysed (belonging to Crozier's early middle-age and old age, respectively), that Crozier acknowledges the imbrication of the cultural with the natural in the context of the garden as well as the agentic powers of both human-made objects and natural elements. While the age of the personae in the poems in which such a piece of information was provided matched on occasion Crozier's biological age, this was not always the case. Crozier's age notwithstanding, the ageing process has been depicted as

one more stage in the life-course thus avoiding age-related stereotypes. In addition, two poems published by Crozier at age sixty-five explicitly criticise ageism. This signals an innovation in the formation process of Crozier's late style, as defined by Crozier's more vocal criticism of prejudices towards the aged in contemporary Western societies upon Crozier's own entrance into old age. The rest of the poems convey both a thematic and a stylistic continuity, as death is a theme developed throughout Crozier's career and the poems start by describing real gardens to later develop the different metaphorical connotations that Crozier attaches to them.

As regards the interaction with the garden that is imbued with connotations of gender and sexuality as present in poems by Crozier published in her early middle age, the human personae both enjoy time in the garden observing the vegetables and personify them by depicting such vegetables as sexually active and gendered beings. Walking in the (vegetable) garden and contemplating the vegetables allows for the persona to benefit from the healing properties of gardens, as was also the case of the interaction with the garden in connection to ageing. In turn, the vegetables' sexual practices, which stand metaphorically for human sexuality, underscore female agency. While the agency of a vegetable, in connection to both the normalisation of anal sex and the criticism of sexual offenders is depicted in one of the poems.

In what concerns the interaction between humans and the more-than-human world in the context of the garden, three main sub-themes have been observed, namely a critique of the ill-treatment of animals, an encouragement of a material entanglement between humans and non-humans, and human humility towards non-human nature. While a difference in Crozier's tone has been noted between the first and second poems in which Crozier criticizes the mistreatment of animals in the context of the garden, a general continuity with minor variations has been observed as regards theme in the three sub-

themes throughout Crozier's oeuvre. As such, Crozier reminds readers that animals are sentient beings who should not be discriminated against according to human scales of value. In addition, while Crozier often personifies animals in her fable-poems, this is used as a strategy to both question anthropocentrism and to awaken the curiosity of the reader as regards the non-human world. Moreover, Crozier depicts the garden and its non-human animals as agentic beings and elements, and admits that humans are unable to perceive the same things that animals. It is in the willingness of Crozier's personae to learn from the teachings offered by the non-human world in the garden that Crozier's poems portray a sense of both awe and humility towards the more-than-human world.

As far as gender is concerned, in the first poems about the garden – in any of its subcategories of attached symbolism – the gardener in the poem is a woman, while in later poems it is a man, which can have a biographical explanation, in the sense that Crozier may have been inspired by her childhood vegetable garden in the backyard, mainly tended by her mother, while her adult garden was tended by her husband, the late writer / gardener Patrick Lane. A notable exception to this trend is Crozier's latest poem in which the symbol of the garden is present, namely "Is Every Poem an Elegy?", in which the gardener is a woman. The fact that the poem discusses the motif of death and that another poem in the collection ("The Sun's Handiwork" 26) recalls with tenderness a deceased mother figure suggest that Crozier had her own late mother in mind while writing this poem. This notwithstanding, the combination of female and male gardeners, young and old, provides a universal identification with the garden, both as a symbol and as a specific real and embodied place. As such, Crozier's poems speak to a wide range of readership types in their promotion of close interconnections with non-human nature, ecocentrism, humility towards the more-than-human world, and age-friendly societies. All in all, the garden as both a symbol associated with the ageing process and with gender

and sexuality, as well as a locale in which human / non-human interaction is fostered, is a place imbued with meaning resulting from hands-on experience, which supports the personae's journeys throughout life and teaches attitudes of humility toward non-human nature.

CHAPTER 3

Emplaced Embodiment of Sexuality at Home: A Micro-Level of Environmental Analysis

"Desire, I will look for you at the gate to our garden, my hair on fire."

Lorna Crozier. "Changing into Fire"

Depictions of sexuality are commonplace in Lorna Crozier's poems throughout her oeuvre, from her first poetry collection, *Inside Is the Sky* (1976), to her latest collection to date, *The House the Spirit Builds* (2019). Given that sexuality is "constructed in social, literary, political, and even medical terms" (Cavell and Dickinson xv), a brief introduction to the history of sexuality in Canada will prove useful to shed some light on the context in which Crozier started publishing her erotic poetry. Crozier's reflections on sexuality in her first poetry collection were published only thirteen years after the Pill had been legalized in Canada in 1963 (Cavell and Dickinson xvii). And it was only after Canada's Centennial in 1967 that a Royal Commission on the Status of Women was established, which in 1970 issued a report "propos[ing] the modernization of the Divorce Act and recommend[ing] increased access to abortion and birth control . . . pay equity (which in 2006, women have still not achieved),[35] 18 weeks' maternity leave . . . as well as the

[35] The federal government of Canada passed the Pay Equity Act in 2018, but it did not fully come into force until 2021 (Government of Canada, "Overview of the Pay Equity Act").

opening up of 'traditional male jobs' (such as bank managers) to women" (Cavell and Dickinson xix). In the early 1990s, erotica was described as "flourishing in Canadian literature" (Kuropatwa and Micros 444) despite the fact that "the moral-religious climate of Canada [did] not welcome open discussion of sexual enjoyment" (ibid.). Indeed, in the entry for "Erotica (Canada)" in the *Encyclopedia of Post-Colonial Literatures in English,* in its 1994 edition, Crozier is the only non-lesbian contemporary poet who is mentioned as contributing towards challenging traditional views of sexuality (445). While discussions of sexuality are held much more openly nowadays than in the 1990s, a 2015 study on Canadian media's constructions of sexuality in older persons' online dating reveals that this is only true for youth-oriented and heteronormative sexuality (Wada et al. 47). This finding implies that "the ideal of remaining young-looking, physically attractive and sexually active is dominant and marginalizes older adults who choose not to conform to that ideal or are unable to do so" (ibid.). In this sense, one of the aims of this chapter is to contribute to foregrounding the increasing relevance of sexuality as a theme in contemporary Canadian literature through the examination of sexual intimacy along the life-course in Crozier's poetic work.

Crozier's career-long portrayals of sexuality are often present in poems whose central theme is unrelated to it. Hence, Crozier depicts sexual intimacy as part and parcel of everyday life throughout the life-course. This leads to the second aim of this chapter, namely to examine how depictions of sexuality in Crozier's poetry evolve with the passage of time and, especially, with Crozier's own entrance into old age. As such, this chapter endeavours to further research on sexuality and ageing, from the perspective of literary criticism, since as Gott contends in relation to the health sciences, "[n]ot only is little specific attention paid to later life sexuality and sexual health issues, but these are also rarely considered in broader evaluations of later life well-being" (Gott 2). Such a

claim made by Gott is not only relevant for the social sciences but it is also applicable to literary gerontology. In addition, the embodiment of sexuality as experienced by older women is also under-researched, most probably, due to socio-cultural understandings of older individuals as asexual beings (Fileborn et al. 117). Crozier's literary engagement with the theme of sexuality in her writing is complex, in the sense that sexuality is depicted in the myriad different forms that sexual intimacy may take for different couples at different ages. In this vein, the ensuing chapter aligns itself with gender, sexuality and age scholar Linn Sandberg, who advocates for "understandings of sex and sexuality in later life, where sex becomes part of a wider spectrum of intimacy" ("Sex, Sexuality" 221). This second aim is inextricably linked to Crozier's portrayal of sexuality as emplaced in the home environment; that is, in a micro-level of environmental analysis. While it is true that there is a large number of poems in Crozier's oeuvre in which sexuality is not explicitly related to a specific environment or place, given that this examination of sexuality focuses on the interplay between embodiment and emplacement, only those poems which connect the embodiment of sexuality to place will be examined. Therefore, to be more accurate, the second aim of this chapter entails an examination of the evolution of the portrayal of sexuality in relation to both emplacement and embodiment throughout Crozier's poetic oeuvre in order to track the formation process of Crozier's late style.

Despite Crozier's emphasis on sexuality, only three academic articles have focused on this subject matter, namely poet and scholar in Canadian literature Tanis MacDonald's "Regarding the Male Body: Rhapsodic Contradictions in Lorna Crozier's 'Penis Poems'" (2002), which examines the ways in which the female gaze depicts the male penis in the poetic sequence "The Penis Poems," belonging to the poetry collection *Angels of Flesh, Angels of Silence* (1988), and which has already been referenced in

Chapter 2; postcolonial literary scholar Gary Boire's "Transparencies: Of Sexual Abuse, Ambivalence, and Resistance" (1993), which examines Crozier's poem about family sexual abuse, "Fathers, Uncles, Old Friends of the Family" (1988), together with other poems from other Canadian women writers, namely Mary di Michele, Di Brandt and Sylvia Fraser, as counternarratives that not only demystify and deconstruct family sexual abuse, but they also provide a space for victims of such a type of abuse to speak; and ageing studies and sexuality scholar Ieva Stončikaité and ageing studies and ecocriticism scholar Núria Mina-Riera's "A Creative Writing Workshop on Sexuality and Ageing: A Spanish Pilot Case Study" (2020), in which they conduct a brief examination of Crozier's poems "Getting Used to It" and "My Last Erotic Poem" as part of the working material for their workshop on sexuality with older adults. Considering the scarcity of research on Crozier's poetic portrayals of sexuality, the ensuing chapter also aims at filling such a gap in the literature. The major themes within depictions of sexuality that will be analysed will be sensuality, the relationship between sexuality and love, masturbation and different portrayals of genitalia, lust, and infidelity in committed relationships. Crozier's poems usually depict heterosexual relationships, even though some poems do not provide any reference to gender, and two clear examples of lesbian sexuality are portrayed. In turn, Crozier's personae are often women, while on some other occasions the speakers are ungendered. Taking both the types of relationships and personae into account, the ensuing analysis will acknowledge ungendered speakers as such, but will be using the pronouns and possessive adjective *she/her/her,* respectively, to refer to the speakers, and the pronouns and possessive adjective *he/him/his,* respectively, to refer to their partners in order to foster readability.

3.1. Embodiments of Sexuality in the Home Environment

The ensuing analysis intends to shed some light on the emplaced embodiment of sexuality in Crozier's poetry throughout her career. With such a purpose in mind, all those poems in Crozier's poetic work which connected the embodiment of sexuality to the personae's emplacement have been considered for analysis and classified into major sub-themes. Nonetheless, such sub-themes are not fixed categories, as a number of poems depict several different aspects of sexuality at the same time. This is the case, for instance, of the first sub-theme, namely that of sensuality, which has been set as a separate category even if the boundaries between sensuality and sexuality may often blur. Indeed, as gender and sexual studies researcher Alicia Arrizón claims, "[s]exuality and sensuality are different, and yet overlapping, concepts that shape, influence, and inspire one another. While sexuality may be expressed in ones' sensuality, a subject's sensuality stimulates her/his sexuality" (193). The reason why sensuality has been set as a separate sub-theme is merely to distinguish it from other forms of sexuality, such as sexual intercourse, oral sex or masturbation, which have been prominent forms of sexuality considered for many years by sexuality researchers to establish whether a person was sexually active or not. This is most likely due to the fact that heteronormative understandings of sexuality have positioned penetrative sex as the only genuine form of sexuality in couples, as Bianca Fileborn et al. found in their study with older women (126). Hence, by granting sensuality prominence as the first sub-theme within the emplaced embodiment of sexuality, the ensuing examination wishes to align itself with those scholarly works which foster understandings of sexuality that are not limiting to certain specific sexual practices, but which understand sexuality as intimacy in all the possible meanings that this may have for a person throughout the life-course.

3.1.1. Sensuality

When emplaced at home, the personae's sensuality is expressed in an environment that supports the lovers, who are usually a couple. Such a generally-welcoming milieu allows the personae to embody sensuality freely. That is, to let their bodies play sensual games devoid of social taboos. Even though neither signs of ageing nor any references to the personae's age are depicted in the personae's emplaced embodiment of sensuality at home, Crozier does indeed depict older bodies engaged in sexual activities. In those poems in which the embodiment of sensuality is not connected to place and are, therefore, beyond the scope of this chapter, references to the ageing process are also uncommon. Such a difference in the portrayals of sensuality and sexuality is most likely due to the fact that the experience of sensuality (hugging, caressing, kissing, etc.) is not limited by the ailments of later life as traditional understandings of sexuality, namely penile-vaginal intercourse, might be. As Linn Sandberg concludes from her qualitative study with older participants, "[b]odily changes, including declining erectile function and vaginal dryness, point older men and women towards other sexual practices. This often means great focus on cuddling and touch, de-centring the significance of men's erections and of intercourse" ("Sex, Sexuality" 223). Such a broad understanding of intimacy in older age can also be observed in Crozier's work, as will be developed in the subsequent sections.

The element which figures most prominently as the personae's emplacement of sensuality in Crozier's poetry in the home environment is either the lover's bed or the couple's bed, which plays with notions of (un)familiarity and (dis)comfort. The couple's bed has been researched in relation to quality of sleep and its implications for both the quality of the relationship and personal quality of life. In this line, sleep and relationship researchers Kneginja Richter et al. state that "[i]n Western societies, it is very common for couples to spend the nights in the same bed" (1464). According to sociologist Jenny

Hislop, this might stem from the fact that "[t]he intimate space of the double bed provides opportunities not only for physical interaction but for conversation; a chance to chat and catch up on the day's activities; a chance to plan; a chance to discuss sensitive issues" (n.p.). In studies on sleep in the couple's bed, sexual activity is considered in connection with sleep quality. Particularly, researchers have found that waking the partner up for love-making is not perceived by the participants as disrupting their quality of sleep (Richter et al. 1465). As regards the implications for couple's sexuality of sharing a bed, sociologists Alison Rahn et al.'s research shows that even though a 90% of baby boomer (born from 1946 to 1965) participants in their study preferred sleeping together, 10% had decided to sleep apart in order to prioritize their personal quality of sleep. However, sleeping in different beds was not necessarily correlated to either lack of physical affection or sexual activity, as "[w]here partners slept separately, bonding rituals included starting the night together, later decamping and reconvening again in bed the next morning" (34). Nonetheless, the gender implications of sexual activity being emplaced in either the man's or the woman's own bed in heterosexual sexual encounters are under-researched. Studies on gender in which beds are mentioned tend to refer to sexual violence (Wood et al.), adultery (Moreno and Kahumoku-Fessler), or physical disability (Browne and Russell), in which the bed becomes the site of gender abuse, family shaming, and adaptation to different forms of sexuality, respectively. A number of Crozier's poems feature the couple's bed as the locus of both sensuality and implicit sexuality, with an emphasis on its metaphorical implications for both sensuality and sexuality.

The emplaced embodiment in the lover's bed suggests familiarity but not full trust in the persona's lover at the beginning of Crozier's career, as illustrated by "Haiku Variation" (1979). The poem depicts a request of the ungendered persona to her lover. Namely, the persona demands: "tonight, let me bathe / in feathers from wind-white

hawks" (ll. 1-2). The use of the adverb "tonight" suggests that the persona wishes to try something different, as if it were a special occasion. Specifically, line 2 suggests that the speaker intends to modify her embodiment of sensuality as a result of her metaphorical bath in feathers. Such a singular bath, given that white hawks (*Pseudastur albicollis*) inhabit the tropical forests of Central and South America (eBird) and, therefore, would be an exotic species – with the sexual connotations that the term exotic carries – in Canada, functions as a pre-coital ritual of sorts, as is implicit in the lines "before you take me / to your bed" (ll. 3-4). Feathers remind the reader of softness, which is related to both the softness of the skin after a bath and the softness of a bed, a pillow and, in turn, tender love-making. On the other hand, a hawk is a bird of prey and, therefore, the persona seems to wish to strengthen herself before the sexual encounter; as if the persona was afraid to become a prey, as a metaphor for an object of desire, rather than a predator, as a metaphor for the subject of desire. Indeed, line 3 suggests that the lover is in control as well as a certain violence in his eagerness to have sexual intercourse with the female speaker. The poem thus suggests a certain unease on the persona's part regarding her lover's attitude toward her, especially considering that the persona emphasizes that she is taken to her lover's bed, and not their shared bed. Likewise, the fact that the persona needs to be granted permission by her lover to symbolically bathe in feathers reinforces a certain power imbalance on the persona's part.

However, in Crozier's 1985 collection, namely *The Garden Going on without Us*, both the complicity and trust shared by the lovers in bed can already be observed, as depicted in "Love Poem, after Rain." Such a change from Crozier's 1979 to her 1985 collection implies an evolution in Crozier's treatment of theme. Specifically, the poem portrays a sensual feeding game which involves a couple sharing a special treat, namely a puffball mushroom. The ungendered persona picks one of such mushrooms from "the

base of the pine" (l. 3) and takes it to her lover "lazy in bed" (l. 8). The use of the definite article to refer to the pine suggests that this is a tree that both the persona and her lover know well, probably the only pine tree in their garden – even if the word garden is not explicitly mentioned in the poem. This familiarity with their environment allows the readers to picture the lovers at home. Then, the lover breaks the mushroom in two with his / her teeth to share it with the persona, who delights in touching with her tongue "the shape of [his / her lover's] teeth" (l. 13) on the puff ball. The persona does not explain either whether the playful sharing of the mushroom leads to a sexual encounter or not, or if it is a post-coital ritual. In its stead, the persona describes the taste of the mushroom in the concluding lines – "Earth and darkness / and last night's rain" (ll. 15-16) – as an embodiment of the natural elements from which the mushroom has grown. The persona's emplaced embodiment of sensuality is thus favoured by both the garden treats and the supportive home environment, which allows the persona's lover to wait for her relaxedly in bed while she collects the mushrooms.

The emplaced embodiment of the personae's sensuality in "The Brain" (1992) also depicts the couple's bed as a relaxing milieu that favours the lovers' intimacy. The poem contains an imaginary conversation about the brain between the medieval Catholic Dominican bishop, philosopher, theologian and scientist Saint Albertus Magnus, and a woman who is described as his lover. The conversation takes place in the bed they share. The woman's hair let loose is a symbol of her sensuality, whose origins can be traced back to the Bible. More specifically, long hair has been associated with sensuality in Western thought since the biblical event of the sinful woman who anointed Jesus' feet and dried them with her long hair (Luke 7: 36-50). The poem contrasts St. Albertus Magnus' belief in the coldness that inhabits the brain with the warmth of his mistress' brain: "Yes, he says out loud, your brain is warmer / than most others" (ll. 37-38). Such a reasoning seems

to arise from the affection they have for each other, which is shown both in his description of her brain as a comforting haven of sorts in the previous quotation, and her tender attitude towards him in the following lines: "As she lies back down in bed, / curling her body around his cold limbs, / her hair draped across his shoulder" (ll. 48-50). St. Albertus Magnus' lover is depicted as offering warmth to him, both with her body and her hair. In this vein, Rahn et al. state that "touch is the most immediate and effective non-verbal means of communicating affection and creating intimacy" (31). As such, St. Albertus Magnus' lover's hair is not only a sensual element, but also a bodily feature that is used to provide care and love.[36]

Female hair as a sensual element is also the main theme in the prose poem "Bobby Pins" (2013), in which the history of the invention of such a hair complement is explained. The poem is emplaced in the familiarity of the home and family: "The man who invented them adored his mother and, later, his wife. The proof is the hours he devoted to preventing the hair pin from scratching the scalp. After many experiments with the family's St. Bernard, he came up with plastic polyps, the size of the head of an ant, to cover the tips." Later in the prose poem, the persona moves from the anecdote of the bobby pin inventor's life to its aesthetic purpose: "He'd be the first to admit bobby pins are dull and unattractive. Still, he had an eye for beauty. Look at what they do." This allows the persona to reveal the erotic undertones present in bobby pins, as they "expose a woman's neck, modestly reveal the delectable whorl of an ear." Moreover, they can also lead to a sexual encounter, as "[t]hey are responsible for that intimate command, 'Let down your hair.'" Subsequent to love-making, bobby pins often go missing, to be "found

[36] Whereas the reader is aware of the contradiction in terms that having a lover has for a Catholic clergyman who has taken the vow of chastity, Crozier's own version of a moment in St. Albertus Magnus' life focuses on him as a philosopher rather than as a clergyman. Therefore, Crozier does not explicitly voice any criticism towards the breaking of the vow of chastity by a member of the Catholic Church in the poem.

days later under the bed or inside the pillow slip." Once found, the missing bobby pin "carries love's rusted lustre, that small ache." The bed thus functions as the emplacement of implicit sexuality, which supports the couple's intimacy. This is shown by the metaphors of "rusted lustre," which stands for a woman's sweaty body, and that of "that small ache," which would stand for her orgasm. Hence, these lines suggest that the bobby pin symbolises women's embodiment of both sensuality and sexuality in their exclusive, everyday use of the bobby pin. This is in line with research, as accessories are considered one of the elements, alongside garments, perfume and gait, among others, through which one can perform one's sensuality (Arrizón 193).

Nevertheless, the embodiment of both sensuality and implicit sexuality in Crozier's poetry is not only emplaced in or around the bed, but also in another part of the house, namely in the bathtub, as is the case of "A Love Poem" (1988). This poem is related to "Obsession" (2011) because they both share a depiction of sensuality which is connected to the personae's interrelationship with the non-human world, even if the emplaced embodiment of implicit sexuality in "Obsession" is in the bed.

The emplaced embodiment of sensuality of a naked woman's body in the bathtub in "A Love Poem" spurs her imagination. Crozier plays with the readers' expectations in the poem, as the beautiful woman's breasts floating in the bath do not either become objects of desire or sources of inspiration for her writer lover in the poem. In its stead, the woman's desire is hinted at by the ideas that cross her mind while having a bath, which position the bathtub as a supportive environment for the persona's desire. Specifically, she has a voyeuristic fantasy of sorts in which black beetles spy on her: "The beautiful woman in her bath, / . . . / thinks of cockroaches / watching from the wall" (ll. 1, 4-5). Her further thoughts while bathing involve her writer lover and cockroaches rather than herself enhancing his creativity:

The woman thinks of cockroaches

drawn to the white,

the mystery of the page

just before her lover writes

the first word

and the word is changed

because suddenly a cockroach

scratches its own invisible text,

a story within a story, (ll. 7-15)

The cockroaches are endowed with the power of creativity in the poem and even become the beautiful woman's lover's muses instead of herself, as "Cockroaches skate on his thoughts" (l. 25). Once more, and contrary to expectations, the woman in the poem does not seem to mind that these insects conjured up in her mind take her place as her lover's muses. On the contrary, she believes in the honesty and relevance of the cockroaches' writings: "What they write is truer than anything / he has ever said to her. / Solitary and ancient, / without promise, without grief" (ll. 28-31). Lines 28 and 29 hint at a certain mistrust of the woman towards her lover's words for her, in a similar way to "Haiku Variation." However, no further explanation or clarification is provided in the poem as regards the relationship between the woman and her writer lover.

The fact that cockroaches abound in literature, creative art and in indigenous mythology leads literary animal studies scholar Marion Copeland to posit that "the cockroach is an archetypal image" (81). This notwithstanding, the cockroach as archetype may carry different associated meanings, as Copeland explains when discussing the symbolic role of the cockroach in Aristophanes' *Peace*:

We see here a yoking of opposites that occurs frequently in cockroach art, since

> the cockroach symbolizes both power and weakness, light and darkness in the same play. Perhaps the interplay of opposites suggests the degree to which Western humans struggle between the dualities imposed by our prevailing systems of philosophy and religion, a division that represses the secrets the cockroach persists in bringing to the surface (80).

On the other hand, the woman's emphasis in Crozier's poem on the creative skills of the cockroaches is in line with Crozier's willingness to pay close attention to all kinds of non-human animals in order to have a deeper insight into animals that are commonly considered pests and therefore disregarded. Indeed, Crozier's admiration of cockroaches[37] in lines 30 and 31 might stem from the fact that cockroaches are "any of about 4,600 species of insects that are among the most primitive living winged insects, appearing today much like they do in fossils that are more than 320 million years old" (Britannica). In addition, the woman in the poem's both empowerment of the cockroaches and lack of jealousy of their role as muses of her lover's denotes an attitude of humility towards the non-human world.

In a similar vein to "A Love Poem," "Obsession" deals with both the persona's thoughts and attitude towards an insect that is not commonly well-appreciated, namely the Miller moth. This is the name by which the adult army cutworm (*Euxoa auxiliaris*) is commonly known by. It is considered a pest, because in its yearly migration, it feeds on crops and flowers, damaging them (Manning). As Muhammad Mansour Abahsain explains, in Persian literature, the moth was a common symbol in Sufi literature. "From earliest times, Arabic literature found the habits of moths, in particular their fateful attraction to flame, to be an imaginative motif for satire, panegyric and love poetry" (21).

[37] Crozier's admiration for cockroaches finds its continuation in the poem "Cockroaches," in *What the Soul Doesn't Want* (2017). However, this poem does not carry any metaphorical associations with human sexuality.

Crozier might have been informed of such literature through her reading of Rumi, as a ghazal master, from whose poetry in English translation she learnt, together with that of Ghalib and Háfiz, in order to write her own ghazals (Afterword to *Bones in Their Wings* 58). Abahsain mentions an example of a poem by Rumi, in which he uses the moth motif in a love poem ("O lover, do not be less than a moth / When would a lover avoid the flame?"), even though he claims that Rumi does not use such a symbol in a recurrent fashion (23). Like in "A Love Poem," the persona's thoughts in Crozier's "Obsession" are the ones that materialise the moth: "I think *moth* and the Miller moth / appears. Out of my mind / it sits on the kitchen windowpane" (ll. 1-3). The mention of the kitchen locates the persona at home from the beginning of the poem, which sets the mood of both familiarity and routine, both as regards the killing of house insects and the experience of intimacy that is depicted later on in the poem. The persona considers different possible ways of thinking about the Miller moth that makes it appear more aesthetically beautiful and relevant with the aim for the persona not to wish to kill it: "I've done my best to see / this moth's large extended family / as things of use or beauty" (ll. 11-13). Such an idea is also present in another poem within the same collection, namely "Finding Four Ways to Celebrate the Huge Moths that Keep Me Awake by Banging Between the Blind and Window and Falling on My Pillow." One of the ways the speaker manages to "stay the murderer in [her]" (l. 27) is by means of comparing the moth's antennae to "two delicate pubic hairs / a lover might leave on the sheets" (ll. 22-23). Crozier thus finds the fragility of the Miller moth's antennae appealing in her comparison of them to pubic hair lost during an implicit sexual encounter, which is reminiscent of the Persian moth symbol. The speaker's description of pubic hair suggests Crozier's presentation of sexuality as an embodied practice of aesthetic beauty, which is emplaced in the bed, as suggested by the noun 'sheets.' This contrasts with the ironic prose poem "God of Sex" (2018), in the sense

that the persona compares human sexuality to that of plants and the result is that that of humans has no beauty in it if compared to that of flowers.[38]

All in all, sensuality and implicit sexuality in the home environment are usually emplaced in the bed, with the exception of "A Love Poem" (1988), in which the persona is in the bathtub. However, this specific location is not given prominence apart from being a backdrop for the personae's embodiment of both sensuality and explicit sexuality. Such an embodiment is sometimes portrayed without a specific reference to gender, whereas on other occasions the female persona's long hair is the one that embodies sensuality. In Crozier's earlier poetry collections, namely *Crow's Black Joy* (1979) and *Angels of Flesh, Angels of Silence* (1988), there is a certain mistrust for the lover on the persona's part. Nonetheless, the poem contained in the collection *The Garden Going on without Us* (1985) shows the couple's full trust for each other. Given that gender issues and a critique of patriarchy are prominent in Crozier's early poetry, the collections published in the mid to late 1980s, which are Crozier's sixth and seventh poetry collections, can be seen as a transition to Crozier's mature poetry. That is probably the reason why notions of mistrust for the persona's partner in the emplaced embodiment of sensuality and implicit sexuality in the home sphere figure in the 1988 poetry collection, but not in subsequent ones, as exemplified in the examined poems from the 1992, 2011 and 2013 collections.

3.1.2. Sexuality vis-à-vis Love

Crozier's poems about the embodiment of the interplay between sexuality and love as emplaced in the home environment are mostly about couples in long-term romantic relationships, in which the partners either cohabitate or are married. Nevertheless, Crozier also depicts two instances of promiscuity and several different instances of the bearing of

[38] An in-depth analysis of this poem, "God of Sex" (2018), falls beyond the scope of this chapter as it does not portray a specific emplaced embodiment of sexuality.

family relationships for the couple's sexuality. More specifically the following sub-subsections will allow for a more nuanced analysis of the different sub-themes regarding the embodiment of sexuality and love as emplaced at home: Playfulness, everyday life, memories of the past, lack of sexual encounters, human sexuality and relationship with non-human nature, promiscuity, and the effects of family relationships on a couple's sexuality.

3.1.2.1. Playfulness

Crozier depicts the emplaced embodiment of playfulness during sexual activity in "My New Old Man, He's So Good" (1980) and "My Last Erotic Poem" (2011). Three decades separate the publication of the two poems; Crozier was thirty-two and sixty-three years old, respectively. Nonetheless, both poems discuss the implications of ageing for their love relationship and sexual activity from a positive stance. That is, the speakers in both poems accept the ageing process as an intrinsic part of the life-course and employ humour as a strategy to empower their ageing selves in a Western society that devalues older bodies. As sociologists of ageing Paul Higgs and Chris Gilleard argue, "many of the key *corporeal* processes of ageing are perceived as making the human body appear less attractive, lacking both health and desirability" ("Ideology" 1624). A process that is especially gendered, as sociologist of ageing and the body Laura Hurd-Clarke examines. Hurd-Clarke claims that "the feminine beauty ideal and the importance given to female appearances disadvantage older women and augment their social exclusion in later life" ("Women" 104).

In the erotic poem "My New Old Man, He's So Good," the persona describes the sexual prowess of her new partner, as suggested by the use of the colloquial term "old man" to refer to a lover or partner in the poem title. The speaker's new boyfriend's sexual prowess results from an implicit greater sexual experience than the persona's: "in bed,

does tricks, can / come on his head or / swinging from the light / enter me, a cork, Pop!! (ll. 1-4). Both the onomatopoeia at the end of the quote and the description of the scene is reminiscent of circus-like pirouettes, which contribute to creating a somewhat humorous tone. The persona's partner uses the bedroom's pieces of furniture as elements that contribute towards his perceived sexual prowess. The persona also describes her active and empowered role during sexual intercourse, in which she is on top of her partner and succeeds in making him reach the climax repeatedly: "I move over him / my slippery skin, snake / swallows mouse, he dies / inside me often" (ll. 7-10). However, the emphasis, as already suggested by the title of the poem, is on the persona's partner and not herself. As such, the persona does not describe her own sexual pleasure, unlike most of Crozier's poems about sexuality, in which the persona describes her own feelings towards the sexual encounter. While the persona's gender is not made explicit in the poem, the fact that the persona describes herself metaphorically as a snake and her partner's penis as a mouse, suggests that the persona is a woman, as snakes were first associated to women as their enemies in the Bible. This notwithstanding, in Crozier's poetry, both the woman and the snake are liberated from patriarchal constraints that disempower both of them, as can be observed in poems like "Fear of Snakes" (1988), "Mother Tongue" (1988) and "Afterwords" (1988). The conclusive lines in the poem offer a stark contrast with the comic introduction, which presents sexual intercourse as something light and not necessarily related to a romantic relationship. Specifically, the poem ends in a sexual innuendo, which suggests oral sex, while at the same time the persona moves beyond the merely sexual to incorporate an element of genuine care for her lover's feelings: "I breath / him into life, lick him / from darkness, his and mine / or just the night" (ll. 10-13). Therefore, the final lines in the poem emphasise the importance of sexuality for the persona as a way of both showing love to her partner and of overcoming emotional issues,

as symbolised by the word "darkness." Indeed, according to psychology, "the attainment of sexual pleasure with a specific partner, when accompanied by affectionate feelings, is likely to increase the desire for prolonged and frequent closeness and the likelihood of attachment formation" (Mizrahi et al. 468).

Moving into young old age, "My Last Erotic Poem" presents lovemaking as an important bonding activity in a couple. In order to avoid a misreading of the analysis, it must be clarified that Crozier's view of sexuality in older adulthood – as that of middle age – is devoid of any connotations related to "sexually active seniors as part of successful ageing (or 'non-ageing')" (Sandberg, "Affirmative Old Age" 14), as suggested in the poem when the persona confesses that having sex is not a priority for this couple, as some nights they prefer doing other activities: "[…] Face it, / some nights we'd rather eat a Häagen-Dazs ice cream bar / or watch a movie starring Nick Nolte who looks worse than us. / Some nights we'd rather stroke the cats" (ll. 21-24). Moreover, Crozier seems to advocate for lightness and humour in this poem as regards the bodily changes the couple's bodies in the poem have experienced with the passing of time: "our once-not-unattractive flesh / now loose as unbaked pizza dough / […] / our faithless bums crepey, collapsed?" (ll. 8-9, 18). The same is true for the loss of perception in some of the senses: "We have to wear our glasses to see down there! / When you whisper what you want I can't hear, / but do it anyway, and somehow get it right" (ll. 19-21). Crozier's playful depiction of sexuality in young old age is reinforced by the use of onomatopoeic words describing the sounds that the old body makes during sexual intercourse: "Who wants to hear about two old lovers / slapping together like water hitting mud […]?" (ll. 11-12). In this sense, literary critic Wayne C. Booth acknowledges that tackling the problems of the aging experience by means of humour encourages readers to do the same (202, 205). In this sense, Crozier's portrayal of sexuality in "My Last Erotic Poem" is in line with age

scholar Zoe Brennan's statement that Lessing, Carter and Diski, among others, "challenge the construction of old age as a period devoid of sexual feeling […] thus mock[ing] the idea that sexual fantasy and expression in old age is abnormal, taboo or inappropriate" (77). Crozier also questions the stereotypical social perception of older adults as drinking soft beverages and being pessimistic:

> Who wants to hear about
> two old farts getting it on
> in the back seat of a Buick,
> in the garden among vermiculite,
> in the kitchen where we should be drinking
> ovaltine and saying no? (ll. 1-6)

What is more, Crozier underscores the older persona and her partner's creativity to engage in sexual activity in different places, such as in a car, the garden and the kitchen. Therefore, their emplaced embodiment of sexuality in unusual places underscores their agency as older persons who deconstruct ageist stereotypes regarding old age. That is to stay that they empower themselves to continue engaging in sexual activity despite being older and thus not socio-culturally expected to do so. Finally, the last two lines of the poem defiantly conclude that "our old bodies [are] doing what you know / bodies do, worn and beautiful and shameless" (ll. 28-29). This ending constructs a final positive image of the external appearance of the ageing body, which, as gerontologist Mike Hepworth has stated, is a rare vision in Western culture (*Stories of Ageing* 50).

3.1.2.2. Everyday Life

As examined in the previous subsection, sexuality is sometimes described humorously in Crozier's work as a playful activity to show love in a couple. However, the embodiment of sexuality in a stable romantic relationship is also depicted as an everyday activity with

different implications in “The Goldberg Variations” (1988) and “A House to Live in” (1988).

On the one hand, in “The Goldberg Variations,” Crozier presents sexuality as a routine activity in which the persona feels emotionless due to an unresolved mourning process. The persona describes her present moment as a time in which she is “so unconnected / to everything” (ll. 1-2). So much so that she is no longer moved by either natural elements such as light and rain, or non-human beings such as her cat. In other words, she is detached from both her emotions and senses and her environment. Thus, she is in a state of emotional disembodiment and dis-emplacement. Actually, the persona’s numbness seems to have been triggered by listening to Canadian pianist “Glenn Gould playing the Goldberg Variations / his last time” (ll. 4-5). In this vein, the poem appears as Crozier’s homage to Glenn Gould, who had passed away in 1982. As such, the persona’s feelings could be related to a bereavement process of sorts for Mr Gould’s death, who she seems to have admired deeply, as the following lines suggest:

> . . . Gould’s fingers on ivory keys.
> It isn’t Bach he’s playing
> from the grave, the stopped heart.
> . . .
> Not Bach, but music before it became
> the least bit human. (ll. 13-20)

This quotation also shows how much the persona believed in the greatness of Glenn Gould’s skill as a pianist, since she implies that his performance of Bach’s Goldberg Variations returned music to its essence in a pre-human stage. According to philosopher Michael Cholbi, “[g]enuine grief at the deaths of those with whom we share no intimacies (admired political leaders or artists, say) is possible because what they do or have done is

perceived as enmeshed with what we desire for ourselves (or for the world at large)" (496). The persona's feeling of unconnectedness is so striking that she even finds it difficult to recognize the worth of her partner's daily actions and loving attitude: "The endless variations of you, / making coffee, ordering seeds for the garden, / calling me upstairs to love" (ll. 6-8). Nevertheless, these lines point towards the speaker's partner's emotional support as a catalyst to help the persona manage grief. As philosophers Matthew Ratcliffe and Eleanor A. Byrne claim, "how grief is experienced depends on how we relate to particular people (the living and the dead) and to the social world more generally" (84). Therefore, the persona's progress towards the resolution of grief, which is suggested at the end of the poem, seems to have been facilitated by her arousal to her partner's caresses:

> Is this ecstasy,
>
> this strange remoteness? Rain falling
>
> from such a distance. Gould's Goldberg
>
> Variations. Your hands. The cold
>
> cold blue. My skin. (ll. 21-25)

The rapture the persona feels suggests a combination of the excitement for Gould's excellent music with the anticipation of her orgasm. As such, the poem conveys the complexities of human emotions, as we can feel both sadness and extreme joy at the same time.

On the other hand, "A House to Live in" depicts the inextricable relationship between the ungendered persona's love and sexual desire for her partner, as the persona asserts that "[w]hen I say a name / it is yours / and now I can't imagine / life without you" (ll. 6-7), meaning without her partner. Such a statement attests to the persona's internalisation of their relationship as a stable one. The persona's relationship with her

partner is based on the persona's sensorial experience of him / her, which suggests both sensuality and sexuality: "From your smell, / your touch, the taste / of your skin // I build a house" (ll. 8-11). These lines imply that the persona has a deep knowledge of her partner's embodiment; a physicality that hints at the persona's sexual arousal for her partner. In turn, the persona establishes a strong love relationship with her partner. This is suggested by both the house-building metaphor and the last two lines in the poem, namely "all the doors / swinging wide" (ll. 13-14), which depict the persona's openness to love and to a long-term relationship with her partner. More specifically, such a house-building metaphor significantly features the partner's body as a site of both pleasure and safety, thus becoming the body a place of sorts. Hence, the poem, as a whole, functions as an extended metaphor of the emplaced embodiment of emotional attachment, sensuality and sexuality in a couple who wishes to cohabitate. Particularly, the poem illustrates an instance of secure attachment in couples, which is "characterised by a sense of self-worth and striving for intimate and mutual nurturing relationships" (Mizrahi et al. 467).

3.1.2.3. Memories of the Past

Crozier's portrayal of the embodiment of the interconnection between love and sexuality in a couple as emplaced at home is also affected by both welcoming and harmful memories of past routines and events, as depicted in "I Know I'm Not Supposed to Say It, But" (1995) and "The Other Woman" (1999).

"I Know I'm Not Supposed to Say It, But" deals with the persona's regretting the absence of contemporary "smokers [and] heavy drinkers" (l. 1). The persona provides a number of examples of people who used to abuse smoking and drinking. One of these examples is the persona's partner, who used to smoke after sexual intercourse: "I miss the post-coital / smoke of my lover as he raised two fingers / that smelled of me to his mouth

and inhaled / again and again" (ll. 7-10). These lines suggest that the speaker's nostalgia for the past, as connected to the materiality of the couple's post-coital bodies, is related to Nancy Tuana's concept of "viscous porosity." Tuana "employ[s] the conceptual metaphor of viscous porosity as a means to better understand the rich interactions between beings through which subjects are constituted out of relationality" (188). Reading Crozier's lines through the lens of "viscous porosity," the speaker's lover inhales the persona's intimate fluids present on his fingers. By so doing, the persona feels that her fluids permeating her partner's body strengthen their intimate bond. Other examples of alcohol and smoke abuse are the persona's father, who despite being ill in the hospital, continued drinking and smoking regularly; and the persona's mother-in-law, who smoked in excess but did not consider it damaging because she "insisted / she didn't inhale" (ll. 14-15). The reason why the persona misses such unhealthy behaviours is because these people brought joy to her life, as the persona confesses in the concluding lines to the poem: "I miss climbing the stairs to bed, draped in their silky / cape of smoke, their singing and jubilation, the small / bonfires of their bodies burning through / what little was left of the night" (ll. 35-38). That is to say that the persona's emplaced embodiment of both smoke and merriment used to contribute to her sense of transgressiveness. The reason why the smokers and drinkers that the persona describes in the poem no longer engage in such behaviours is not explicitly mentioned. Nevertheless, the reader assumes that it is either because these people have stopped smoking and drinking or because they have already passed away. Therefore, in this latter case, what the persona misses is the people rather than their addictive behaviours.

Contrary to "I Know I'm Not Supposed to Say It," "The Other Woman" is about hurtful memories of the persona and her partner's struggle to establish a strong love relationship despite the persona's partner's ex-wife's manipulative efforts to regain her

former husband's love. The persona reminisces the events that happened twenty years before, as a crucial moment in the persona's relationship with her partner. The persona realized how affected her partner was by his ex-wife's pressure to get back with him by the unconfident way he made love to her:

> The first time he visited his sons
> she wore clothes he'd never seen before,
> hair shampooed and newly permed.
> Stay the night, she said, save the price of a room.
> Home with me his hands stammered
> down my belly in a language they'd forgotten,
> one with several words for guilt and pain.
> I almost lost him then. (ll. 15-22)

The persona describes their initial relationship as being dominated by debauchery: "Every night a bottle of wine, a cheap motel, / we went so far we came back animal / and wild. No child could hold us" (ll. 12-14). These lines contrast with those of the previous quotation – i.e., lines 15-22 – in the sense that the personae's embodiment of sexuality in a motel is depicted as psychologically unhealthy inasmuch as it represents a self-centred relationship; that is, a relationship in which the lovers have no regard for the hurt it causes to others, as suggested by lines 13 and 14. On the other hand, sexuality at home symbolises a more stable and mature relationship. Such a difference is not common in Crozier's poetry, though. Despite the importance of sexuality in the persona's relationship with her partner, the persona emphasizes the relevance of the strong emotional bond with her partner as essential to her well-being. So much so that she confesses to have thought to herself, while in a water activity in which her partner was rowing with his sons, that if they had been drowning, she might not have been able to rescue his children. This is

because she was emotionally clinging to her nascent relationship with her partner, to the extent that the persona thought herself unable to leave her emotional emplacement. In this sense, the persona's fear to lose her partner suggests that their incipient relationship was lacking in solidity:

> If the child had been drowning,
> if his father had turned to me
> and the little one, free,
> kicked into deeper water,
> I couldn't have moved,
> couldn't have saved them,
> so fierce I was
> holding on to my new life. (ll. 42-49)

Further, if seen from the lens of embodiment, the persona's embodiment of love for her partner might have prevented her from embodying any other role, such as that of the hero who saves the children. While the persona is not proud of this feeling, she is brave enough to acknowledge it. In this sense, she seems to be aware of her limiting embodiment of love in her use of the past tense, suggesting that her romantic relationship is a non-limiting, healthy one in the present time of the narrative.

3.1.2.4. Absence of an Embodiment of Sexuality

When discussing the relationships established between love and sexuality in Crozier's poetry, the absence of sexuality must also be considered, even if not a large number of poems illustrate this situation. Such instances of temporary asexuality published upon Crozier's entrance into young-old age – specifically, when Crozier was fifty-seven and sixty-three years old, respectively – add to Crozier's portrayal of a complex interplay

between the embodiment of love and sexuality, which thus renders her representations realistic. However, as gerontologist Merryn Gott points out, “there is nothing inherently ‘sexual’ or ‘asexual’ about old age; later life is excluded from our contemporary sexualized world because the meanings which underpin dominant representations of old age are anti-sexual, while those underpinning sexuality itself are inextricably linked to youth” (11). Actually, the construct of asexuality in old age has garnered especial attention from age scholars (Sandberg, “Sex, Sexuality” 218), insofar as old age has been traditionally associated with lack of sexuality and is still nowadays an ageist stereotype for some (Berdychevsky and Nimrod 227) and a reality, either forced or voluntary, for others. Nevertheless, lack of sexual activity – particularly sexual intercourse – in later life can be liberating for some, especially in the case of older women (Gott 22). Crozier’s poetic engagement with an absence of sexuality is presented in the context of a lack of sexual interest due to the speaker’s partner’s tiredness and to the persona’s illness. Specifically, three poems in Crozier’s work suggest an absence of sexuality in the home sphere, namely “Hoping to Fix up, a Little, This World” (2005), “The Weight of August” (2005) and “Angel of Loneliness” (2011).

“Hoping to Fix up, a Little, This World” deals with the ungendered persona’s observation of her two cats and fish as a way of passing the time, given that the persona’s partner went to sleep early once more: “and you, my love, go to bed / again too soon” (ll. 7-8). The persona misses her partner although she does not explicitly mention what she would be doing with him or her if the partner was awake: “How long / your sleeping makes the night” (ll. 18-19). Yet, these lines suggest that the persona also misses the sexual intimacy with her partner, as it is a common activity to be done in a couple’s bed at night besides sleeping and discussing the day’s activities and concerns. As Rahn et al. found in their study with baby boomer participants, “bedtime activities included both

verbal and non-verbal communication, such as kissing, cuddling, 'snuggling' and sexual activity" (34). In other words, the bed emplaces the embodiment of love and affection in a couple. The persona's lack of embodiment of sexual activity – as one of the elements that contributes to a couple's closeness (Træen et al. 816) – is substituted by her emplacement in the garden with her cats, which allows her to both observe and acknowledge their greater sensorial abilities: "Dusk gives way to darkness / and leaves behind its watchfulness. / The cats absorb it. They see what I am / missing, what I can't make out" (ll. 10-13). The human persona's learning from the non-human world and her humble acceptance of her less developed sense of perception as a human suggests an attitude of humility towards the non-human world, which is essential to wish to protect it. As ecocritic Josh A. Weinstein explains:

> In our time, a time of growing concern about global warming, air and water degradation, and an overall anxiety with regard to environmentally unsustainable development, humility, and particularly an ecological humility, helps provide a framework for approaching the world in a manner that respects not only our own narrow interests but those of the other elements of our ecosystems. (760)

Such environmental stewardship is the one the title of the poem – "Hoping to Fix up, a Little, This World" – alludes to at a macro-level. On a different layer of meaning, at a micro-level, the title refers to the problems in the persona's own portion of the world – namely her home; thus, the title refers to the persona's wish to be able to solve whatever issues are associated with the persona's partner's decision to go to bed early.

Similarly, "The Weight of August" describes what the ungendered persona is doing while her partner is asleep. The persona is in the garden about to open a book and she seems to miss her partner, as she is sitting alone in their loveseat, which is a piece of furniture designed for two people. The garden setting is the one that allows the persona

to express her mood, as the persona is sitting outdoors observing the natural and man-planted environment. However, the persona is not impartial in her observation of her surroundings. On the contrary, the persona's tone is pessimistic throughout the poem when natural elements and man-made tools related to man-planted nature are described. As such, the flowers in the garden are withered: "The exhaustion of flowers, mid-afternoon" (l. 1); the sunshine is no longer interesting: "the stale sun's spill and stutter / across the lawn" (ll. 2-3); and the device that waters the lawn makes the persona ponder about the fact that everything has a stopping point, a *mors vincit omnia* of sorts: "a sprinkler lifting / its tired arc and letting it fall. All things / moving to an end" (ll. 3-5). In addition, the persona's gloomy mood is reinforced both by the mention of "bitterness," when describing the vegetables that she will prepare for dinner, and the following assertion: "We live with who we are and not / what we once wanted" (ll. 14-15). This statement suggests a process of maturation on the persona's part that has led to acceptance of change as an intrinsic element of life. The persona's maturity contrasts with her pessimistic, depressed attitude: "Late August, / its weight on my shoulders, my hand / not on your skin" (ll. 15-17). Specifically, these lines imply that the persona's sombre mood is caused by a lack of physical intimate contact with her partner. Such an emotional response is consistent with the literature on marital satisfaction, as "higher quality couple relationships are associated with fewer depressive symptoms" (Yan et al. 1207). In other words, the fact that the persona misses some degree of intimacy with her partner and is therefore depressed as a result of its absence suggests a decrease in the quality of their relationship.

As different from both "Hoping to Fix up, a Little, This World" and "The Weight of August," "Angel of Loneliness" deals with the loneliness of a woman caused by the fact that she has not had intimate physical contact with anybody for a long time: "her

body / all these years untouched, / unfeathered" (ll. 14-16). The persona does not clarify the reason why the woman is alone, but the way the lines are phrased suggests that this woman is an older widow. Her lack of intimacy may stem from various reasons, such as a personal choice not to have another partner; the assimilation of the socio-cultural construct of asexuality in old age; and a lack of available partners "for older women as compared with older men due to gender differences in longevity" (Gott 81). Nonetheless, the poem does not clarify which is the reason for her lack of human intimacy. The absence of human touch contrasts with the permeating presence of the snow, the wind, and the cold temperatures while she is walking "from the back door / to the birdfeeder" (ll. 6-7), which are so intense that press against her body: "[wind] fashions wings of such a force and size / she can feel the muscles / underneath the pinions as they push her back / and sweep across the yard" (ll. 8-11). Likewise, the cold temperatures get under the woman's skin: "It's the cold – / this winter there's too much of it – / that makes its presence known, / inside and out" (ll. 16-19). As such, the older woman's emplacement in the harsh weather conditions of the prairies in winter is metaphorically analogous to her embodiment of coldness, not only because of the freezing temperatures, but especially due to her lack of physical intimacy with a partner.

The fact that Crozier uses the lyrical I in "Hoping to Fix up, a Little, This World" and "The Weight of August," but she decides to describe the experience of the woman in "Angel of Loneliness" from a third-person perspective, suggests that she can relate – or may have even experienced – the situations in the first two poems, while a certain distance is created with the woman in the third poem, as if it were a situation Crozier had observed but not experienced herself. Crozier's depiction of the woman's feelings is very vivid, which implies that she may have seen this in a person close to her. In addition, the line "all these years untouched" suggests that the woman is in her old age. This resonates with

other poems in Crozier's oeuvre in which Crozier alludes to a mother figure who has been widowed for a number of years and, as a result, feels lonely.

3.1.2.5. Sexuality and Relationship with Non-Human Nature

Diverse embodiments of sexuality in couples are depicted in connection to the non-human world in Crozier's poetry. Emplaced either at home or in its surroundings, the couples' sexual experiences are influenced by each member's own relationship with non-human nature. Specifically, "He's Only a Cat" (1995), "Man from the Cariboo" (2015) and "Rewilding" (2015) depict the personae in relation to non-human animals, whereas "Turning on the Light" (2011) refers to non-human nature in general.

In "He's Only a Cat," the emplaced embodiment of sexuality in the couple's bed is affected by their cat's attitude. Specifically, the persona remembers that the cat used to be on their bed while the persona and her partner engaged in sexual activity and responded to her partner's sounds during his orgasm:

> The cat used to sit
> at the bottom of our bed
> when we made love
> and when my husband came,
> the cat would meow
> though I was the noisy one,
> and sometimes
> he'd even nip my husband's heel. (ll. 22-29)

The persona underscores the importance that her cat has for her, which is no less than the love she feels for a relative. Therefore, she deems pets in no way inferior to humans while she acknowledges that a lot of people do not share her view. As a result, her relationship to people changes depending on whether they value pets as equals or not:

I've been crying a week

over the cat. There are some

I can say this to and other

I cannot. *He's only a cat*,

many reply. I now divide

people into these two camps.

It's one way of knowing the world. (ll. 1-7)

Sociologist David Blouin, in his revision of the literature on the relations between people and their pets, references Arnold Arluke and Clinton Sanders' (2009) claim that "societies rank animals, like almost everything else, on a 'ladder of worth.' Most humans rank highest on this 'sociozoologic scale' followed by pets, which are valued for their relative tameness and acceptance of their place as close to, but lesser than humans" (859). Blouin concludes his literary review by offering a perspective that contradicts Crozier's persona's previously quoted statement, namely that human-animal relationships are complex and can, therefore, not be reduced to people who view their pets as objects versus those who regard their pets as subjects; the reason for this is that "[p]et owners' attitudes may change over time, change between different pets, or even change with a single pet, as situations in their lives also change" (865). On a different note, death anxiety over the cat's ill health is related in the poem to both past and future experiences of parental death. In the persona's father's case, he asked the doctors to stop his suffering, although this was not a legal practice in Canada when the poem was published,[39] and therefore his request was not granted. Nevertheless, this is a common practice in animals who are extremely ill and in pain:

[39] "In June 2016, the Parliament of Canada passed federal legislation that allows eligible Canadian adults to request medical assistance in dying." ("Canada's Medical Assistance in Dying (MAID) Law," *Government of Canada: Criminal Justice*, par. 5).

Animals have it lucky,

you can always put them under,

stop the suffering. I know

she’s thinking of my father,

those last months in the hospital. (ll. 35-39)

The persona also believes that her mother’s words about the possibility of euthanizing her cat and the fact that her father could not benefit from assisted death reflect the persona’s mother’s own death anxiety and fear of disease and pain in late life: “At seventy-five / she’s also trying to tell me / something about herself, / but what can I do?” (ll. 43-46). As psychologist Debra M. Bath posits, “[t]he ability to make sense of the loss [of a loved one] may be greatly influenced by an individual’s beliefs and fears about death” (423). In this sense, the persona’s mother seems to be undergoing both a grieving process for her late husband and experiencing death anxiety, also known as fear of death, and in this case, fear of dying in pain. Actually, death anxiety, which “reduces well-being and the will to live among elderly […] may be particularly high when death is being seen as associated with pain” (Assari and Lankarani n.p.). Even if the adult daughter persona is aware of her mother’s suffering, she does not seem to know how to help her besides offering emotional support throughout her mourning and death anxiety processes. Nevertheless, such a caring attitude on the daughter’s part, as well as the mother’s relatively open disclosure of her personal distress, will certainly be essential to the mother’s future well-being, as “mutual support among its [family] members contributes to adaptive adjustment to loss” (Delalibera et al. 1120). In this vein, pain is connected to pleasure – “[p]ain and pleasure, it’s become / an addition in our house” (ll. 30-31) –, as the emplaced embodiment of the couple’s sexuality in their marital bed is associated with (terminal) illness, death anxiety, and death of both human and non-human beings, particularly pets.

In a similar yet different vein, "Man from the Cariboo" connects the persona's sexual activity with her partner in relation to a semi-wild animal, namely a mare. The poem depicts the persona's sexual intercourse with the man from the Cariboo – an intermontane region of British Columbia – at her home, with an emphasis on her soothing tenderness towards him: "Above me in my bed, sunlight rode the saddle / Of his long back. Nothing could break him / Though my touch, strong and sure as water, / Calmed the tremors, untied the knots" (ll. 8-11). In these lines, the persona establishes an analogy between her lover and a horse due to the fact that he owns several of these animals. The analogy empowers the female persona, as she is compared to one of the most basic elements for life, namely water. Besides the healing power of her caresses, the fact that the couple's embodiment of sexual intercourse is emplaced in the female persona's own bed also suggests that she is in control of the situation despite him being on top of her during coitus. Actually, the persona confesses to her partner that she was looking forward to having a horse rather than a romantic relationship with a human male: "He rode into the yard with five white horses, / And he in the middle on a big black, / His face burnt and chapped. I wanted / A horse more than a man, I told him that" (ll. 1-4). As philosophy researcher Aura-Elena Schussler explains, for Greek philosopher Plato – as one of the main thinkers that has shaped Western thought – "the metaphor of the *black horse* symbolises the spirit driven by sensuality and the irrational desire of the body to lust, which is intrinsically connected to the sensible/sensory world" (78). Following Plato's belief system, the black horse in the poem works both at a metaphorical level to refer to carnal love and at a literal level, in terms of the connection established between the human female persona and the mare she buys to her lover: "Bargained for a mare with legs like rifles / That fired when she galloped, and me / No more than wind on her withers" (ll. 5-7). As these lines suggest, the persona's connection to the mare is one of mutual respect.

Despite the human riding the horse, like the man *riding* the woman during sexual intercourse, neither of them is presented as assuming a position of power or dominance, but of love and mutual care. That is why the persona feels free riding her mare and, in turn, she allows the mare to enjoy freedom too: “In the meadow, I wait for her to come to me / Without a rope or bridle, my hands / Offering her my hands” (ll. 18-20). The persona thus shows an attitude of humility towards the non-human world.

Diametrically opposed to “Man from the Cariboo” in terms of the human relationship to the non-human animal world, “Rewilding” presents a couple’s renewed passion that results from the husband’s hunting. At the beginning of the poem, the man’s hunting is presented as an activity that is only meant to reinforce the man’s masculinity: “Wanted an edge, he said, something in the forest / to ignite his fear” (ll. 1-2). Indeed, his hunting transforms the husband into such a primitive type of man that even his hunting partner becomes frightened: “[H]e even yelled and kept on / yelling. Scared his friend – “Put it [a fallen deer] down” – / but he went on” (ll. 7-9). The way these lines convey the husband’s brutish attitude suggests the omniscient speaker’s condemnation of hunting for the sole purpose of increasing a man’s ego. Likewise, the husband’s sex with his wife becomes bestial, as “what he did to her in bed – he didn’t want to / bathe – wasn’t making love but she didn’t care” (ll. 13-14). The couple’s increased libido is triggered by their renewed passion during sexual intercourse, which reminds them of their younger and more ardent selves at the beginning of their relationship: “On all fours, she was long and lean; thighs and biceps / too, found something from the past she’d lost. / It was like the first time they’d slept together / and the year before the child” (ll. 15-18). Such a description of both the changes in the wife’s body and the implicit changes in sexual activity after having given birth to their progeny suggests that the couple is middle-aged in the present time of the poem. The persona’s description of the woman’s body during

sexual activity seems to arise from her partner's male gaze, as he appears to be observing his wife's body from behind. In this sense, the poem illustrates the importance of male partners' reassuring comments of beauty towards their wives in order for them to be able to overcome the social beliefs that construct female ageing bodies as both unattractive and lacking sexual appeal. In psychologist Jane M. Ussher et al.'s own words, "partner response can influence how a woman feels about embodied changes, with positive consequences for sexual desire and response" (460). The wife reasons that her sexual appetite is due to the pre-historical instinct to feel sexually attracted to the male who brings meat to his female, as suggested by the concluding lines: "[I]t was the crack of wood on bone, the heat of his mouth / moving slowly up her legs, the feral muscles / carrying across the black plains of the past / the rotten kill to her door" (ll. 31-34). While this is not directly stated in the poem, the fact that the couple's sexual encounter is followed by the acknowledgement of his fears suggests that she knows him well and loves him dearly for his fear of losing what he wishes to protect the most, namely his family. Therefore, in this case, the couple's emplaced embodiment of sexuality is closely connected to love:

> […] Two nights earlier
> someone had kicked three pickets
> in the fence around the house and broken them in half.
> It happened again. She woke to find him
> crouched in the porch, naked in the dark,
> looking out, a baseball bat in his hand. "Still-hunter,"
> he said, she knew he liked the sound of it,
> "let him come to me." Back in bed when he slept again
> he ground his teeth, his legs panicked like a dog's. (ll. 18-26)

The title to the poem, “Rewilding,” refers to both the couple’s recovery of their sexual urge – that is, they have become sexually ‘wild’ again – and to “a movement” (l. 27) in which “[b]ears and wolves [are] let loose in English countrysides, / cougars lowered in nets to the mountains, rattlesnakes / dropped in the drylands where they could nest” (ll. 28-30). Therefore, the couple’s renewed embodiment of their sexualities “[b]ack home” (l. 12) is coterminous to the man’s emplaced embodiment of his new role as a hunter “in the forest” (l. 1). Rewilding is, in fact, a conservation strategy, which involves the restoration of local fauna (Perino et al. n.p.). To connect the practice of rewilding to the poem, biologist Richard T. Corlett explains that some of the human benefits of rewilding are “hunting opportunities and guided nature recreation” (130). As contradictory as hunting might sound for the preservation of endangered species, it turns out that “even today proceeds from hunting licenses in the United States (via the Pittman-Robertson Act) and Canada continue to generate hundreds of millions of dollars every year for wildlife management and habitat protection” (Arnett and Southwick, cited in Naidoo et al. 629). Moreover, hunting of certain species, such as large ungulates (i.e. deer), in case of human-perceived risks of overpopulation, has been proven to be necessary to avoid damage to both farmland and disease transmission to livestock (Carpio et al. 96). At this point, it is important to clarify that Crozier’s poems depict the need for humans to become stewards of the non-human world. Thus, Crozier is not in favour of hunting or killing animals, with only another poem in Crozier’s whole oeuvre, namely “Fall” (1983), in which hunting, particularly the hunting of snow geese, is depicted in relation to large numbers of such game birds.

Whereas “Rewilding” depicts a middle-aged couple’s renewed sexuality, “Turning on the Light” refers to the transformations of a young couple’s sexuality in rural nature. As a result of flies’ actions, “So many climb the string, they turn on the light” (l. 14), a

rural house "across the field" (l. 15) that was uninhabited and whose presence was not acknowledged becomes the focus of attention. A couple of young lovers who have regular sexual encounters in the shade provided by the vegetation surrounding the house age when they are cast in the new light coming from the abandoned house: "The boy and girl who have never stopped / their lovemaking in the shelter of its trees / feel its light upon them and grow old" (ll. 20-22). The young lovers feel comfortable in the shelter that nature provides, which symbolises a *locus amoenus* of sorts, but the artificial light coming from the abandoned house breaks the spell. Years have passed, so the artificial light functions as a mirror[40] which awakens the lovers to age-related expectations which do not allow for teenage-like sexual encounters amid nature. In other words, the shining of artificial light on the young lovers becomes a rite of passage into adulthood. As a result, the young couple's emplaced embodiment of sexuality is no longer free from cultural stereotypes.

3.1.2.6. Promiscuity

Crozier also establishes a connection between love and either casual sexual relationships or prostitution as emplaced in either the home sphere or the saloon, as can be observed in "Patchwork" (1979) and "The Red Onion in Skagway, Alaska" (1995), respectively. Both poems highlight the embodiment of place – rather than the embodiment of sexuality – as a significant factor for the female personae's sense of self.

"Patchwork" connects promiscuity to creativity. The woman in the poem does not have a partner. She may be a widow, given that in the first stanza of the poem the part of the bed she does not sleep in is compared to the rigidness of a corpse: "The empty half

[40] Please note that the mirror functions as "an instrument of identity construction . . . [as] mirror moments illustrate the complicated relationship that exists between individuals and their ageing process as well as between private voices and public discourses of ageing" (Anderson 190).

lay as stark / as a body coffined / on the dining room table" (ll. 2-4). However, the poem does not clarify whether this is the case or not. The woman in the poem is described as having sexual encounters with a different man every night: "She wrinkled it [the bed] / with different men / who left before morning" (ll. 6-8). Nonetheless, it is not made explicit in the poem whether she simply enjoys the company of different lovers or whether she is a sex worker (as is the case of the poem that is subsequently analysed, namely "The Red Onion in Skagway, Alaska"). What Crozier emphasizes in the poem is the woman's keeping of a memento from each of her lovers, out of which she sews a bed cover: "[…] from each she stitched / a piece into her heavy quilt –" (ll. 9-10). Such a patchwork project suggests that the woman in the poem is fond of her lovers and does not wish to forget them. Indeed, the heat created during sexual intercourse will somehow remain with her in the warmth provided by the duvet. Thus, in a way, the quilt represents the woman's willingness to anchor her temporary lovers to her bed, and by extension to herself. While the woman in the poem's embodiment of sexuality is not made explicit, her emplacement of sexuality in her bed is reinforced by the memento she keeps from each of her lovers; this suggests that the woman's creative place-making stems from the sexual energy of her encounters. Hence, the woman's undescribed embodiment of sexuality has a direct effect on her emplacement.

On the other hand, "The Red Onion in Skagway, Alaska" depicts the saloon, where prostitutes work and live, as a constraining space which fosters a disembodiment of sexuality on the part of the sex workers. The ungendered persona retells what she read in the exhibit of the Red Onion Saloon and provides a critique of the conditions its sex workers used to live in at the "turn-of-the-century" (l. 23). The poem criticizes the smallness of the rooms the prostitutes worked in, as implied by the following quotation:

In the Red Onion Saloon

I read what's supposed to be

an amusing tale of the girls upstairs

who worked in "cribs," ten by ten cells,

just enough room to lie

spread-legged. . . . (ll. 5-10)

The persona does not find such an instance of erotic history entertaining, as she makes explicit in lines 5 and 6. In addition, the persona also comments on a photograph of the sex workers in order to draw attention to their humanness. That is to say that the prostitutes from the photograph were no different from other local young women:

. . . Four small-town girls

open-faced and plump

look out at you

like someone in an ad for milk

or someone you used to know,

that quiet girl who caught the bus to school

from Olds or Antelope or Manyberries,

the one who ate her lunch outside alone. (ll. 24-31)

In spite of this, the poem both underscores their alienation from society, as the last line in the previous quotation suggests, and compares them to beasts of burden whose happiness is not taken into consideration: "I think of the ponies / who never got to leave the mines / . . . / pulling car after car / in numbing dark" (ll. 37-38, 41-42). Such an analogy is triggered by several similar characteristics, namely the already-mentioned limited working space, the system in which the prostitutes were asked to receive one client after another – "When one of the girls was occupied / the bartender flipped a doll / onto her back / and when he righted her / another miner climbed the stairs" (ll. 17-21) – and the

physical and emotional appearance of the girls in the photograph: "The photographer / has made the Red-Rock Ladies smile (I hope / his words were kind) / but they all look pale, / discomforted" (ll. 42-46). The sex workers' pets, the persona guesses, were their only source of happiness: "two with their reluctant pets / tucked into the fleshy curve of their arms, / in the Red Onion / perhaps all they knew / of love" (ll. 47-51). The poem binds sexuality to a very specific place in this poem, one that is reminiscent of a prison and that involves routine rather than pleasure. From an ecofeminist perspective, both the women and the beasts of burden in the mine in which the prostitutes' miner clients work suffer from the same kind of exploitation, namely one that prioritizes male desire over either female or animal needs and wishes. As ecofeminist Nöel Sturgeon claims, "[e]cofeminism is a movement that . . . articulates the theory that the ideologies that authorize injustices based on gender, race and class are related to the ideologies that sanction the exploitation and degradation of the environment" (58). Thus, it makes sense that in their shared submission, the women find comfort and love only in their pets.

3.1.2.7. Parents and Siblings

The emplaced embodiment of both love and sexuality is also affected by the relationship with parents and siblings. Whereas in "The Night of My Conception I" (1999), the persona imagines her parents' sexual act that led to her embodiment of life, in "At the Bottom of the Well" (2002), the male persona daydreams about him having sex with a beautiful woman in order to mentally liberate himself from his present constraining emplaced embodiment resulting from his siblings' lack of love for him. On the other hand, in "Getting Used to It" (2011), it is the awareness of the persona's mother's loneliness and aloneness as a widow that affects the persona's own embodiment of sexuality.

"The Night of My Conception I" is a poem in which the ungendered persona imagines with tenderness the moment in which her parents conceived her. She explains

the situation as if she actually remembered it. The sexual act is not made explicit, only suggested by the mother taking off her stockings and, later, the hearing of the mother's orgasm through the wall of her brother's bedroom:

> He is trying not to hear
>
> through the wall that keeps him
>
> from the huge bed
>
> they won't let him sleep in any more.
>
> […]
>
> till my mother cries that cry
>
> and I must go. (ll. 24-27, 35-36)

The persona's conception is a very special moment for the persona not only because her conscience becomes embodied and she comes to live in the world but also, and more significantly, because being born implies being next to her brother, who she loves dearly:

> Waiting six years
>
> since my brother drifted from my touch.
>
> I have almost forgotten his smell,
>
> forgotten how we moved together,
>
> water over water, breath riding breath
>
> into the emptiness of blue.

Crozier's poem implies that before babies are even conceived, their conscience or their soul already inhabits their mothers' wombs. Therefore, parental sexual intercourse is presented in this poem as a means for such a conscience or spirit to take a human shape; that is, to become embodied. By presenting the sexual activity of parents in this way, Crozier manages to discuss – even if succinctly – what might be considered a taboo subject by some, namely their own parents' sexuality.

Diametrically opposed to “The Night of My Conception I” in terms of the relationship among siblings, “At the Bottom of the Well” presents the lack of love of Joseph’s brothers for him. The poem expands on a Biblical story from the Book of Genesis, namely that of Joseph, Jacob’s son. According to the Bible, Joseph receives dreams from God that are supposed to guide him as part of God’s bigger plan to make Joseph a ruler of Egypt. As a result of these dreams, Joseph’s brothers become jealous and imprison him in a well, where he remains until they can sell him to passing merchants as a slave. Crozier sets her poem during the time in which Joseph is in the well, in which among other things he imagines himself free from his prison and in his dwellings having sex with a woman whose hair has not been shorn and who is therefore unmarried according to the Jewish tradition: “and in his tent a woman on her knees above him, / swathing his face in her long black hair” (ll. 23-24). Joseph’s imaginary embodiment of sexuality appears strictly connected to the safety of home, which bespeaks the important role that place plays in the poem. That is, Joseph’s tent is a symbol of both freedom and female empowerment, as the woman he is having sex with is on top of him and feels free to play with her hair in a sensual way. On the other hand, the well becomes an emplaced embodiment of both punishment – due to Joseph’s captivity – and the ills of society – specifically animal and child abuse –, as depicted by what surrounds Joseph in the well, namely: “the head of a donkey” (l. 2) and “a baby / cold and blue, thin cord dangling” (ll. 10-11). Crozier concludes that only in Joseph’s willingness to become enmeshed in the non-human world will he be liberated from both his imprisonment and embodiment of trauma at the close experience of the consequences of animal and child abuse: “he’ll make himself so wanted he’ll be water / lifted to another’s mouth, he’ll be the earth’s / salt rising” (ll. 15-17). In addition, Joseph wishes to redress such social injustices through establishing connections with the non-human world, even if he is aware that it is only

wishful thinking:

> . . . He wills himself to dream
>
> he's in the bottom of a stone throat
>
> that will spit him out if he finds the words
>
> it needs to say: the donkey whole again,
>
> rolling in dust on the village road
>
> the baby rocking in arms that want to hold it" (ll. 17-22).

That is, by transforming the well as a man-made place used to discard those disempowered and abused by society into a non-human natural element, Crozier paints the possibility of a healthier reality permeated by love rather than abuse.

Finally, the experience of love-making at middle age in a long-lasting relationship is connected to the older persona's mother's loneliness and aloneness in "Getting Used to It." The poem presents a common situation nowadays, in which because of work commitments, many daughters live apart from their older mothers, and cannot always afford to visit, even for New Year's Eve. The older mother seems to reluctantly accept the situation despite her feelings of both solitude and lack of physical intimacy due to widowhood: "the hurt and no-one-touching / that my mother has to bear" (ll. 16-17). Indeed, "[l]oneliness has been reported as a feature of widowhood from the earliest studies (Bennett and Victor 35). However, the middle-aged daughter feels terribly frustrated – "her loneliness / a hard salt on my skin" (ll. 7-8) – and is not willing to accept a future old age marked by isolation and loneliness: "I swear I won't get used to this" (l. 15). In fact, she does not perceive seniority as being very distant in time, as she asserts that "[their] bodies / old, now [are] one year older" (ll. 16-7). Actually, according to research in psychogerontology, a "fear commonly associated with reaching very old age is the fear of surviving close others and of being left alone" (Rupprecht et al. n.p.). In the

end, Crozier's persona is partially comforted by making love to her partner. The knowledge she has acquired of her partner's erogenous zones throughout the years makes her feel reassured to expect a continuation of such gentle sexuality in their old age. The persona compares her sexual intercourse with her partner to swimming in well-known water: "You moved over me like water, / old water I'd swum in for years, knowing where / the bottom fell away, where warmth became a shiver" (ll. 8-10). Additionally, the scent from the persona's partner that remains over the persona's body is compared to his embodiment of the garden flower's fragrances: "you left / your smell all over me as if you'd just walked / naked in our garden, juniper, rosemary, snow's / blue flowers melting on your skin" (ll. 12-15). In this way, Crozier emphasises once more the importance of both literal and metaphorical emplaced embodiment in non-human nature not only as a source of creativity but also as a way of understanding life.

In sum, the connection between sexuality and love is present throughout most of Crozier's career. Crozier's poems illustrate the complexities involved in relationships, as depicted by the different meanings attached to the emplaced embodiment of sexuality at home. Such meanings are often nuanced by the couple's relationship with non-human nature. Alongside Crozier's own ageing process, she has deconstructed in her poems socio-cultural stereotypes towards the embodiment of sexuality in older couples, in which emplacement has played an important role in liberating them from constraining socio-cultural expectations. Indeed, an essential feature in the emplaced embodiment of sexuality, in the different types of relationships depicted, is each partner's – and other relevant characters in the poems – ability to contribute to the overcoming of life's difficulties and emotional pain for both the spouse's and the couple's well-being. In this sense, Crozier's poetic work, as embedded with humour, creativity, empathy, and the wisdom acquired from the observation of the non-human world, among others, leads to

an understanding of mutual care in the couple's – and other social contexts – as essential for the emplaced embodiment of both a healthy and fulfilling sexuality. Hence, no significant differences can be observed throughout Crozier's oeuvre as concerns the emplaced embodiment of the interplay between love and sexuality, beyond the incorporation of the effects of the ageing process on the couple's sexuality.

3.1.3. Masturbation and Genitalia

The emplaced embodiment of sexuality at home in Crozier's poetry is also featured in a number of poems that focus specifically on both female masturbation and male and female genitalia, as published between 1979 and 2013. These two themes have been a taboo for centuries in Western societies (Kontula and Haavio-Mannila 50) and have mostly been alluded to by means of euphemism, which is often still the case of female genitalia in contemporary times (Cox 226). One of the most salient Canadian poetic precedents on female sexuality is Dorothy Livesay's poetry. According to Linda Rogers in her foreword to the selected collection of poems by Livesay, *The Self-Completing Tree*, in its 1999 edition, Livesay "champion[ed] the right to talk freely about sex" (2). Born in 1909, Livesay was almost four decades older than Crozier. While Crozier openly discusses female masturbation in her second poetry collection, published in 1979, Livesay published the poetry collection *The Unquiet Bed,* in which female masturbation is also present a decade before, in 1967. While "Livesay's preoccupation with sexuality and the performance of gender roles is clearly visible throughout her artistic career . . . passionate poems of physical love [were] introduced by *The Unquiet Bed* in 1967" (Butler 33, 35). Both Livesay and Crozier's engagement with self-erotica bespeak their willingness to empower women. In addition, Crozier's discussions of both female masturbation and male and female genitalia are not always presented as erotic poetry, but as reflections on

social prejudices and a critique of sexual violence. Such reflections, which were written in the late 1970s and 1980s, are still valid to define sexuality in present-day Western societies. This fact renders Crozier's poems even more relevant and worthy of examination.

The embodiment of female masturbation as emplaced mainly at home is discussed in three poems, namely "I Am Ready" (1979), "Poetess" (1979) and "We Came into the Night, Singing" (1999). In "I Am Ready" the female body becomes a place for nature to bloom as a result of the female persona's sexuality, while "Poetess" discusses an instance of embodiment of sexuality through masturbation as triggered by the persona's emplacement of a peach stone in her mouth. In a different vein, "We Came into the Night, Singing" describes the persona's initial stages of embodiment of sexuality through masturbation in pre-adolescence, in which emplacement at home constrains the persona's freedom to discover her sexuality.

"I Am Ready" depicts the female persona's future masturbation as a way of managing her feelings of jealousy for her partner's mistress. The persona asserts both in the first line and the last line of this circular poem that she is prepared for her husband's future infidelity: "i am ready / for your other lover / . . . / i am ready" (ll. 1-2, 37). This is because she has made a number of sexual aids out of plants and animal body parts to satisfy her sexual needs:

> my drawer is stocked
> with dildos wrapped
> in panties   fragile phalli
> in nests of silk
>
> the beheaded stalks

of sunflowers

a Golden Torch cactus

bulrushes bound together

the throbbing tail

of a dragonfly that mated

in a bed of sky (ll. 3-13)

The persona justifies the use of such materials for her sex toys in their ability to produce new life within her, which she cherishes: ". . . my womb will grow golden / flowers sucked on blood not sun / . . . / a veined double-winged insect / will squeeze from my cunt" (ll. 25-26, 28-29). In this sense, the persona's body becomes a place where plants and insects germinate and grow. Besides, the persona believes that once she has tried such naturally-stuffed dildos and her partner's mistress has left, she will no longer be satisfied by her partner's penis either in its inability to generate certain kinds of life within her or in its lack of skill at entering her from the air:

when she leaves us

you will be a boring lover

a penis incapable

of blossoming

of thrusting

acrobatically

in spinning sky (ll. 30-36)

Therefore, the persona is actually ready not only to overcome her partner's cheating, but also, and more significantly, to turn her body into a metaphorical seedbed. Such an imaginary interaction with non-human nature both empowers the persona as a source of life in front of her partner's disrespect towards her, and is reminiscent of human shared

nature with the non-human world.

The interaction between the female persona and non-human nature continues in "Poetess," albeit in a more realistic way. The poem features a woman poet called Alice whose inspiration to both write poetry and to stimulate herself sexually comes from sucking a peach stone. That is, whereas in "I Am Ready" it was the persona's vagina the one that became the site of interaction with non-human elements resulting in the persona's sexual pleasure, in this poem it is the persona's mouth. The savouring of the peach stone inspires the persona in a number of ways. Concerning word choice, the persona claims that the roughness of the peach stone confers her lexicon the strength of birds:

> the sharp and pointed rim
> pricks her gums
> and gives her words the strength
>   of birdbeaks
>   cracking the blue shell sky (ll. 15-19)

In line with Crozier's style, these lines posit non-human nature as a site of learning for humans. In this sense, artists become conveyors of such knowledge thanks to their kindred attention to the more-than-human world. As regards theme, the sucking of the pit prompts her to write about love and sexuality and to feel aroused at the same time, which results in masturbation:

> the stone's fullness
>   in her wet mouth
> leads her to thoughts of love
> and she slips her right hand
> under the table while
> the left types

oh

such perfect sighs (ll. 20-26)

In this way, Crozier both connects self-pleasure to creativity and counters social taboos about female masturbation by validating it as a healthy form of self-esteem. Indeed, according to gender and women studies researcher Hallie Lieberman, "[f]ew women spoke openly of their masturbation practices during the 1970s and 1980s" (98). Therefore, Crozier's poem, published in 1979, must have been quite daring for the times. Actually, masturbation became a major theme of the second-wave feminist debate (late 1960s – early 1980s). In this sense, with this poem, Crozier positioned herself along the lines of radical feminists, who believed that "change happened on an individual level" (Lieberman 99) and, therefore, the politics of the bedroom were essential to advance feminist concerns. Moreover, the fact that Crozier's persona predicts that she will no longer be satisfied with her husband's penis after using her dildos must have also been controversial, considering the ongoing feminist debate on women's masturbation: "Debates about whether the dildo was a penis substitute (and therefore patriarchal), simply a neutral masturbatory device, or even a subversive instrument, played out in feminist media in the 1970s" (Lieberman 100). In "I Am Ready," Crozier uses the dildo not as a patriarchal device, but as a toy to provide pleasure and to empower the female persona.

Twenty years after the publication of the previous two poems, Crozier released "We Came into the Night, Singing" (1999), in which Crozier criticises the social stereotypes surrounding the discovery of sexuality through masturbation in female pre-adolescence, as prevalent during Crozier's own youth. Sociologists and sexologists Osmo Kontula and Elina Haavio-Mannila explain that "the revolution of sexual knowledge and values that took place in the Western societies in the late 1960s and early 1970s had a

major impact on the attitudes and behaviors related to masturbation" (78). Therefore, we must assume that the poem is set before the 1970s, since the persona remembers her first experiences with masturbation and kissing at age ten with a friend from school as involving a mixture of pleasure and fear:

> That winter we were ten . . .
>
> . . .
>
> In her room we made up stories
>
> of what we thought was love,
>
> touched ourselves and then each other,
>
> felt something we couldn't speak
>
> though there was pleasure in it,
>
> and fear, and every night in bed
>
> I prayed I'd stop. . . . (ll. 1, 9-15)

The persona does not clarify what she was afraid of, although we could assume that it was related to social and religious prejudice that set masturbation as both an unhealthy act and a sin, respectively (Kontula and Haavio-Mannila 51), and which promoted both fear and guilt among the population to prevent masturbation (Kontula and Haavio-Mannila 52). Nevertheless, the persona remembers the pre-sexual experiences with her friend as full of tenderness, because with her friend she could be herself genuinely:

> On the street with my friend
>
> I threw my body into song,
>
> the grace notes of a girl
>
> told she couldn't stay in key.
>
> Far from our mothers
>
> I moved my lips to her voice

and we kissed each other (ll. 30-36).

This quotation suggests that their mothers were part of the social surveillance system that enforced the prejudices against masturbation and also against same-sex kissing. Regarding the latter, literary scholars Benjamin Authers and Andrea Beverly's assertion when examining Canadian writers Daphne Marlatt and Betsy Warland's work that "[t]he project of making lesbian lives visible was still clearly needed in 1988 . . . [and that] both poets name the need to create space for the articulation of lesbian erotics in contemporary literature and culture" (195) bespeaks Canada's struggle to accept homoerotic narratives. On an interrelated note, the fact that Crozier's girl persona felt free to sing with all her body is a metaphor for freedom from both a restrictive education which would not allow a student to sing if s/he did not sing well – "I sang loud with everything I had / till the teacher put me in the back / with the tone-deaf boys / told to mouth the words" (ll. 3-6) – and social constraints regarding sexuality. Throughout the poem, the persona mentions three different locations where her sexuality is emplaced, namely her friend's room, her own bed, and the street. Both at her friend's and at her own home, the girls' discovery of sexuality is done in secrecy and the persona and her friend are afraid of being discovered by their respective mothers. Therefore, home is a place that limits the young female individuals' embodiment of sexuality due to social prejudices that do not support (female) sexual stimulation. Even if the persona and her friend continue engaging in such practices, they feel as if they were doing something wrong. On the other hand, the street allows the teenagers to kiss freely as it is a milieu not dominated by parental restrictions when the mothers are not present.

Regarding the second theme within this sub-section, namely male and female genitalia, three poems discuss the embodiment of sexuality in relation to the penis as connected to the emplacement of sexuality in the home sphere, while one poem centres

on the embodiment of sexuality in relation to the vagina. Nonetheless, all poems are written from the perspective of a female persona, which indicates that it is not the penis per se as a male organ the one that will be looked into but its implications in heterosexual relationships.

For the female persona in "What Women Talk about" (1988), embodiment of shared place-making is more important than embodiment of sexuality. At the beginning of the poem, the persona criticizes societal attitudes that overestimate the size of male genitalia: ". . . I never understood why the world / turns on it, why life or death / depends on its size" (ll. 2-4). Subsequently, Crozier quotes from Australian radical feminist Germaine Greer in order to hint at the fact that women's vaginas do not necessarily need to use a penis: "Once on a TV talk show / I heard Germaine Greer, badgered by the host, / say, 'Do you think a prick's the most interesting / thing we can put inside us?'" (ll. 11-14). Indeed, for her and her women friends, what matters is not men's sexual apparel, but rather their male partner's degree of involvement in the household chores: "None of my women friends / talks about that [size], / . . . / They're more likely to talk about / the politics of housecleaning" (ll. 4-5, 8-9). Thus, these lines suggest that while sexuality is important in a relationship, it is overshadowed by male partners' willingness to contribute to making a house a home. As such, from the female persona's point of view, shared home making – as a specific feature of place making – is more relevant to women than their own embodiment of sexuality, even if the latter is also important, as mentioned in the first line of the poem: "Sure, I'm a woman who likes her pleasure." Research on marital commitment has shown that "those who feel less unfairness in household division of labor have better overall sense of happiness" (Nakamura and Akiyoshi n.p.). Nonetheless, perceptions of fairness are affected by factors other than the actual number of hours that each spouse devotes to household duties. Some of these factors, according to researchers

in family studies Chiung-Ya Tang and Melissa A. Curran, are gender ideology, and the three types of marital commitment: personal, structural and moral. Nuancing Crozier's discussion of the division of household chores in the poem, research has shown that "women's perceptions of fairness are linked to both the affection given and received in the marriage [and] . . . both their own and their partner's evaluation of union continuity" (Tang and Curran 1617). It therefore follows that sexuality may influence women's perception of fair sharing of household duties as long as it becomes a meaningful way of expressing love and appreciation towards them.

However, the body can also become a place during the embodiment of both sexual intercourse and sexual abuse, as depicted in both "Variations" (1988) and "Ode" (1988), both part of the section "The Penis Poems." In "Variations," Crozier begins the poem in a humorous way, in which she establishes an analogy of the penis with three different beings, namely a senior male, a beheaded chicken, and a common garden slug. This is because the penis does not have teeth and is bald, and it moves around without a sense of direction, respectively: "you flap about / without beak or brain, / banging / into everything," (ll. 10-13). According to MacDonald, Crozier describes the penis in this way in order to "change the conditions under which the penis is considered erotic [by] . . . obscur[ing] obvious features and magnif[ying] particularities" (253). Crozier goes on to imply that the penis can also be dangerous in the lines following those of the previous quotation: "bruising the air, / not knowing / when it's time to stop" (ll. 14-16). Specifically, the gerund "bruising" (l. 14) suggests that the penis can be harmful if it is forced on another's body, while the phase "not knowing / when it's time to stop" (ll. 15-16) reminds the readers of the importance of consent in any sexual relationship. Finally, in the third stanza, Crozier moves away from both the initial humorous depiction and the subsequent allusion and critique to sexual abuse, to portraying seminal fluid on the

persona's body as aesthetically pleasing. Specifically, Crozier establishes an analogy between the penis and its secretions on the female persona's body and the mucus trail that a common garden slug leaves on the ground while sliding on it. The persona finds beauty in both the slug – in line with her recurrent depiction of insects and reptiles from a positive stance – and the male fluids by means of comparing them to guiding lights: "your antennae / little horns of light, / on my breast and belly" (ll. 19-21). Likewise, to underscore this same idea, the poem finishes with the following simile: "you draw a luminous / silver trail / like the moon's / ghostly tracks / across a field of snow" (ll. 22-26). Once more, Crozier compares the human with the non-human world, being the latter a source of inspiration for the former. In this case, Crozier paints a picture of nature that is reminiscent of the Romantic tradition in the depiction of the reflection of the moon on the snow as "ghostly." Thus, these lines reinforce the idea of sexuality as both embodied and emplaced on the female body.

In a similar vein, "Ode" combines the persona's admiration for the penis' characteristics and yearning for it with her wariness and dread of it as a result of the acts of sexual violence that are committed with it. The persona associates the penis to two different animals, namely a dog and a bat. The dog is a mongrel, thus a half tame, half wild dog, which she cannot have confidence in: "I know you could turn on me / at any moment. Never // trust an animal / that has tasted blood" (ll. 9-12). On the other hand, the bat refers to the penis' ability to locate the female sexual organs in the darkness:

> To you who travel by touch
> blind as a bat,
> finding moths
> soft as flannel
> in the fragrant night,

the round, ripe fruit. (ll. 16-21)

In these two quotations, the instinctive behaviour of semi-wild and wild animals is employed to first provide a warning against those men who are prone to commit sexual crimes and second to praise the penis' abilities, as emphasised by the alliteration of the voiceless fricative labial sound [f] in "finding", "soft", "flannel", "fragrant" and "fruit," which suggests the penis' rubbing on the female persona's skin in its journey towards the vaginal opening. Such a duality, which is depicted in an analogous way to the non-human world, is further developed in the following lines: "Sweet between my thighs, / you burrow there, the animal / I long for, / the animal I fear" (ll. 24-27). The persona connects wild animals' hunting for food with the stalking behaviour of male sexual predators, as ". . . For years / you have waited / for the child, / the solitary woman" (ll. 29-32). As in "Variations," the female persona's body becomes a place where the penis "burrows" and which may be broken into on the event of sexual abuse: "You batter down the gate, / break the lock, / smash the window" (ll. 33-38). To quote from MacDonald, "[i]n 'Ode' Crozier confronts the puzzling paradox of female heterosexuality, a disquieting mix of love for and fear of the male body" (262). Hence, Crozier criticises in both poems, namely "Variations" and "Ode," women's inability to freely embody their sexuality as well as both women and children's social vulnerability to sexual offences in the case of the latter poem.

Devoid of any connotations related to sexual violence, the prose poem "Vagina" (2013)[41] depicts the vagina as an embodied place for women to both get to know themselves and their sexual partners. This is because, according to the persona, there has been a lot of mystery in the Western world for centuries and still nowadays about this part

[41] Crozier's prose poems, chiefly published in *The Book of Marvels* (2013) and *God of Shadows* (2018), are not shaped into lines but into sentences, as Crozier emphasised to the author of this dissertation in our discussions of her poetry; that is why there are no references to the line numbers in the analyses of Crozier's prose poems.

of the female body for three main reasons. Firstly, the persona acknowledges that the word vagina originally means sword cover. Therefore, the persona believes that it has chauvinist connotations, as a sword is often a metonymy for the penis. She prefers the names the Chinese give to it, probably because they are both complimentary and devoid of a male perspective: “You find solace in translations from the Chinese: Pillow of Musk, Inner Heart, Jade Gate.” Secondly, Crozier reflects on the social taboos regarding the naming of female genitalia when her persona states that the vagina is frequently “named without naming” it. For instance, she mentions Napoleon’s term to refer to his wife’s vagina: “much lower still.” Thirdly, the persona states that due to the vagina’s appearance “it’s mysterious, even to a woman.” Crozier thus suggests that social taboos regarding female genitalia also include women. Indeed, there is a growing body of research that studies women’s genital self-image, as “women’s negative thoughts and feelings about their genitals can be associated with behavioural consequences” (Fudge and Byrnes 359). In order to counter such stereotypes, Crozier both describes the vagina and provides welcoming names for it:

> What it most resembles is not a cat but a flower, unfolding on an O’Keeffe canvas, petals wet with light. Or, minus the stinging tentacles, a sea anemone, an ocean-dweller that doesn’t smell like fish. All tuck and salty muscle . . . Doorway of Life, Lotus Boat, the Deep One. You worked through the dirty jokes and schoolyard taunts to learn it’s cleaner than a mouth, you can’t lose anything inside it, and it’s never grown teeth. . . . The Double-Lipped, the Beautiful, Quim.

Crozier associates the vagina with beauty in its resemblance to non-human nature, specifically a flower and a sea creature. Two of the other names she suggests instead of vagina are related to place, namely “Doorway of Life” and “Lotus Boat.” Regarding the former, the vagina is the place in the body out of which babies are born. Regarding the

latter, the vagina is described as a sea vehicle in the shape of a flower, which the poem does not clarify where it leads. Crozier's rendering of the vagina as both aesthetically pleasing and central to its life-giving function, among others clashes with media portrayals, as "media may modify perceptions of women's genitals by creating unrealistic expectations and reinforcing socially-constructed concepts of 'perfect' genitals" (DeMaria et al. 146). In this sense, Crozier's poem contributes towards a much-needed positive image of women's genitalia.

All in all, as with the other sections, the majority of poems were written in the late 1970s and 1980s. Nevertheless, the fact that there was a poem written in the late 1990s and another one in the early 2010s suggests that masturbation and genitalia are subject matters that Crozier has been concerned with throughout her career. It is important to mention from an ageing studies point of view that only one of Crozier's poems, namely "We Came into the Night, Singing" (1999) depicts a specific moment in the life-course, specifically early adolescence. None of the other poems includes any reference to a specific age, which allows for sexuality in the form of masturbation and its connection with genitalia to be free from socially and culturally-imposed ageism.

3.1.4. Lust

Closely connected to masturbation, but embracing a larger number of sexual situations, lust is a major sub-theme within Crozier's depiction of sexuality. The emplaced embodiment of lust at home can be classified into three main approaches, namely lust as liberated from social constraints, absence of lust, and a critique of the dark side of lust in relation to toxic masculinity. This classification notwithstanding, Crozier's multifaceted portrayal of lust allows for poems that depict an in-betweenness between enjoyment and absence of lust.

Lust as liberated from social constraints is presented from a perspective of freedom and enjoyment in “I Am Ready” (1979), “Cauliflower” (1985), “Love Song” (1985), “Fire Breather” (1995), and “Drop” (2019). “I Am Ready” is the only one out of these five poems which depicts lust in connection with infidelity. Analysed before in relation to the persona’s masturbation as a strategy to satisfy herself given that her partner is satisfying another woman’s desire, the poem also contains the persona’s description of her partner’s lust while having sexual intercourse with his mistress. The persona experiences such lust first-hand in her hiding place under the bed on which her partner is having sex with the other woman:

> she will not know
> i occupy our house
>
> i will camp silently
> under the bed
> the trailing blankets tent walls
> to shelter me from
> the thunder of your lust
> when the ceiling rocks
> and the air sparks with your whimpers
> i will insert my new lovers (ll. 14-23)

The persona decides to stay present while her partner is cheating on her for some reason which is not made explicit in the poem. As this quotation illustrates, she describes her partner’s lust as “thunder” and the “air” as “spark[ing],” both of which suggest a passionate sexual encounter. The persona decides not to feel sorry for herself and, in its stead, she joins in her partner’s and his lover’s lust by playing with sexual toys. In other

words, the persona decides she is not going to surrender to victimhood, but she is going to create her own sexual narrative so as to empower herself and her sexuality. To this end, she makes a secret space for herself under her own marital bed in order to stand ground as an alternative way to overcome her partner's infidelity.

From the use of plants as sexual toys, Crozier moves to personifying the garden, and especially the vegetable's metaphoric emplaced embodiment of sexuality in the poetic sequence The Sex Lives of Vegetables, where the poem "Cauliflower" is collected. Crozier imagines the cauliflower as an omnipresent mind, which is aware of everything that all the other vegetables in the garden do: "The garden's pale brain, / it knows the secret / lives of all the vegetables" (ll. 1-3). Besides, its leaves are reminiscent of ear lobes which, as erogenous zones, become the source of the other vegetables' both erotic imagery and lust: "holds their fantasises, / their green libidos / in its fleshy lobes" (ll. 4-6). Thus, the cauliflower, as emplaced in the vegetable garden, is imagined to embody sexual desire.

Within the same poetry collection as "Cauliflower" but as part of a different section, namely Forms of Innocence, "Love Song" also personifies an organic element as a metaphor for human lust. Specifically, it plays with the common association of women's hair to both sensuality and sexuality in many cultures. The poem asserts that "[a]t night / [hair] lifts from your pillow / and mates with the wind" (ll. 2-4) without the female addressee's awareness of it. Thus, the hair's embodiment of sexuality is emplaced somewhere over the pillow. Female hair's behaviour explains, according to the poem, the fact that "it is so knotted / and tangled in the morning" (ll. 5-6), and it also explains "why it breaks the teeth / of your finest combs, / spills from ribbons and barrettes" (ll. 7-9). The poem ends by further personifying the hair as having a promiscuous personality: "Can't you feel its wantonness / as it falls across your shoulders?" (ll. 12-13). No judgement is

passed on the hair for its secret sexual encounters with the wind. This is because "[h]air has a mind / of its own" (ll. 1-2). Therefore, in a similar vein to the later poem "Imagining Love" (1999) – which is analysed below as part of the poems in which lack of lust is discussed –, the mind is not regarded from a sexual perspective as being present only in the brain, but also in many other parts of the body. Such a synecdoche for the human body as a whole stands for (female) sexual freedom in the embodiment of libido.

Similarly giving full rein to lust, "Fire Breather" explains a couple's sexual desire for each other: "When I drank what you gave me I burned / my mouth. So much fire on these lips" (ll. 1-2). The couple's sexuality is expressed in relation to cooking and eating, which far from a routine household task becomes an aphrodisiac of sorts: "Nothing to show, but inside enough heat / to light the tallow candles you bought / from the butcher who gives you soup bones for free. // After I take you in my mouth I can blow flames" (ll. 13-16). The couple's relationship is not only based on passion, but also on cooperation: "I was used to tasting your homemade soups / with a wooden spoon, testing the flavour, / . . . // Add more barely, I'd say, or those red spices / from the Nile." (ll. 4-5, 7-8). The persona concludes that despite their burning passion – as represented by the word "ashes" in the poem (l. 18) – his/her "feet [are] still cold" (l. 18). On a surface layer of meaning, this line is an oxymoron that offers a contrast between two different temperatures. On a further layer of meaning, this line could refer to the idiom "have cold feet," which would imply that the persona is unsure about her/his relationship with her/his partner. The persona's uncertainty is embodied – as reflected by her bodily temperature – and emplaced, in her/his assertion that it is "[a] strange bed for [them] to lie in" (l. 17). The fact that the couple's shared lust and its related happiness are emplaced in the kitchen, whereas a suggestion of possible issues in the relationship are emplaced in bed is worth of note. Nonetheless, the poem does not provide any other hints towards the reason why

this is the case. At any rate, no continuation of this idea can be found in later poems by Crozier, as exemplified by the following poem, "Drop" in which lust is emplaced in bed.

Similar to "Love Song," lust is presented from a disembodied perspective, as regards the human body, in "Drop." This poem interconnects the image of a drop of rain that rests on a leaf with an image of sexual desire, as exemplified by an untidy bedroom after a sexual encounter:

> Rain stops falling
>
> but
>
> hangs around
>
> like the shape of lust
>
> in bedsheets . . .
>
> . . .
>
> . . . you imagine the
>
> pucker, the bedroom
>
> funk, . . . (ll. 1-5, 7-9)

Whereas the embodiment of rain is a raindrop which is emplaced on a leaf, the embodiment of lust is emplaced in the lovers' bedroom. However, it is not a human body that embodies lust, but the shape of the sheets, which form a metaphorical bodily-shape of sorts. Both the raindrop and the bedroom's representation of lust are "caught in / an eternity of now" (ll. 10-11) in the sense that they are both snapshots of the present moment. In the case of the raindrop, Crozier suggests that it will remain on the leaf until ". . . an insect // alights on / the stem / and sips" (ll. 12-15). While this change is not made explicit in the case of the depiction of lust, this quotation is charged with sexual connotations which suggest oral sex in its image of sucking a liquid from a surface. Therefore, it is implicit in the poem that the shape of lust will vary if the lovers resume

their sexual activity.

As a counterpoint to the free expression of lust, a lack of embodiment of sexual arousal as emplaced at home is also portrayed in Crozier's poems. The persona's fear of sexuality in her youth, which substituted a proper sexual education and led to a lack of embodiment of either lust or sexuality is depicted in "Sex Education" (1979). Specifically, the persona was told by an unspecified plural subject, which could stand for adult members of society in general, that mice are waiting for a chance "to whoosh / up [her] housecoat / nest in [her] crotch" (ll. 4-6). Fear of such menacing mice, as representations of men's penises, led the persona to keep her legs closed until she would fall in love with a person who would be worth losing her virginity to:

> i learned to walk
>
> oriental style
>
> i pressed my knees together
>
> until my thighs webbed
>
> it will take a blade
>
> thin as love   sharp as dreams
>
> to open me

Thus, the young, unmarried female body is presented as a site to be protected from intrusion. The symbolic consequences in the female body of her lack of sexuality, namely the metaphorical webbing of her thighs, are caused by men – as metonymically represented by mice – in certain lying places, such as the sofa or the bed: "mice . . . / hide in the couch springs and / under your bed" (ll. 2-4). Hence, such stories of invading mice intended to turn young unmarried teenagers and women into asexual beings before marriage, presumably to avoid any unwanted pregnancies. In other words, Crozier

criticises in this poem a sexual education based on the embodiment of fear of sexuality on the girls' part in order to neutralise their lust. Nowadays, "[a]cross the United States and Canada, sex education programmes tend to fall into two broad categories: comprehensive and abstinence-based" (Levin and Hammock 324). While this poem was written in 1979, and is most likely a metaphorical retelling of Crozier's own experience as an adolescent of an abstinence-only sexual education, research shows that there is an increasing tendency to go back to these programmes in the USA, in order to try to reduce the rate of teenage birth rates: "In the past two decades, sex education has moved away from more comprehensive programs in favor of abstinence-based curricula that stress the importance of monogamous sexual relationships with a spouse" (Carr and Packham 403). In Canada, there is currently a debate regarding the content of sexual education programmes (Levin and Hammock 324), but no information is available on whether there is a growing tendency towards abstinence-only sexual education or not.

"Peas" (1985) from the poetic sequence "The Sex Lives of Vegetables" establishes a contrast with "Sex Education." While in the former poem the persona expects that one day love will enable her to open up to sexuality, in the latter poem the personified peas regret any sexual connotations associated with them because "[t]hey have spent all their lives / keeping their knees together" (ll. 11-12). That is, "Peas" becomes one of the possible outcomes of the type of sexual education criticised in "Sex Education." As such, "Peas" suggests that peas are unable to enjoy the pleasures involved in oral sex because of their embodiment of socially-imposed asexuality: "Your tongue finds them clitoral / as it slides up the pod. / Peas are not amused" (ll. 8-10). As in the previously analysed poem "Fire Breather" (1995), eating – in this case, peas – is related to pleasure, which is in turn connected to sexual pleasure. In order to reach the eating stage, however, the persona has had to go through shelling peas first, which implies an extra effort: "They make you suffer

for the sweet / burst of green in the mouth. Remember / the hours of shelling on the front steps" (ll. 2-4). Such preparation works as a subtle analogy to foreplay before sexual intercourse. On the other hand, the fact that the persona remembers her childhood chore of shelling peas with her mother – ". . . Your mother / bribing you with lemonade to keep you there, / splitting them open with your thumbs" (ll. 5-7) – establishes a connection to a *lieu de mémoire,* to borrow from historian Pierre Nora's terminology. That is to say that the persona's shelling along her life-course brings back memories of her childhood home with her mother, in the symbolic association that such an emplaced moment of personal history has with the creation both of the persona's personal identity and relationship with her mother. Namely, a strong mother-daughter bond is depicted in most of Crozier's adult daughter personae, both in Crozier's poems and in her memoir, *Small Beneath the Sky*.

Unlike either "Sex Education" or "Peas," "Cabbages" (1985) depicts lack of lust as unrelated to socially and culturally imposed behaviours around sexuality. "Cabbages" belongs to the poetic sequence The Sex Lives of Vegetables. This poem hints at the metaphorical lack of sexual arousal of cabbages in a vegetable garden, as cabbages "ignore the caress of the / cabbage butterfly, the soft / sliding belly of the worm" (ll. 4-6). Such a lack of libido is explained by saying that they are already satisfied by lying in the sun; that is, in their embodied experience of place: "content to dream in the sun, / heads tucked in" (ll. 2-3). Moreover, the cabbages' imaginary emplaced embodiment in the garden is presented by means of an analogy between a cabbage and a turtle, as both of them "lie so still, / so self-contained" (ll. 7-8) as if the cabbage was "laying eggs / in the earth's dark pockets" (ll. 10-11) like turtles do. In this line of thought, the persona imagines the cabbages' eggs breaking and the new-born creatures "dragging themselves / to the creek behind the house" (ll. 13-14) in their trip "to the sea" (l. 17), like baby turtles do. The fact that the turtle's eggs have been fertilized implies that the female and the male

turtles have mated. Therefore, the female turtle must have been sexually aroused; otherwise, mating would not have occurred. The implications that this has for the analogy between unaroused cabbages and turtles may have to do with the fact that neither the butterfly nor the worm are the appropriate or desired sexual partners for the cabbage. The specific location of the vegetable garden in which cabbages are born, with its nearby stream, namely their emplacement, is the one that allows the observer persona to imagine the embodiment of the cabbages both in their lack of sexual arousal and in their resemblance to turtles.

However, lust is not only depicted by Crozier as either something to freely enjoy or as a socially regulated feeling, but it is also portrayed as a personal choice in the poem "Seasons" (1988). Particularly, in this poem the ungendered persona wishes that lust in humans were like that of animals, namely that it was seasonal: "I wish there were a season for mating / . . . / and for the rest / you just went about your day" (ll. 1, 8-9). The persona does not mention explicitly why year-round sexual desire is annoying for her. However, she does comment on the benefits of seasonal lust, namely to be able to have a nap and sleep without thinking about sexuality:

> Or being human, to fall asleep
> late in the afternoon in a double bed,
> naked or not, the body
> busy with its own life, giving up
> on love and beauty, words
> like *hand, shoulder, inner thigh*,
> meaning simply what they say. (ll. 12-18)

In other words, the persona would like to embody sexual desire in a more circumscribed way. That is, the persona longs for some freedom from the cultural-specific sexual

connotations regarding certain parts of the body so that she could enjoy her emplaced embodiment at home in non-sexual ways. This is in line with Deborah L. Tolman et al.'s assertion in their article about embodiment and sexuality that "compared with men, women's feelings about nudity reference cultural scripts that imagine female nudity as only and inherently sexual" (768).

Within the same poetry collection, lust is discussed in relation to the embodiment of illness in "The Sky at Twilight" (1988). More specifically, the ungendered persona explains her loss of sexual desire while being ill – "Last week in another country / I was cold and sick. Desire / left my body, it pulled away" (ll. 12-14) – and her recovery of it once she is well: "Now we hold one another / in the upstairs room" (ll. 24-25). The persona's regaining of her lust runs parallel to the growth of the gladioli she helped plant upon her return home:

> . . . The first day
> I helped you plant the garden,
> dug holes for fifty gladioli.
> . . .
> Today the bulbs buried in the earth
> begin to awaken from their deep sleep.
> They have a dumb patience
> like our bodies when they are ill,
> asexual and tender, twilight
> giving way to dark. (ll. 3-5, 17-22)

The persona's regained embodiment of sexual desire is seen as analogous to the gladioli's emplacement through their rootedness in the garden's soil. The fact that the gladioli symbolize rebirth for the persona underlies the analogy between the gladioli's growth and

the persona's healing and recovery of lust: "They were the favourites of my grandmother. / Flowers of resurrection: / one wilts, another opens on the long stem, / flowers of dying-in-stages" (ll. 6-9). The remembrance of the late grandmother does not trigger either death anxiety or grief in the persona. In its stead, the grandmother's preference for this flower justifies the persona's use of popular wisdom, in the grandmother's passing down of such folk knowledge to her granddaughter, to anticipate her full recovery.

Somehow in line with the previous poem as regards a definition of lust in larger discussions about the family, Crozier also deals with parental perception of young-adult children's lust and sexuality, and vice-versa in "Imagining Love" (1999). The female persona confesses that thinking of either their parents' or their children's sexualities is extremely awkward for both her partner and her: "Next to our deaths, the hardest thing / to imagine is our parents making love. Now / the age we are, surely it's our children, / faces radiant with lust" (ll. 13-16). However, they caught her partner's son having sexual intercourse with their friends' teenage daughter; as a result, they could not avoid the subject: ". . . Legs wrapped around his waist / she hugged his naked chest, secure in the grace / that held her, her prettiness against his flesh / suddenly, a fragile, dangerous beauty" (ll. 9-12). It is not only the awkwardness of seeing their own son engaging in sexual activity in their own living room, but especially the fact that his partner's son's lover is still an adolescent, which alerts them to possible upcoming issues such as risk of teen pregnancy. Indeed, there is a "positive association between parent-adolescent sexual communication and youth safer sex behaviour" (Widman et al. 58). While the persona acknowledges that her partner's reaction should have been more mature, she also understands that it is the result of her partner's own father's response to his similar problems in youth: "Later in the car alone with him / you asked, *What's wrong with you*, / *she's far too young*, then repeated / your father's words from years ago" (ll. 20-23). The

father's unsympathetic attitude may be explained by the fact that men may struggle to be emotionally open and find it embarrassing to discuss issues of sexual health, which may hinder in-depth father-son discussions on safe sex (Widman et al. 58). Concurrently, the persona underscores her active sexual life with her partner as a way of empowering her partner's younger self, which his father had disempowered due to his unrestrained sexuality: "Barely sixteen you wanted more from him, / something that could save you, / turn you back. All he had to offer / was a father's rage and fear" (ll. 25-28). To her partner's father's reproach namely, "*Is your brain between your legs?*" (l. 29), the persona replies the following:

> You should have answered yes,
>
> the brain is everywhere.
>
> Some days my cunt's an existentialist.
>
> When I touch your anus
>
> my fingers ponder the origin of stars. (ll. 30-34)

The fact that the persona discards the Cartesian mind/body split in relation to a metaphorical emplaced embodiment of sexuality contributes to a portrayal of sexuality which is free from prejudices.

Finally, a criticism of toxic masculinity in relation to lust as metaphorically embodied by zucchinis and emplaced in the vegetable garden is portrayed in "Zucchini" (1985). Toxic masculinity is defined as "masculinity based on simplified norms and understandings of traditionally masculine characteristics such as violence, physical strength, suppression of emotion and devaluation of women" (Elliott 18). In this sense, "Zucchini," which belongs to the poetic sequence The Sex Lives of Vegetables, depicts the courgette as a sexual harasser, the vegetable garden's bully and a voyeur. It is said to touch other vegetables who are depicted as female and look under their clothes: "The

zucchini strokes the slim waists / of the pea vines, peeks under / the skirts of the yellow beans" (ll. 1-3). It is metaphorically depicted as a male, which becomes the dominant vegetable in the garden as it "squares its shoulders and says to the rhubarb, / *There's only room for one of us*" (ll. 4-5). As a voyeur, it observes quietly – "a voyeur lying still and silent / in its speckled lizard skin" –, as it spreads across the vegetable garden – "[i]n secret shadows it spreads / like must over the garden" (ll. 9-10) – and is vigilant throughout the night: "the zucchini's eyes are open all night" (l. 11). Crozier plays with the phallic shape of both the zucchini and the cucumber, which is analysed in Chapter 2, in order to depict a toxic masculinity. Namely, the zucchini is a metaphorical representation of a chauvinist, dominating man, whereas the cucumber represents a person who exposes his genitals in public. The zucchini's control is limited to the garden, though, as the poem does not comment on what happens to it when it is picked up for consumption. Actually, its power lies in the plant more than the fruit. It is its rootedness to the garden's ground – that is, its emplaced embodiment – the one that allows the zucchini plant to grow and thus reach other plants and expand its pre-eminence over the garden. The vegetable garden thus functions in the poem as a symbol of patriarchal societies that allow for toxic masculinities to exist. Crozier's criticism of toxic masculinity through this poem is still relevant nowadays, as according to women studies researcher Kathleen Elliott, despite the great advances for women in all fields, the toxic masculinities from the 1970s have permeated the newer generations and are still prevalent today (18).

All things considered, the emplaced embodiment of both the enjoyment of lust and its absence in the home sphere is depicted throughout Crozier's oeuvre. Therefore, Crozier's depiction of lust, as part of human sexuality, is realistic, as lust is variable and dependent on many internal and external factors. Furthermore, Crozier's portrayal of lust

is non-ageist, as absence of lust is not related to age. Last but not least, as in all discussions of sexuality, Crozier introduces its dark side to put forward a critique towards it. In a similar line of thought, the following subsection focuses on the emplaced embodiment of infidelity in committed relationships and its emotional consequences for both the lovers and their legitimate spouses.

3.1.5. Infidelity in Committed Relationships

The embodiment of infidelity in committed relationships as emplaced at home can be read in Crozier's poems published in the decades of the 1990s and 2010s. Both men and women are depicted as unfaithful spouses in all poems except one, in which the unfaithful person is a boyfriend. Therefore, there does not seem to be any gender bias, in line with Crozier's realistic portrayals of sexuality. Moreover, the fact of describing mostly spouses in their stead of partners or boyfriend and girlfriend relationships is different from the depiction of lovers in all the other subsections within sexuality, in which there is a wider variety of both sexual and romantic relationships, or in which the nature of the relationship is not even defined. The recurrent use of portrayals of infidelity within married couples, who are supposed to have a stable and strong relationship, amplifies its harming effects on both the spouse who has been deceived and, often, on the unfaithful one, too. The depiction of the emplaced embodiment of adultery is thematically organised in poetry collections, unlike that of the other subsections within the emplaced embodiment of sexuality in the home environment. As such, female empowerment of the cheated-on wife is depicted in the 1992 collection, whereas the 1999 one features the opposite, namely the disempowerment of the disrespected spouse, with the exception of one poem, namely "The Summer of the Large Hats," in which a lesbian love affair is depicted as a truer form of love for the female personae than their respective marriages to

men, which appear almost as cultural impositions. The 2013 collection portrays unlawful embodiments of adultery, while the poems about adultery contained in the 2015 and 2018 collections reveal the prominence of place in its decisive role in the embodiment of adultery.

The empowerment of those women who have suffered from their husband's unfaithfulness can be observed in three poems in the 1992 poetry collection, namely in "Dictionary of Symbols," "Home Care" and "Recipes." The wife and mother in "Dictionary of Symbols" whose husband is unfaithful to her with another woman decides to improve her self-esteem by comparing her naked body to that of the moon, as the woman's body shape is similar to that of the Earth's satellite: "It is the colour of her breasts / when they are full of milk, / it is dimpled like her thighs, / her tired belly, it waxes and wanes" (ll. 10-13). Moreover, she decides to share with any passer-by her body's moon-like beauty so as to feel valued by someone else, given that her husband undervalues her by being unfaithful to her:

> The woman who undresses in the dark,
> stands at the window, turns on the light.
> This is what it looks like, she says,
> this pale celestial body, faceless
> as the moon is faceless, coldly luminescent.
> You can stare at it forever
> and never burn your eyes. (ll. 29-35)

The fact that the woman in the poem describes her own countenance as "faceless" like that of the moon suggests that the experience of the woman in the poem is not restricted to her, but is applicable to any biological mother. That is, women experiment not only many bodily changes in the postpartum period, but they also undergo emotional and

psychological changes. In this sense, an absent husband who betrays his wife is likely to have a detrimental impact on the mental health of the new mother. In other words, "relational factors such as adult romantic attachment patterns, partner support and marital satisfaction have also an influence on postpartum depression" (Zörer et al. 156). Thus, by daring to show her "tired" body in public, the woman empowers herself, and more specifically, her own identity as a person, beyond her role of mother and wife. Crozier criticises the unfaithful husband by depicting his emplaced adultery in his lover's house as an embodiment of lust that is self-centred on his own pleasure:

> on a summer evening when all her children
> are asleep, when her husband kneels on a bed
> in another house, entering a woman
> from behind, so he can watch himself
> disappear into the flesh,
> his hands on her buttocks,
> round and glistening with sweat. (ll. 22-28)

While the emplaced embodiment of adultery in the lover's house is consistent in the three poems, "Home Care" offers a different embodied response to unfaithfulness from that of "Dictionary of Symbols." In "Home Care" the woman who is cheated on is not a wife and mother, but a girlfriend. In this case, her boyfriend has an affair with a friend of hers: "This / woman's the same age as her mother, but guess what? / There he was fishin' already, she says, but in her friend's bed" (ll. 7-10). In these lines, Crozier both depicts the stereotype of the asexual older woman – as depicted by the woman's amazement at her boyfriend's sexual involvement with a woman the age of her mother's – and deconstructs it by presenting it as a real fact that has happened to a regular person, namely the woman from Home Care who provides healthcare assistance to the persona's older

mother. The woman from Home Care, whose name is not acknowledged, decides not to allow such a disrespectful attitude towards her and takes the law into her own hands: ". . . she takes the boots to him and she / means what she says, she kicks him right in the face / . . . / too stunned to lift a finger, blood spattering / his shirt" (ll. 14-15, 17-18). She decides not to let her partner's infidelity show on her body image and dresses up – "So, she goes back to her / place and waits, gets all dressed up as if she's going / out, puts on her new shirt and cowboy boots" (ll. 10-12) – to take the previously quoted revenge. Feeling empowered in her attire, she decides to alter her partner's physical appearance by means of violence as a reminder of his need to respect women:

> . . . His first wife said he used
> to beat on her but who wanted to believe it? *Fishin'*
> *good?* she says. Now he's gone, she means for *ever*, but
>
> he'll never be rid of her. She opened him right above
> the cheek – there'll be a scar there three inches long
> saying *howdee-do* every time he looks in the mirror (ll. 18-23).

The woman from Home Care's use of violence to counter violence seems to be justified in the poem as the only means by which a former wife batterer can be dealt with. This is because, from the perspective of traditional masculinity – and that of the animal world – an alpha male's pre-eminence is closely connected to his strength and power over others. Thus, the woman from Home Care's attitude would correspond to that of a beta male challenging the status of the alpha male; as such, she fights patriarchy from within. Apart from this, Crozier underscores the need for society to confront domestic violence, understood in this case as gender violence, by giving a voice to its survivors, as it is only when the woman in the poem becomes aware of her partner's infidelity that she believes

her partner's former wife's story. Indeed, as former lawyer and director of Public Prosecutions in England Keir Starmer stated in an article in 2011, "it is only in the last ten years that [domestic violence] has been taken seriously as a criminal justice issue" (10). Unfortunately, discussions on domestic violence, as the one Crozier puts forward in her poem, are more alive today than ever due to the worldwide increase of such a criminal offence as triggered by the imposed lockdowns related to the Covid-19 pandemic. Hence, the effects of Covid-19 pandemic "have undermined the decades of progress made in reducing the extent and incidence of domestic violence" (Piquero et al. n.p.). In both poems, home is the place that enables the female personae to deal with their respective partners' adultery by means of different types of embodiment and body image. This is the case because the female personae in the poems, who have been the recipients of unfaithfulness, have not suffered from domestic violence. Otherwise, home would most likely be a site of disempowerment.

Whereas both "Dictionary of Symbols" and "Home Care" revolve around the emplaced embodiment of infidelity in committed relationships, "Recipes" is about the female persona's fear of her husband's future infidelity. The couple are at a party and the persona believes that one of the women in the party wishes to have an affair with her husband. This is the reason why, according to the persona, this woman tries to be nice to her and to tell her about a recipe she is fond of: "At the dinner party the woman / who intends to make love to my husband / tries to give me a recipe / . . . / You'll love it, she says" (ll. 1-3, 16). Nevertheless, the persona has collected many recipes over the years and does not need any more: "I have too many now, ones / I've saved for years from magazines / as if they're messages / of love or wisdom" (ll. 4-7). It is precisely the wisdom from recipes passed on from one generation to the next over the years that helps the persona manage her jealousy, which is triggered by her husband's repeated mention of

the woman in the party: “Later when we’re home / . . . / he says her name out loud, / three times / in the course of conversation” (ll. 20, 23-25). Such wisdom allows the persona to be practical rather than emotional about the issue: “At least, I tell myself, / I’ll know if he’s been with her – / the smell of garlic / where her fingers sweep across his belly” (ll. 32-35). In this way, the persona assumes that the ingredients of the recipe the woman in the party explained to her will allow her to trace any signs of her husband’s infidelity. Her husband’s body thus becomes a possible emplaced embodiment of adultery, which as an object of surveillance by his wife, may reveal the husband’s secret infidelity by the interaction of different material agencies on his body, namely his lover’s touch and the smell of garlic on her fingers.

Nonetheless, Crozier’s poems not always portray empowerment in the face of suffering from adultery. Specifically, Crozier’s 1999 collection depicts the disempowerment of disrespected spouses, an older mother with Alzheimer’s in the context of infidelity, and a certain justification of infidelity for lesbian women when heterosexual love is the cultural norm.

“The Sounds a Woman Makes” is about a husband’s sudden realization of his wife’s unfaithfulness. The husband in the poem arrives home in the evening and sees the vehicle of someone he knows in front of his house: “A familiar truck sits in his driveway / like a stray dog that won’t go away” (ll. 5-6). However, he only becomes aware of the fact that the owner of the car is his wife’s lover when he hears her reach her sexual climax from outside their house: “Above, through the screen, / he hears her cry” (ll. 29-30). At that moment, the deceived husband was enjoying his emplaced embodiment of the natural elements around his home – “He hears / a raccoon back of the house, / . . . / a breeze nuzzles his neck” (ll. 12-13, 21) – and preparing to arrange the house for the upcoming winter: “Against the porch four storm windows lean. / It seems harder every fall / to climb

the ladder with that weight" (ll. 23-25). Nevertheless, his wife's infidelity changes it all, even though the poem does not clarify in what specific ways exactly: "When she stops, / he knows all that he was / has been whittled away" (ll. 45-47). He stands outside in shock without knowing what to do. His unidentified feelings – ". . . it isn't anger / he's feeling now, it isn't pain" (ll. 43-44) –, which are related to his emotional distress, contrast with the surrounding prettiness of natural materials:

> Below their bedroom window
>
> he stands in the beauty of new wood,
>
> naked and gleaming,
>
> before it can be made into anything
>
> a man might use. (ll. 48-52)

One of the reasons that contributes to the husband's life becoming upended upon his wife's adultery is the fact that the husband seems to be getting older, as suggested by the increasing difficulty in installing the heavy storm windows. Adultery in older age after a lifetime together would appear to be much more challenging than at the beginning of the relationship at a younger age. Psychological research has shown that this is clearly the case for women, but no differences depending on age have been found in men (IJzerman et al. 204). This notwithstanding, psychologists Menelaos Apostolou and Andriana Demosthenous found in their study with Greek-speaking participants that "older people were more likely to forgive their partner's infidelity than younger ones . . . because it reduces the risk of staying single" (68). However, these results may vary in a different socio-cultural context.

Contrastingly, "His Wife: No Word Can Hold It" depicts the opposite emplaced embodiment of passion and adultery, as the lover's house embodies passion whereas the persona's house emplaces the disrespected wife's resignation. This poem belongs to the

Section Counting the Distance: Another Family's Story, in which a family's story is explained from the different perspective of each of its members. The poem focuses on the wife of the older sister's lover. The wife persona is aware that her husband is being unfaithful to her, and she has ambivalent feelings towards it. On the one hand, she laments it and suffers from emotional distress: "Lately I follow him, drift to the edge / of town in my white nightgown / . . . / watch the curtains at her window / . . . / So much life in her and mine in pieces" (ll. 11-12, 18, 20). In addition, the persona believes that her husband's lover's house is the emplaced embodiment of both happiness and liveliness, as the curtains "suck in and out as if the house itself is breathing" (l. 19). On the other hand, she accepts her husband's infidelity because she married him knowing that he had always been in love with his lover: "but I knew from the start. / Across the schoolyard / his long gaze bent around my friends and me / to stroke her face" (ll. 2, 5-7). Nonetheless, the husband is not aware of the fact that his wife has always known about his lover: "When he slides between our sheets / near morning, he believes he keeps / her scent a secret. How can he not sense / my knowing?" (ll. 25-28). Besides the husband's infidelity, the married couple have a communication problem, as the wife does not tell her husband about her sexual needs, which contributes to her misery. The wife wishes she could embody her husband lover's smell so that her husband would be as passionate in bed as she believes he is with his lover: ". . . pray her smell / will soak into my skin and / he will take me hard / without the gentleness he thinks I want" (ll. 29-32). Although the wife is both unhappy and resigned to her husband's unfaithfulness, the only solution she can think of is to "make him choose" (l. 21), but she discards it considering that her husband chose to marry her and that his lover "won't have him / longer than a night" (ll. 23-24). The persona does not contemplate the possibilities of speaking with him, going to couple therapy, or leaving him.

Another perspective on the sexual affair described in "His Wife: No Word Can Hold It," specifically that of the mother of the persona's husband's lover, can be observed in "The Mother: Without Blessing" from the same section, namely Counting the Distance: Another Family's Story. The mother persona, who suffers from Alzheimer's disease, complains about her two daughters and her own memory loss. Two things annoy the mother about her older daughter, who she describes as "a whore" (l. 2). Firstly, she has sexual intercourse with a married man in her house: "A married man / rolls in her stink. It's my house / they rut in, thinking I can't hear" (ll. 2-4). In other words, the older mother criticizes her daughter's adulterous embodiment of sexuality as well as her emplacement of the sexual act. Secondly, she is not loving to her anymore: "She used to care for me, / the spitting image, some would say. / When I cry out she threatens / to gag me in bed" (ll. 5-8). This quotation bespeaks the verbal ill-treatment that some older adults have to bear, especially those who suffer from dementia. As psychologist Ignacio Gimeno et al. found in their study and, as they acknowledge, in line with the research findings in previous studies, more than fifty percent of interviewed informal caregivers admitted having exercised some kind of abuse towards the patient with dementia, which they explained through high levels of burden in the caregiver (n.p.). Such a reasoning appears to illuminate the reason why the daughter is no longer loving to her demented mother. However, the fact that the mother suffers from Alzheimer's disease also places her as an allegedly unreliable speaker, which is connected to her memory loss. The older mother particularly laments having forgotten her daughters' younger years – "I don't remember much / of them as children" (ll. 16-17) –, about her husband and their marriage – "There was a man, / a satin dress / I can't get into. / It's there on the wall" (ll. 18-21), and lost her language skills: "Once, I spoke in tongues. / Now words dissolve / like wafers in my mouth" (ll. 26-28). These lines together with the last line of the poem – "without blessing"

(l. 30) – suggest that the persona is angry about her illness, as it implies a loss not only of memory but also of personal identity. In this sense, "Alzheimer's does not only imply the loss of identity of the sufferer, but also the loss of identity of the whole family, since the effects of the disease change the lives of all its members" (Garrigós 211). Nevertheless, dementia studies have intended to challenge the equation of dementia to various forms of loss in the last two decades, with a focus on "remaining abilities" (Hydén and Antelius 3). In this vein, dementia studies researchers Lars-Christer Hydén and Eleonor Antelius explain in the introduction to their edited collection of essays, *Living with Dementia*, what this means:

> In the field of dementia studies we can witness a clear shift from a preference for a spectator (third-person perspective) to an interest in the experience (first-person perspective) of the person with dementia, to seeing the person with dementia as engaged in interaction with others (second-person perspective). (4)

That is to say that listening to people with dementia and how they experience they day-to-day life has become essential to understand how the patient suffering from dementia experiences his/her condition (Hydén and Antelius 5). This is precisely what Crozier does in the poem, namely she gives voice to the person with dementia so that the reader can have a snapshot, even if fictitious, into both her life and her point of view as a patient, thus empowering both her concerns and her agency as an individual.

Infidelity in committed relationships is also portrayed as a free form of love between two women married to men in "The Summer of the Large Hats" (1999). This poem is unique in Crozier's oeuvre both in its depiction of a lesbian love affair between two neighbours and as regards viewpoint. That is, as has been analysed throughout this chapter, most poems involving adultery depict the emotional harm done to the disrespected spouse in heterosexual relationships. Nonetheless, in "The Summer of the

Large Hats," what is portrayed is the emotional pain that the unfaithful female persona feels when the relationship with her lover ends because her lover fails to go to their arranged date and is having sex with her husband in its stead, as the following quotation suggests:

> Though we'd agreed, she didn't make her call.
> That weekend she was quiet
> But I heard her husband through the wall –
> it was like putting my hand in fire,
> holding it there. (ll. 39-43)

The persona's intense feeling of betrayal is due to the strong bond between the women lovers, which is reinforced by their connection to nature: "We were like two fillies glimpsed in a field / as you drive past, one palomino, / one sorrel, needing nothing but the grass, / wind running like a boy between us in the sun" (ll. 12-15). In addition, their embodiment of sexuality, as emplaced both at the persona's country home and outdoors is also connected to nature. Regarding the former, when their respective children are asleep – "At night we tucked my daughter, her small son, / in rollaways on the porch" (ll. 24-25) –, the persona and her lover play at creating shadow puppets of animals on the wall, leading to an implicit sexual encounter: "our hands cast rabbit, antelope, and mare, / on whitewashed walls. Her fingers / ran down my belly like a mouse" (ll. 33-35). Regarding the latter, it involves the lovers' kissing of their breasts in the open air: "we picked saskatoons in the coulee's dip / our mouths purpling the skin / under each other's blouse" (ll. 45-47). Their summer time in the countryside is related to freedom for the women lovers, as their husbands are often in the city: ". . . Any moment / our husbands would arrive from the city" (ll. 28-29). However, in hindsight, each of the lovers has a different opinion on their relationship. While the persona's lover believes that they were

“[l]eft on [their] own too much” (l. 16), the persona reminisces their love as one that made everything that surrounded them gayer:

That summer,

berries exploded on the stems,
wild canaries carried her blondeness
from my fingers to the trees, brightening
everything they touched, my mouth
salty with the taste of her. (ll. 59-64)

On the one hand, the persona’s former lover’s opinion suggests that she is not proud of their relationship and that it took place because they lacked some kind of marital surveillance. Thus, in a way, the persona’s former lover seems to have incorporated into her worldview a patriarchal system of beliefs. On the other hand, for the persona, both their love and sexual relationship were inextricably connected to nature, in the freedom from cultural norms and expectations that it allows for. Such a contrast between the natural and the cultural is also depicted with the wearing of the hats by the women, only when their husbands were home: “We were women with good hair and wore hats / rarely. . . . / . . . / We’d wear our hats for them [our husbands]” (ll. 5-6, 30). The poem does not clarify whether the persona’s husband knew about their love affair or not and whereas this changed anything in their marital relationship. Nonetheless, the persona suspects that their affair died because the persona’s lover’s husband became aware of it and kept his wife from meeting her lover, as suggested by his exaggerated laughter when the persona could not eat the pie made of saskatoons that they had picked in the coulee’s dip because she had added salt instead of sugar to the pie.

While infidelity in committed relationships is portrayed in most poems in which its emplaced embodiment is in the home sphere as an emotionally detrimental act for

everyone implied, but especially for the disrespected spouses, Crozier also criticises more severe cases of adultery in which criminal acts are committed. This is the case of the poem "Happiness" (2013). Crozier starts her poem by imagining what would come out of the embodiment of happiness. As an animal, happiness would be embodied in a dog with a game bird in its mouth: "If happiness had a body it would be a golden retriever running through the grass, a shot duck in its mouth." As a tree, happiness would be embodied in a tree of the unknown addressee's hometown, whose shade is well appreciated by both wild animals and couples: "If happiness were a tree it would be the cottonwood ten miles north of the city where you grew up. Its singularity has given it a following: coyotes and hawks . . . couples who need shelter." However, when it comes to human embodiment of happiness, Crozier acknowledges the complexities of such a feeling. She provides two examples to illustrate that the human embodiment of happiness in connection to sexuality is sometimes both unhealthy and obtained in illicit ways. The first example is from a film which depicts an ideal family that looks extremely happy: "Todd Solondz's film *Happiness* opens with the perfect family and their perfect grins." However, the viewer eventually discovers that the father is, actually, a pederast: "Later, the perfect father lures a boy into his car." The speaker is both horrified at such hypocrisy and abhors such an act of sexual violence: "When his perversion becomes clear to you, it's as if an earwig has been dropped into your ear and is laying eggs in the folds of your brain." Regarding the second example of human embodiment of happiness in relation to sexuality, the speaker retells the story that was broadcast on a TV programme, namely "Rod Serling's *Night Gallery*." A man whose wife was unfaithful to him with another man plots to kill his wife's lover by making a servant insert a type of beetle in his wife's lover's ear. Nonetheless, the husband's scheme is reversed and he ends up with the deadly beetle in his ear. As a result, the husband dies in agony, but the unfaithful wife is no longer happy

despite sexual pleasure:

> The cuckold asks his servant to introduce the earwig and its ways to the lover of his wife. There is a screw-up in the dark, and the husband becomes the victim. A day or two later, he can feel the larvae burrowing, eating his grey cells without end. His screams from the bedroom drown the orgasmic cries of his wife in the summer house, and her happiness starts to thin.

The poem suggests that happiness cannot be obtained by either unhealthy or illicit embodiments of sexuality. In its stead, Crozier suggests that the human emplaced embodiment of happiness should be like the example set by the non-human world.

Finally, Crozier's 2015 and 2018 poetry collections emphasise the prominence of place in the embodiment of infidelity in committed relationships. "The Wrong Cat" (2015) is the last poem in section three of the poetry collection with the same title, namely *The Wrong Cat*. It is a narrative poem about an evening the female persona shared with her husband and a woman friend of theirs, who is a painter. After suggesting different titles for one of the artist's paintings, including that of "The Wrong Cat," they tell both happy and sad stories from their pasts. The persona retells the story her husband explained about his first wife and their marriage, which was partly related to cats. The husband's first wife "collected cats; ten or so sneaked their way among the small legs / of the children, two daughters and a son, under four" (ll. 40-41). Their emplaced embodiment of sexuality at home was affected by their cats' unhygienic habits and their inaction in preventing their cats from acting in such a way, as "[o]n hot days the house they rented / stank from the attic insulation the cats used as litter. / When they made love, that's what he smelled in her hair" (ll. 46-48). Their marriage ended when the first wife confessed to her husband that she had been unfaithful to him with different men: "After he'd left, after she'd told him she'd slept with all his friends, / she claimed she just wanted to be happy.

‘How could she be / happy?’ / . . . / No one was happy then. Not the kids, not him, not the cats” (ll. 49-51, 54). This reflection connects with the poem entitled “Happiness” (2013), as in both poems the adulterer wives are unfaithful to their husbands with the excuse of their personal search for happiness. However, this is in both poems a selfish quest, which ends up being harmful to their respective families. In addition, in both poems the couples’ embodiment of their sexualities involves an element from the natural world – the earwig and the funny smell from the cat’s excrements and urine, respectively – which, in its inappropriateness during the sexual act, foretells an unhappy ending to both marriages.

In a similar vein, the prose poem “God of the Self-Defeating” (2018), which is also analysed in Chapter 4 in its relation to the prairie trope, describes a couple of lovers who are unfaithful to their spouses and whose adultery is revealed by the weather, among many other thwarting situations. The lover’s affair is interrupted by the cold brought in by the untimely snow: “In mid-July, winter for no good reason decides to occupy the summer house. Snow drifts through the screens onto the adulterers lying on the wicker couch.” The summer house becomes the emplacement of adultery in this prose poem, in the same vein as in “Happiness” (2013). Crozier describes the lovers’ embodiment of such an unexpected cold in the following way: “their sweat freezing into fragile quills along their fickle bellies, their marmoreal inner thighs.” Such a description underscores the weakness of the lovers’ emotional bond, as their perspiration becomes easily-breakable icicles and their abdomens, as a synecdoche of them as individuals and their behaviours, are described as not loyal in their affections.

Last but not least, Crozier also connects the emplaced embodiment of future infidelity to a liminal space between the home and the outside world, namely the balcony, as depicted in the prose poem “God of Balconies” (2018). Crozier acknowledges such a liminality between the intimacy of the house and the public exposure to the street in the

following way: "Only the railing draws a line. And the space it defines is the site of crucial happenings." One of such occasions is the arrangement of the first secret meeting of future adulterers: "the tryst that begins the affair while the spouses of the nascent lovers chat insipidly behind them in the well-lit room." The liminality of the balcony matches the liminality of the incipient adulterous relationship. Such liminality can also apply to gender, as the lovers in both "God of Balconies" and "God of the Self-Defeating" are not gendered, and therefore, the ideas about the emplaced embodiment of sexuality present in both poems apply to all types of couples.

In sum, Crozier's emplaced embodiment of infidelity in committed relationships at home is multifaceted. In this sense, a wide range of situations surrounding infidelity are depicted, not only in relation to the emotional implications for both the official partner and the person who is unfaithful, but also as regards other family members, such as an older mother with Alzheimer's. Crozier's emplacement of infidelity at home and its surroundings, such as the garden, contribute on some occasions to underscoring the criticism towards the harm inflicted by unfaithful spouses, whereas on some other occasions place and the human relationship with the non-human world contribute to empowering the disrespected spouse. Significant changes in either style or theme cannot be observed in the emplaced embodiment of committed relationships at home. In its stead, Crozier has provided different perspectives to the same subject matter from *Inventing the Hawk* (1992) to *God of Shadows* (2018).

3.2. Chapter Conclusions

In conclusion, as has been shown throughout the analysis of the poems in this chapter, Crozier provides a wide array of experiences of sexuality both in the different life stages and without a specific reference to age throughout her oeuvre. More specifically, Crozier

grants relevance to sexuality, understood in the myriad forms that intimacy may take, as an important way for couples to show love to each other throughout the life-course: "Indeed, sexual activity in its diverse forms is a central human need beginning at birth and continuing throughout adulthood, as human nature is in continuous profound need of intimacy and love, which translates into desire for affection and closeness, as well as comfort and familiarity with own and partner's body." (Dominguez and Barbagallo 514). Crozier's depictions of sexuality include both healthy sexual encounters that promote stereotype-free sexuality, and unhealthy ones that contribute to public awareness of and offer a critique to sexually related offences – such as sexual harassment – and crimes – such as pederasty. Indeed, redressing social injustices has been an important concern throughout Crozier's career, as she herself acknowledges: "I've used words to shine a light on those dark corners" ("Masterclass"). Crozier's portrayal of sexuality thus moves, alongside that of many feminist writers, from the speakers' personal experiences to "a political sphere in which socially constructed discourses around sexuality and aging shape our ability to study and theorize them" (Jen 207). Crozier, as an older woman herself, is very much aware of social prejudices towards older people's sexuality, as she ironically claimed in Saskatchewan's Writer's Guild Talk in 2021:

> After all these years of writing and publishing, I've come to the conclusion that it takes more courage both on the page and in front of an audience to speak the truth of your life when you're older. Perhaps because that territory in literature is relatively unchartered. Poems and stories built from the raw materials of ageing are rare. After all, what's to say? The old have given up on sex, haven't they? And all the story lines that go with it. (30'29"-31').

A member of the Baby Boom generation, Crozier aligns herself with those writers who "[h]aving grown up during the sexual revolution . . . are renowned for challenging and

disrupting stereotypes in relation to both sex and ageing" (Fileborn et al. 118). One major way in which Crozier undertakes such an endeavour, and which has been the focus of this chapter, is by means of interlacing the speakers' respective embodiments of sexuality to their relationship with place. In this sense, Crozier's portrayal of an emplaced embodiment of sexuality at home has proven relevant to a micro-level of environmental analysis, given that the lovers' connection to place often exerts a significant influence on their embodiment of sexuality throughout the life-course. In this sense, home is both supportive – as in the poems in which home symbolises emotional stability and the site of female empowerment – and unsupportive, as illustrated by the poems in which the speakers feel trapped in a house that does not contribute to their happiness. Non-human nature, as mainly encompassing the speakers' respective gardens, but also pets, other animals and natural elements, has an effect on the personae's respective embodiments of sexuality, both at a literal and at a metaphorical level. In this regard, the non-human world becomes a site of both learning and empowerment when the personae show humility towards it, but it also functions as a reflection and critique of cultural implications and limitations that hinder the speakers' enjoyment of sexuality. Specifically, Crozier's emplaced embodiment of sexuality at home underscores both women's sexual desire and agency, as favoured by the female personae's interactions with non-human nature, including Crozier's valorisation of animals like cockroaches, which have not traditionally been depicted from a positive stance in Western literature.[42] Both adaptation to life-circumstances and humour are essential features of Crozier's depictions of sexuality throughout the life-course. The latter allows, for example, to "not only undermine phallic

[42] A clear example of the common despise for cockroaches in the Western world is Franz Kafka's *Metamorphosis*, in which Gregor Samsa, a salesman and the household's provider, transforms into a huge insect – often represented as a cockroach – overnight. After the transformation, the family alienates and gradually both neglects and abuses Gregor. Kafka's novella shows the true nature of individuals in capitalist societies, given that Gregor's family's esteem for him was merely based on his ability to provide economically for the family.

worship but also [to] suggest an alternative perspective on the male body" (MacDonald 249); such new meanings are negotiated by Crozier's description of sexuality in relation to the non-human world. While previous studies have underscored the evolution of Crozier's treatment of sexuality as of the late 1980s (Morrissey, qtd. in MacDonald 249), the present examination of the emplaced embodiment of sexuality at home in Crozier's work has identified career-long concerns in a number of sub-themes, namely sensuality, playfulness and promiscuity, within depictions of the interconnection between sexuality and love, masturbation and genitalia, and lust. Some other sub-themes have been recurrent in Crozier's oeuvre since her 1990s poetry collections, namely sexuality in the wider context of parents and siblings and infidelity in committed relationships. Crozier's late style as regards the emplaced embodiment of sexuality at home is thus defined by a continuation in theme in order to counter the pervasiveness of "so much silence regarding desire" (Crozier, "Changing" 67), and especially, as regards both older women and the sexually abused.

CHAPTER 4

Imprinted Emplaced Identities: The Prairies as a Meso-Level of Spatial Analysis

“. . . on that prairie that made you
naked. Everything is
measured in space.”

Patrick Lane. “You Have Always Driven into Silence”

The prairies occupy a central position in Crozier’s poetic repertoire, not only because she was born and raised in a small prairie town, namely Swift Current (Saskatchewan), but especially because of the issue Crozier has taken with many of the patriarchal constructs prevalent in such agricultural communities. The prairies are, therefore, an inspirational trigger for Crozier, whose identity as both an individual and as a writer has been strongly shaped by this specific setting. As a poet writing in the prairie context, in the 1970s, 1980s, and early 1990s, Crozier was often described as a prairie poet (Cooley 184; Heath 194). Nonetheless, such a classification reduced Crozier’s works to regional, parochial concerns. This is the reason why a number of commentators disagreed with the label of prairie poet to refer to Crozier already in the 1990s. Nathalie Cooke collects such views in her biography of Lorna Crozier’s, noting that “Crozier is *more* than a regional poet because landscape is a vehicle in, rather than the object of, her poetry” (89). Such a statement has several important implications. Firstly, the prairie region becomes a symbol in Crozier’s poetry, as she herself states in an interview with Bruce Meyer and Brian O’Riordan:

> One thing I've never done is write about "The Prairie." I wouldn't say any of my poems are about "The Prairie." In most of my poems I use the images that surround me, and that includes the prairie, but the poems are *about* something else ("Nothing Better" 1-2).

Even though Crozier seldom writes about the prairies per se, the prairies gain a salient position in her poems through her use of the prairie trope, as she often reflects on the implications that living in the prairies has for its inhabitants. Particularly, Crozier explores what the prairie weather and the specific features that it confers to it as a landscape mean for local prairie citizens, as well as the interactions established between the human and non-human world on the prairies. Hence, the prairie trope is worth examining not only in its symbolic identifications but also in the portrayal of the prairie itself as a naturalcultural environment; that is, as a site that is the meeting point of wild animal species and farmers who tend the prairie lands, among other human activities such as mineral and fossil fuel exploitation. Secondly, with her move to Victoria (British Columbia) in 1991 to work in the Writing Department at the University of Victoria, Crozier's poetic symbolism as related to the natural environment gained new insights from the diametrically opposed landscape – characterised by a mild climate, located on the coast, and surrounded by rainforests and mountains – which became her new home. Therefore, Crozier's progression through her life-course has been significantly influenced by the different places she has inhabited, as reflected in her poetry.

The prairie as location is not presented as empty space in Crozier's poems, but it is transformed into a meaningful place by means of the strong connection that the personae have with it. Specifically, the prairie is depicted in Crozier's poetry as a complex locale which encompasses two main interconnected tropes, namely the prairie and drought. The prairie stands for the land in a generic way, while drought is a specific

condition of the prairies in the hot season. The prairie and drought tropes will be analysed in separate subsections below in order to observe their respective evolution throughout Crozier's poetry. In the conclusion to this chapter, both tropes will be considered together in their (re)construction of the symbolism associated to the prairies.

An examination of the meanings attached to the prairie landscape in Crozier's poetry demands framing the prairie as both region and trope within the Canadian context. The Canadian prairie region has traditionally encompassed three provinces, namely Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba, also widely known as Canada's breadbasket. The agricultural and economic connotations of such a popular label, as well as the lingering socio-cultural and therefore literary implications of rurality that the prairie region evokes originated in the colonial settlement of Canada during the 19th and early 20th centuries. Specifically, the British Empire consciously constructed and advertised an image of the prairies as a paradise of sorts, an Edenic garden to be re-created in the great plains of the prairies (Kerber 3). Such was the image that the imperial promoters of settlement on the Canadian West sold throughout Europe. However, it soon became apparent to the new settlers that such a biblical ideal would be extremely difficult to fulfil given the harsh climatic conditions on the prairies. To make matters worse, the decade of the 1930s brought with it the Great Depression, which on the prairies was worsened by the severe droughts and windstorms that eroded the soil and destroyed the crops. Also known as the Dust Bowl years, such an ecological catastrophe finished with the return of regular rainfall in 1939. As a result, those writers that flourished on the prairies created a number of narratives about the prairie landscape which defined it as either a lost paradise or an unforgiving wasteland. Such narratives of place became so common that they were thought to be natural reactions to place, rather than actual constructs. The prairie provinces were thus widely described as an un-evolving place (Calder and Wardhaugh 4),

as the mythic West, not only by academics but also by political forces that have exploited prairie resources (Calder, "Reassessing" 58, 60). As a response to such dominant scripts about the prairies, a number of prairie-based writers such as Robert Kroetsch, Dennis Cooley, Andrew Suknaski, and Lorna Crozier among others started individual literary projects to demythologize the prairies in the 1970s and 1980s (Kerber 119-120).

These authors' work can be seen as a form of literary resistance against the dominant narratives of the unchanging prairies, which have also been fostered by capitalist requirements to commodify place for touristic purposes (Calder, "Reassessing" 54). As literary scholar Alison Calder further suggests, such literary resistance has ultimately underscored the relevance of place – and especially place attachment – in a globalised world (60). While the importance of place has often been contested, present-day scholars of prairie literature regard prairie writers' depictions of place attachment as essential for prairie culture (Kerber 6-7). This is especially the case in a context in which the regional and its associated motifs have tended to be devalued (Wyile et al. xi) in the face of the experiences depicted in literary works produced in the major Canadian urban centres. In this sense, it is worth noting Crozier's – among other prairie-born writers – continuous attachment to the prairies, as depicted in her oeuvre, despite having lived half of her adult life far away from them in the Saanich Peninsula on Vancouver Island. Crozier's ongoing portrayal of the prairie landscape in her work bespeaks both the importance of place in the construction of a person's identity and the major role that memory plays in writing.

Regarding the importance of place in the construction of a person's identity, place should not be seen as a deterministic factor in a person's identity despite its strong influence on it. As ecocritic Jenny Kerber concludes when discussing novels of prairie writers Rudy Wiebe, Thomas King, and Margaret Laurence, the connection between place

and identity "is neither natural nor inevitable" and therefore "identity, like one's commitment to place, is always to some extent a critical and creative choice" (202). However, such a view has only become common in the last two decades, as until the late 1990s, the vast majority of literary critics of prairie literature asserted the domination of landscape over culture (Calder and Wardhaugh 8) as a result of the historical animosity between the European settlers and the harsh prairie climatic conditions (11). As literary critic in contemporary Canadian literature Frank Davey critiques, "[i]n Canadian literary criticism regionalism has often been virtually equated with place, as if any signs of specific places in a text directly signalled regionalist ideology" (2). In a similar vein, the appropriateness of the notion of prairie has also been contested. Alison Calder and historian Robert Wardhaugh explain that historians like Gerald Friesen consider the term 'prairie' as being no longer suitable to describe the Canadian West, because it presently encompasses the province of British Columbia, too, which features a diametrically opposed climate, landscape, and history. Nonetheless, Calder and Wardhaugh note that "[t]here have been no attempts to reconceptualize the region through ambitious works of synthesis" (14-15). Therefore, no alternative term to that of prairie has been suggested.

Regarding the role that memory plays in writing, the role that memory plays in prairie-based poetry encompasses the re-invention of the prairie landscape. According to geographer Carl J. Tracie, "[p]oetry emerges from past observations, events, and emotions that have been not only re-imagined by the poet but modified by time and intervening experience. Hence, memory complicates the exchange between poetry and the prairie landscape" (9). Such re-imagination of the landscape is possible, in Crozier's case, by what Tracie calls "a visceral involvement with the prairie" (10). As Crozier points out in an interview with Tracie, prairie poetry is a reminder of the need "to live passionately linked to place and to the past" (191). As such, the role of memory in poetry

which depicts the prairie is a reminder that place is always mediated by the writer. That is, the writer re-creates the landscape and in so doing adds a number of connotations to it. Therefore, his/her words are unable to fully represent the landscape objectively (Cooley 186-187). In close keeping with both Tracie and Cooley, Kerber states that "[l]andscape is never simply a physical phenomenon composed of material traces; it is also a complex imaginative archive, an accretion of stories told and retold as a way of making sense of the present" (8). Along these lines, Tracie claims that the effects of poetry on the prairie landscape involve an act of renewal through the imagination (161), which can help to "enlarge and enrich our understanding of the prairie landscape" (190). In turn, the effect of the prairie landscape on poetry comprises the writer's use of images of place in his/her poems, crafted after careful observation and experience of such a landscape (Tracie 21).

From an environmental perspective, Kerber asserts – following parallel respective notions by Allan Pred, Edward Casey, and geographer Doreen Massey – that place should not only be understood as the product of literary transformation, but also as a process resulting from "interactions among different entities" (9). That is to say that place is composed of a multiplicity of natures which are co-created by both human and non-human agencies (Kerber 13). In this light, present-day narratives of place play a major role in the contextualisation of the current environmental challenges that the prairie – and the Earth as a whole – is currently undergoing (2). Namely, narratives of place, in their ability to heal, contribute to adapting to the changing prairie landscape; they become pieces of social critique and, as such, encourage readers to address environmental challenges creatively (10).

Similarly, Calder and Wardhaugh emphasise the need to depart from anthropocentric perspectives of the prairie as part of the project to demythologise such a

landscape. To this end, they claim that the impact that the prairie has on its writers is the same as the one produced by other landscapes (16-17). Specifically, they believe that

> [t]his desire to simultaneously break down and construct regional boundaries points out to the conflicted and contradictory impulses imbedded within any discussion of the region, and to the need to develop ways of reading that recognize that the prairies are both place and no-place, unique and generic (10).

Crozier's poetry often engages in such narratives of place that are rooted both in the regional, specifically the prairies, and in generic natural environments that cannot be ascribed to a specific location. Other specific sites, which are either endangered, like the Great Bear Rainforest in British Columbia, or which contribute to healthy interactions between the human and the non-human world, such as the ones taking place at the educational retreat centre Wintergreen, in the Frontenac Arch Biosphere Reserve in Ontario, also feature in Crozier's poetry. In this sense, Crozier's oeuvre contributes to what Kerber calls "a transnational ethics of place" (146), which points toward the need to establish connections among different communities in order to foster a global sense of place. In Crozier's case, such connections to different places are interwoven with reflections on the passage of time and the ageing process.

4.1. The Symbol of the Prairie: Weather and Landscape

When Crozier mentions the prairies in her poems, the reference may be in relation not only to the fields, namely the countryside, but also to prairie towns. That is, the specific rural or urban setting is often undistinguishable in Crozier's prairie poems. The prairie trope in Crozier's oeuvre can be classified into two distinct subcategories, namely (i) those poems in which the symbol of the prairie stands for the effects that the harsh prairie

weather has on its inhabitants, both human and non-human beings. This includes those poems which connect the characteristics of the prairies to the human ageing process; (ii) those poems which foster the interrelatedness or even Barad's notion of intra-action between the human persona and the non-human world. In Barad's own words, the term intra-action articulates the fact that "all bodies, not merely human bodies, come to matter through the world's performativity – it's iterative intra-activity. Matter is not figured as a mere effect or product of discursive practices, but rather as an agentive factor in its iterative materialization" ("Nature's Queer Performativity" 33). There are no clear-cut boundaries between the first and second subcategories, as in some cases poems contain both. However, for the sake of clarity, poems are classified into one subcategory or the other depending on the more salient meaning contained in each poem.

Therefore, the aim of this section is twofold, namely to examine Crozier's literary engagement with the prairie weather and its effect on prairie inhabitants, both human and non-human; and to interrogate the kinds of relationships between human and non-human beings on the prairies that Crozier describes in the selected poems. In turn, the relationship between individuals and the prairie environment that is gradually forged throughout Crozier's life-course is closely connected to her sense of place. Hence, the following section will also feature the ways in which Crozier's move away from the prairies has affected her sense of place and consequently the evolution of her late style. In addition, both Crozier's emplaced embodiment of the prairies and literary remembering of them in her different life stages attest to the ways in which place affects both the ageing process and one's sense of identity. As environmental gerontologist Sheila Peace et al. argue when discussing late life, "[i]t is thus, through movement within a local social milieu as well as in and out of the local and domestic environment, that sense of self and the identity that arises with it, is established and maintained" (114). In Crozier's case, the specific physical

natural environment of the prairies – both wild and man-planted – has had a strong life-long influence on her identity as reflected in her oeuvre.

4.1.1. The Effects of the Weather on Prairie Living Beings

The first subcategory within the analysis of the prairie trope encompasses those poems in which the symbol of the prairie stands for the effects that the harsh prairie weather has on its inhabitants, both human and non-human beings. One of the major ways in which the prairie trope is constructed in Crozier's oeuvre is via the definition of the prairie as a place of extreme climatic conditions which exert a strong influence on the bodies of both human and non-human beings alike. In addition, the harsh prairie weather also has a major emotional, aesthetic and economic effect on human beings, as portrayed by Crozier in her poems.

In this vein, Crozier depicts the winter prairie realistically as a snowy landscape with freezing temperatures. Crozier laments the fact that such harsh winter weather hinders human contact and interpersonal communication in outdoor environments, as can be observed in the poem "White Distance" (1976). This creative piece focuses on the fact that everything is covered by snow in winter, as the adjective "white" in the title suggests, and because of the cold generated by the snow, the prairie inhabitants need to wear warm coats and gloves which do not allow for much human contact. Therefore, the specific weather conditions on the prairies limit the interpersonal relationships of its human inhabitants, as suggested in the title by means of the noun "distance." Specifically, Crozier bemoans the fact that prairie inhabitants are unable to hold hands while walking on the street: "In the winter on the prairie / hands never touch" (ll. 1-2). Moreover, prairie citizens need to shout to be heard while outdoors because of the thick fabric the coats they need to wear are made of: "and pile-lined parka hoods / deafen the ears. / Just shouting

words are spoken" (ll. 7-8). In order to show that this is no exaggerated claim, Crozier ends the poem by means of a warning:

> but they never touch the hidden hands,
>
> for they fear the cold smoothness
>
> of a metal claw
>
> a mitted skeleton
>
> now sudden and exposed (ll. 12-16).

That is, the cold is so extreme that those who do not wear their hands covered, risk losing their limbs to the freezing temperatures. The fact of not being able to have skin to skin contact creates a certain emotional barrier which prairie inhabitants wish to overcome, as depicted in lines 9 to 11: "Prairie people in winter / dream of whispers of soft fingers / sheltered in the wool's warmth." This seasonal weather-related both physical and emotional difficulty is likely to be imprinted on prairie inhabitants' identities. Indeed, social science research on the relationships between weather and sense of place corroborates this point. As sociologists Phillip Vannini et al. claim in their ethnographic study on British Columbia citizens' experiences of the weather, "the weather is in us, incorporated into our very identities, into our very dwellings and sensations" (373).

Crozier elaborates further on the hazardous weather conditions on the prairies in the poem "What Words Are Left" (1996), in which the emphasis is shifted towards the deadly effect of the extreme winter temperatures on farm animals. The poem criticises the "immigration pamphlets / meant to attract settlers / to the West" (ll. 2-4), which circulated – in the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century – the false promise of both a healthy climate and an ease to grow crops (Owram 3; Kelley and Trebilcock 62; Gagnon). The devastating effect that the bitter cold has on farm animals is salient: "Some winters / the noses of the cattle bleed. / Farm cats lose the tips of / ears and tails" (ll. 16-

19). The icy temperatures are also explained to be dangerous for people, as "Between house and barn, / lost in a blizzard / a man can freeze solid" (ll. 20-22). Nonetheless, "What Words Are Left" ultimately portrays a sense of place based on resilience to the hard weather conditions. This is achieved through the shift in perspective that art allows for. Specifically, the persona goes for a walk in the cold and meets an arguably minor result of the harsh weather conditions, namely a kitten's frozen ear. The persona decides to keep it as a bookmark: "I / picked it up, placed it / between the pages of my book" (ll. 30-32), and as a symbol of beauty in the inescapable cold that defines the region: "A winter petal, / emblem of the season, / this country's harsh, un- / erasable word" (ll. 33-36). Crozier's depiction of the kitten's frozen ear is reminiscent of the Romantic concept of the sublime; in the sense that a beautiful element from the non-human world produces an intense feeling of wariness in the viewer, which is associated with the deadly hazards of the prairie winter's extremely cold temperatures. Moreover, such concluding lines are the ones that particularly suggest both resilience to the extreme climate and a strong sense of place, in Mrs Bentley's acceptance of the effects of the prairie weather via the use of the cat's bit of frozen ear as a bookmark. In this line, following philosopher Edward S. Casey's notions on body, self and landscape, Vannini et al. claim that "the experience and practise of weather" involve "an active, reflective, practical disposition to endure, sense, struggle, manipulate, mature, change, and grow in processes that, over time, implicate the place-making of one's dwelling" (362). Therefore, the persona's resilience to the freezing temperatures in Crozier's poem contributes to her feeling at home in the prairies. This attitudinal shift to the ways in which the weather is portrayed implies an evolution in Crozier's poetics towards less aggressive depictions of the prairie landscape and its effects on both its human and non-human dwellers, given that the cat's frozen ear is re-inscribed in the poem as a symbol of resilience through non-human aesthetics. Such a change may

be explained by Crozier's distancing from the every-day realities of prairie winter weather following her move to the climatically temperate Saanich Peninsula in British Columbia in 1991.

Crozier also portrays the prairie as a wind-stricken area, which has wearing effects on its human inhabitants and destructive consequences for the non-human world. In "Retired Farmer" (1976), the speaker describes the effects of strong winds on an older peasant:

> It wasn't the prairie
> he needed now not the wind
> that bowed his head to dirt
> that blistered his mouth and dried
> the moisture from his eyes. (ll. 4-8)

The speaker in the poem claims that the senior farmer would benefit from "the soft wind that came from oceans" (l. 9) instead of the prairie wind. Moving to the seaside after retirement is actually not an uncommon practice in Canada; in this sense, the West coast has become home to many retirees who migrate to cities like Victoria attracted by its mild climate (Forward 117; Sheets and Gallagher 2). However, the depiction that follows of the older man's life near the sea is not only an idealised one, but it also seems to be the speaker's idealised daydream of the farmer's life by the sea:

> On his island he built a shelter
> from driftwood etched with tales
> of water.
> Hollow grasses were his bed,
> crab claws his necklace,
> fish scales and gull feathers

a costume for his walks

and on his earth creased forehead he set

a sea-star. (ll. 10-18)

Even though this description is unrealistic and reminiscent of the magical attributes that characters are granted in mythical stories, the portrayal of the close interconnection of the human and non-human world is noteworthy. That is, the older man in the poem manages to survive off the land in a respectful way akin to that of indigenous populations; he makes a shelter and a bed without harming the woods, feeds by means of hunting and fishing, and clothes himself by means of reusing the non-edible parts of the animals he kills for food. In its stead, however, the retired farmer is attending an auction with some of his fellow farmers and with "city men who wore no hats" (l. 3). Notwithstanding the opinion of the speaker in the poem, the older peasant does not seem to wish to leave the prairies even though it implies having a tougher life as a result of the weather conditions. When the speaker signals how the men from the cities lack knowledge about the harsh prairie weather – as implicit in the fact that they were not aware of the need to protect their head from the prairie heat and strong sunshine – s/he acknowledges having a similar prairie origin to that of the retired farmer. Nevertheless, the speaker's wish for the older peasant to have a more comfortable life could stem from a different understanding of the prairie, namely that of a person who despite loving the land is aware of the possibility to leave it for better life prospects elsewhere. This poem can thus be included under both the first and the second subcategories, as it both depicts the effects of prairie weather on its human inhabitants, and it portrays an imaginary close interconnection between the retired farmer and the non-human natural world.

Similarly, the effects of the gale-force prairie winds are described in "Western

Calligraphy" (1979). The strong winds in the poem uproot the spruce that were planted as a shelterbelt; that is, as protection to farmlands from such windstorms: "beyond rows of spruce / roots too shallow / when wind scythes" (ll. 30-32). In so doing, the gale harms the flora, particularly both the spruce and the crop fields that the shelterbelt is tacitly protecting. As such, the strong winds are both detrimental to the vegetation and to the implicit farmer who planted the shelterbelt, as he might see his harvest spoilt. From a stylistic perspective, the poem shows a deep sense of place and insight into the prairies in its condensed portrayal of the most salient natural elements and beings that inhabit the Canadian West, specifically deer, crow, fox, earth, sky, and prairie. Each item is described by its metonymical relationship with another natural element. For instance, the earth is defined as "hawk's shadow" (l. 11), the sky as "severed / sun" (ll. 21-22), and the prairie as "inverted tree" (l. 33). Whereas human beings are not explicitly present in the poem, the lines "you must create / your own brush" (ll. 4-5) address the reader and suggest that he or she must make sense of the prairie himself or herself through direct contact with it. However, the instructions on how to create a brush from natural elements do present the speaker's insightful view of the prairie in all its complexity. Namely, the instructions depict a dry landscape of yellow grass covered by sundust, and a skyline marked by barbed wire fences and shelterbelts. In addition, the reader is told to ". . . pull five / coarse hairs from [the badger's] / wide throat" (ll. 14-16), and to "tie butterfly wings / to the wooden handle" (ll. 23-24). These two images, which at first glance would encourage animal ill-treatment, should be read metaphorically. On the one hand, the badger image refers to the badger as the hawk's prey: "brush paints / the heartbeat of prey / crouching / in dark earth" (ll. 17-20). On the other hand, the butterfly wings suggest the need to observe the prairie from an aerial view so as to grasp its immensity: "eyes on each wingtip / give the vision of flying / wing design teaches / a pattern" (ll. 25-28). Crozier's poem

thus suggests that the effect of the prairie on humans is dependent on human acquaintance with the multiplicity of prairie natural elements and their interrelationships among themselves and with human beings. As such, sense of place is dependent on emplaced embodiment; that is, on the notion developed throughout this dissertation which reflects on the physical experience of a particular place and how this experience both affects and is affected by the human body.

Likewise, ghazal "15" (2003) also mentions the wind as one of the most salient features of the prairie weather which contributes to the hardening of life, specifically in the province of Saskatchewan. Particularly, the prairie is defined as causing both economic and emotional distress in its inhabitants. That is to say that the prairie is a place that farmers may have to move away from because of the difficulty to breed and raise livestock: "We may have to move / because we can't raise chickens" (ll. 5-6). The prairie is also depicted as a rainless and therefore grassless environment: "Imitate the rain when you feel lonely. / The grass when you fear joy" (ll. 7-8). The rain and the grass are depicted as two natural elements that the addressee seems to be missing in his / her daily life, as s/he is told to imitate them in order to compensate for certain emotional states. The prairie is further portrayed as a desert, a place with no trees. As such, it is a hard environment which not everybody feels comfortable living in, especially because of the lack of vegetation: "Up close or distant, not every eye / can hold a desert. Trees, the absence of" (ll. 9-10). Despite the harshness of the bleak prairie environment, the previous quotation suggests a certain pride in managing to survive such an environment. Therefore, the challenging and bragging attitude that the wind is granted in the poem's last lines – "Saskatchewan. / *Chew on that one*, said the wind" (ll. 11-12) – works as a reflection of prairie inhabitants' sense of place as based on a collective pride in their resilience to the harsh weather conditions. Vannini et al. explain such an attitude towards the weather from

a sociological perspective. Although their research is not based on prairie inhabitants but on British Columbia ones, their reasoning can be applied to any territory with harsh weather conditions: "Familiar sensations over time build personal memories and intersect with collective memories and common skills, hence shaping weather-based personal, social and collective identities, which themselves are then used as resources to make sense of weather" (370). Crozier's collective identity as a prairie-born person, specifically from the province of Saskatchewan, is particularly defined by prairie inhabitants' shared experience of extreme weather conditions. That is the reason why anyone from Saskatchewan would share in Crozier's sense of collective pride in resilience to the wind as articulated in the poem.

Finally, the prairie also has an aesthetic impact on its inhabitants, which is devoid of any associations with extreme weather conditions and the resulting sense of hardship in their inhabitants, as depicted in "God of Doubt" (2018). The theme in this prose poem suggests that in Crozier's late style, which has been identified as starting in her 2011 poetry collection *Small Mechanics*, Crozier's imagination is spurred by aesthetically impactful memories of the prairies rather than by how extreme weather events affect both human and non-human prairie populations. "God of Doubt" centres on the effects of doubt on human beings. It specifically conveys the idea that hesitation results in a lack of self-confidence. The prose poem establishes an analogy between such a tenet and the strong impact of seeing a prairie sunset, which in its stark beauty will remain with the viewers as permanently as their misgivings: "Doubt's like that. Once it's been around for a while, even if diagnosed and treated, it won't go away. . . . You fall – not into St. John's dark night of the soul but into a prairie dusk stretched long and thin." This prose poem also depicts other instances in which doubt plays a major role in people's lives, besides the analogy with the impression on the human mind of seeing a prairie sunset. Most of

these examples focus on situations in which a decision has been made and it is now too late to change anything despite being assailed by doubts. Nevertheless, this piece is unique in the sole attachment of splendour to the prairie landscape, which demonstrates the indelible imprint on prairie inhabitants of a prairie-based sense of place. In this case, sense of place is defined by the beauty of the prairie sky at sunset.

The long-lasting imprint of the prairie on the personae is also shown in the interconnection between the prairie and the personae's ageing processes, which encompasses the poems "Exiles" (1979), and "Sixty-Six Winters" (2015). "Exiles" is an ode of sorts to sense of place, as it figures the love for the prairies that the personae express when they move away from them to live elsewhere. The prairie is described as a sanctuary of sorts in which to return to in old age, as the places they hold dear will endure the test of time: "the rows of shelterbelt / we planted to forest / a prairie house // these remain" (ll. 8-11). In addition, the traces of ageing described on the addressee's body are described as memory keepers, as imprinted reminders of the places and people the personae love. Thus, "the scar above your left eyebrow" (l. 14), "the white ring on your calf" (l. 21), "the furrows across your forehead" (l. 25), and the "cracks spreading / from your wind-faded eyes" (ll. 31-32) connect the addressee to his brother, a mistress, a former wife, and the persona, respectively. However, while the events experienced with the first three relationships were traumatic ("cracking your head," "sinking her pointed teeth," and "digging each trench / to plant your guilt" (ll. 18, 23, 27-28)), the experience with the persona is both emotionally and sexually satisfying (". . . laughter and smiles / across breasts and thighs" (ll. 33-34)), and closely connected to the prairie: ". . . your wind-faded eyes / . . . / fields planted" (ll. 32-35). The prairie is therefore associated with happy memories in this poem, and devoid of feminist or myth-debunking imagery. Old age, the time when the couple may reunite, is portrayed in a somewhat stereotypical way

as a time of unfashionable dress codes in which the bodies are covered by thick layers of cloth: "our familiar bodies muffled / in flannels in moulting furs / topped with the silly hats of age" (ll. 41-43). Moreover, senescence is depicted as a time of asexuality resulting from bodily constraints: "though our fingers will be / too calloused to touch / or arouse passion" (ll. 44-46). In spite of this apparently dim future, the poem ends on a positive note by means of stressing that what really matters is the fact that when the couple meets again, they will remember their cherished experiences on the prairie: "we will not have forgotten // these places these people this love" (ll. 47-48). The lack of commas in the final line of the poem, i.e. line 48, between the three objects reinforces the strong sense of place or rootedness to the prairies that the speakers feel, which is strengthened by their love for each other. In turn, the lack of a final full stop implies that such a bond is a long-lasting one, with no end-point to it. This is in line with Crozier's articulation of sense of place as connected to the prairies throughout her career.

The portrayal of ageing in "Exiles" is different from the one in "Sixty-Six Winters." This is quite understandable considering the fact that the former was published in Crozier's early-thirties, when she had not experienced old age in her own flesh, whereas the latter was written when Crozier was already herself a person of retirement age. "Sixty-Six Winters" contains a reflection on death and loss, which is triggered by the observation of "a prairie road in winter" (l. 1) covered by snow, which the persona wonders whether it could be similar to the appearance of heaven: "Long, flat, and open, its sheen sheering your eyes" (l. 2). The prairie in winter is further defined as windy, as in many of Crozier's prairie poems. The young-old persona finds it difficult to wade through the snow and wind, not only because of the ailments of age, but especially because of the psychological burden of memories: "Your hips can barely carry you, too heavy / with the past" (ll. 11-12). The persona connects the past with the wind, as the past "hunches in the swirl ahead"

(l. 12). And in thinking about the past, the memory of the persona's deceased mother comes to the persona, who referring to herself claims: ". . . You would give // the years you have ahead of you / to be so eaten, to die inside / her snowy belly as you once lived" (ll. 15-18). While the persona's wish of return to the womb suggests that the persona is undergoing a process of mourning for her deceased mother, her ultimate wish to die in the mother's comforting womb suggests a certain degree of anxiety towards the idea of future death. Death anxiety is a common feature in Western societies (Huang 197), and it makes sense that having reached retirement age, the persona starts thinking about her retirement plans and therefore about the span of years she has left to live and the quality of life she is going to have. Indeed, law and psychology researcher Peter Huang claims that "a way to reduce fear of death is to feel powerful from effective and well-informed retirement planning" (198).

All in all, whereas the effect of the extreme weather conditions on both human and non-human beings on the prairies has remained quite stable throughout Crozier's career, new concerns have been incorporated in the association of the prairie trope with the ageing process, namely reflections on death from a young-old age. The difference between the kinds of memories that are evoked through observation of the prairie landscape in each life stage is worth noting. Specifically, whereas in young adulthood the imagined return to the prairies in old age evokes happy memories, the actual prairie homecoming in young-old age rekindles the grief for the passing away of the persona's mother. This different portrayal attests to the common losses that growing older implies, such as the passing away of parents, relatives and friends, and that Crozier shares with her readers.

4.1.2. The Prairies and Human / non-Human Interactions

The second subcategory within the prairie trope in Crozier's oeuvre is the one depicting the interrelationship of the human and the non-human world in the specific context of the prairie. Throughout her career, Crozier has responded in poetic form to common prairie concerns, such as the historical animosity between man and nature in the harsh prairie environment. Her own particular portrayal of the human relationship with the prairie demonstrates the need for humans to cherish the natural environment in which they have settled in order to reach their full potential as living beings. In other words, Crozier encourages prairie inhabitants' emplaced embodiment of the prairie lands in its resulting entanglement of human and non-human agencies. Such a communion with the non-human world, Crozier suggests in her poems, is highly beneficial for humans in a number of ways.

Crozier's first poetry collection, namely *Inside Is the Sky*, already features Crozier's wish to deconstruct sociocultural unhealthy bonds with the prairies from an ecocentric perspective, as can be observed in the poem "Vertical Man" (1976). This is a poem which, as already suggested by its title, both alludes and responds to Lawrence Ricou's 1973 seminal study of prairie literature namely *Vertical Man / Horizontal World: Man and Landscape in Canadian Prairie Fiction,* which had been published only three years before Crozier's poetic response to it. In this book, Ricou traces the recurrent theme in the works of prairie writers of man's feeling of intimidation as produced by the vastness of the prairie landscape. In order to manage such a feeling of smallness, Ricou argues, prairie inhabitants intend to leave their imprint on the landscape by means of "raising a crop or a monument, by interpreting [their] experience in paint or in words" (111). Crozier's poem is in line with Ricou's claims in the sense that the poem portrays how man intends to dominate and shrink the prairie by means of agriculture and the railway,

respectively. As a result, animals no longer feel safe, as they need to hide from men even if "[t]here is no place left to hide" (l. 19). Crozier, however, depicts the climatic elements in the prairie landscape as offering animals shelter from men:

> I stand still and bare on the prairie
> but the wind flat-palmed
> pushes me to the earth
> silences me with dusty lips
> surrounds me with tumbleweeds
> and although I hear the heavy boots
> I breathe with the wind,
> I tremble with the earth.
> They will not find me (ll. 20-28)

In these lines, men are portrayed as being a menace for animals. According to Margaret Atwood, the portrayal of animals as victims of men is a common theme in Canadian literature, in which texts are written in a way that leads the reader to "sympathize with the animals, not with the men who are torturing or killing them" (*Survival* 77). Northrop Frye's statement in relation to Saskatchewan artist Thomas Saunders' works also applies to Crozier's "Vertical Man," as it portrays an "uneasy relationship between man and nature on the prairie" (103). Such a vision has been central to the Canadian poetic imagination, as discussed in Frye's *The Bush Garden: Essays on the Canadian Imagination*. While both Atwood and Frye's claims are relevant to the poem analysed because the three texts were written in the 1970s, neither author's theories may be fully applicable to present-day Canadian literature. As Atwood herself states in the preface to the 2012 edition (third edition) of *Survival,* the recurring trope of Nature as Monster that had been prevalent in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries is now reversed, as with the

current global environmental crisis, humans have become the "Monster" who by means of pollution may destroy both the natural world and humankind (xi). Crozier has also gradually introduced in her oeuvre new creative examinations of the ways in which the landscape contributes to shaping the individual into a call for environmental advocacy, in line with Atwood's statement in her 2012 preface. Crozier's poem actually criticizes "the vertical man" in the poem, as opposed to critical works such as that of Frye's, in which man is defined as the victim of the prairie environment. The poem, by means of reversing the gaze from a human one to an animal one, compels the reader to empathize with the non-human beings in the poem and their interrelatedness, which is not available to the man, whose body is not one with the land. This is because the man's boots, which are the only thing the animal can see from its perspective, isolate the man's body from the land and its properties. As a result of this lack of human relatedness with the non-human world, the man in the poem's only relationship with the prairies is an anthropocentric one: Man, the hunter.

While the importance for humans of an emotional interconnection with the non-human elements and beings of the prairies is also emphasised in the poem entitled "Wilderness" (1996), a change can be observed in Crozier's articulation of the relationship between human and non-human beings. Specifically, the human persona in "Wilderness" is no longer depicted as either having an anthropocentric perspective or as being separate from the prairies in any way. On the contrary, the persona claims to have internalised the more-than-human elements of the prairie: "the wilderness moved inside me" (l. 2). In so doing, the persona bespeaks a strong sense of place. This is because it is only when you know a place intimately that you may feel it is part of who you are; in other words, place has become part of the persona's identity. As a result, she feels ". . . small and scared / inside [her]self and yet at times / full of wonder" (ll. 20-22). Her fear

and sense of smallness are triggered by the vastness of the prairie: “It’s really space that rushes at you / in spite of fences, the grid roads / laid in graphs across the earth” (ll. 5-7). As such, the persona acknowledges the failed human attempts at dominating the landscape by means of creating boundaries. Precisely, the persona admits that the power of the prairie lays in its agency, which is independent from humankind and much more powerful:

> The worst is
>
> it doesn’t need you.
>
> It goes on and on whether the land
>
> is broken or not, whether a town makes
>
> its small exclamation mark or flattens out (ll. 13-16).

However, the persona is also awestruck by the prairie landscape because “What’s most like the prairie / is the mind of God, the huge way / he must have of looking at the world” (ll. 17-19). Thus, the prairie teaches the persona to be broad-minded in a prairie context dominated by strict moral and social values, which Frye defined as “garrison mentality” (225). Frye coined such a term to describe the “small and isolated communities surrounded with a physical or psychological ‘frontier’ . . . that are compelled to feel a great respect for the law and order that holds them together” (225).[43] Frye’s notion has been used to illustrate prairie literature as well as that of other equally isolated communities in Canada. For instance, literary critic William F. Garrett-Petts, examines two major Canadian novels, namely Margaret Ostenso’s *Wild Geese* (1925) and Frederick

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[43] Crozier’s hint at breaking away from garrison mentality in this poem is specially connected to the original text Crozier pays homage to in *A Saving Grace*, namely Sinclair Ross’s *As For Me and My House*. Nevertheless, as Susan Gingell argues, Crozier conducts a feminist revisioning of biblical myths and patriarchal attitudes of the Canadian West in her oeuvre, in line with Adrienne Rich’s notion of feminist writing as re-vision in her article “When We Dead Awaken” (Gingell 68). This is specially the case of those poetry collections published before her move to British Columbia. In later works, while she continues with her feminist revisioning, it becomes more generalised and seldom focussed on prairie attitudes. This is a reasonable change, as Crozier no longer had a day-to-day personal experience of the evolution of Saskatchewanian mindsets.

Philip Grove's *Settlers of the Marsh* (1925) as examples of "the evolving narrative of prairie fiction as the product of a garrison culture" (922). Crozier's depiction of the prairie thus helps the persona free herself from limiting ways of thinking. An evolution in the treatment of theme can be observed in this poem, which was published twenty years after "Vertical Man." Such an evolution consists in both depicting the prairie from a contemporary perspective and portraying the persona's healthy interrelationship with the prairies, as based on humility and non-dominant human attitudes. Regarding the former, Crozier's renewed perspective on the prairies in her later poem also reflects prairie society's own evolution in terms of worldview, which was triggered by economic growth in Canada due to "the continuation of war-time prosperity after 1945 . . . for a decade and a half" (Riendeau 301). On the prairies, such an economic growth after the Second World War was reflected in the rapid advancement of mechanisation in agriculture (Dick and Taylor). That is to say that in Crozier's early middle-age, young and middle-aged adults like her did seldom experience a relationship with the prairie land based on extreme hardship, as it had been the case until Crozier's parents' generation.

The close interconnection between humans and non-human beings and elements in the context of the prairie that Crozier advocates for in her poems also features human characteristics being conferred to the prairie lands, as depicted in the poem entitled "Consummation" (1979). Such a creative piece narrates the process by which seeds dispersed by wind are deposited in the land and finally put forth buds in the spring time:

> The wind . . .
>
> blew seeds into her pores . . .
>
> in spring . . .
>
> tiny grass blades sprouted
>
> from her skin. (ll. 1, 4, 9, 12-13)

The poem's explanation of the way in which the land becomes fecund is expressed in the title by means of an analogy of sexual intercourse after a wedding in order to validate the marriage. While the poem does not explicitly refer to human beings, Crozier personifies the prairie soil through human bodily parts, namely "skin" (l. 13), "hair" (l. 15), "nails" (l. 17), and "eyes" (l. 19). In addition, the prairie soil is referred to as "she," a pronoun often used to refer to Mother Earth. In this sense, Crozier's poem nears First Nations' understandings of the land as an agentic living organism. Moreover, Crozier's personification of the prairies aligns with material ecocritical tenets according to which boundaries between humans and non-humans do not exist; this is because human bodies are constantly affected by their surrounding environments at a cellular level. In material ecocritic Heather I. Sullivan's own words, "our concrete survival [as human beings] depends on our full immersion into our earthy, bacteria-laden surroundings" (518). In the poem, this is suggested by the first lines of the poem, which play with the ambivalence of both a woman's body being buried by the soil carried by the wind, and the prairie as a body of land: "The wind began the camouflage. / Through its teeth it sifted / fine topsoil over her body" (ll. 1-3). Subsequently, the dead woman's body, her "pores" (l. 4), becomes enmeshed in the prairie by means of the seeds that germinate in her body, "and tiny grass blades sprouted / from her skin" (ll. 12-13), and is thus reborn alongside the cycles of nature: "In the summer, / her hair blew from the mouths / of the crocus" (ll. 14-16) and "Her eyes were sky and water" (l. 19). From this perspective, "Consummation" offers a continuation with the idea of plants germinating from the organic matter resulting from the decomposing of a human corpse, which was first observed in "Rebirth" (1976). The tone in the last lines of the poem suggests both a celebration of such a metamorphosis and a healing process of sorts on the part of the narrative voice: "No longer cold no longer quiet / she was motion she was prairie" (ll. 20-

21). In other words, the narrative voice is content that the woman has been reborn as part of the prairie, and, as such, s/he no longer needs to mourn for the "cold" and "quiet" body of the woman's corpse.

For Crozier, both the garden and the prairie can be healing despite being completely different landscapes. While healing garden research argues that gardens are healing due to their greenery (Stigsdotter and Grahn 4), Crozier suggests that the treeless prairies, populated by "crocus" (l. 16) and "Russian thistles" (l. 18), can also be healing. Specifically, Crozier's persona's imagined entanglement with the prairie landscape by the deceased person's corpse and soul whose death s/he is mourning in the poem "Consummation" leads to emotional healing. Crozier's portrayal of the prairies as healing is better understood through human geographer Alette Willis' claim that stories of healing come from everyday places rather than the "exceptional places [that] therapeutic landscape research tends to focus on" (87). According to Willis, places deemed therapeutic and commodified as such offer mainly palliation (87). Conversely, ordinary places are likely to lead to healing when individuals examine their own relationships with place and "the transformations, negative and positive, that occur in and of those places" (88). The prairies were Crozier's everyday place until 1991, as she was born in the prairie town of Swift Current (Saskatchewan), visited her grandparents in summer at their prairie farm, and later on, lived in a country house with her first husband in a prairie rural setting. In "Consummation," both the corpse's and the deceased person's soul transformation into an active part of the prairie is what gives the grieving persona solace. Therefore, in line with Willis' theorization of human relationships to place, Crozier provides an alternative story of the prairies as a healing place.

While "Consummation" depicted an entanglement of both agencies and bodies between a human corpse and the non-human prairie, "Badlands" (1979) – published in

the same poetry collection as "Consummation" – depicts humans as animals' siblings. In other words, the poem portrays both men and animals as created by nature. The poem shows the human personae's (a couple) realization of their common origin with non-human animals while hiking across the prairies. This will become both a physical and an emotional journey across nature for the couple, who are experiencing relationship problems. The poem is divided into three sections, which correspond to the origin of both humans and hawks, the beginning of the human personae's trip across the prairie, and the continuation and end of the trip, respectively. In the first section, both humans and hawks are said to have come to life out of natural elements:

> hill roundness stream-sharpened
>
> into wingtips warmed
>
> by the sun
>
> given movement
>
> by the wind's breath (ll. 3-7).

The wind instils life to both the hawk and humans although, in the case of humans, water also plays its part.

> and man
>
> a fold of flesh
>
> swelled from the hill's crusted gashes
>
> separated from the hill's side
>
> by a water touch
>
> by a wind whisper (ll. 19-24)

Such a creation story challenges Biblical accounts, particularly the poem's implicit reference to Genesis 2:7: "And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and

breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul."[44]The fact that man is created by nature itself in Crozier's poem works on two interrelated levels. On the one hand, "Badlands" contributes to Crozier's demythologizing process, in which she dismantles Biblical beliefs which disempower women (Cooke 122; Gingell 75). On the other hand, Crozier portrays a new mythological creation story, which in its emphasis on nature as the creator of life and humankind as intrinsically belonging to nature, nears cosmogonies by North American indigenous peoples. The fact that Crozier honours the more-than-human world in a similar vein to aboriginal societies is reinforced by the allusion to "the turtle back" (l. 15), which is a term commonly used to refer to the American continent by several North American indigenous peoples. As Crozier explained in a lecture to undergraduate students at the University of Lleida in early November 2019, she was not aware of the existence of indigenous populations as a child. This was probably due to the fact that the forced assimilation of First Nations children into white Anglo-Canadian society via the Residential School system[45] (1867-1996) was still being carried out by the Canadian government at that time. Nevertheless, as Crozier went on to say, as an adult she befriended some indigenous people – such as the late writer Richard Wagamese – thanks to whom she became familiar with indigenous cultures and their struggles for self-determination as well as with the fact that the name of her hometown province (Saskatchewan) is actually an indigenous name. In line with indigenous beliefs,

[44] All quotations from the Bible in this dissertation belong to King James Version.

[45] Residential Schools were church-run boarding schools which First Nations children were forced to attend, in order to assimilate them into Euro-Canadian culture. This implied the imposition of English or French as the only languages permitted in the school; Christianity as the only true religion; and white, Euro-Canadian values as the only acceptable ones. As a result, Residential School children suffered from both cultural and identity erasure. There were very few hours of class every day, in which Residential School children were taught basic arithmetic and reading and writing skills; during the rest of the day, children carried out manual labour, such as tending the fields in the case of boys and cooking, sewing and cleaning in the case of girls. The products that the children manufactured were later sold to support the school. Children suffered mistreatment and abuse of different kinds, and many died of malnutrition and illnesses such as pneumonia. The Residential School system started in 1867 with two schools (Jung 6). However, it was not until more than a century later – in the 1980s – that "injustices associated with Residential Schools assumed mainstream political and legal significance" (Jung 7). The last Residential School closed in 1996 (Regan 4).

the second section of the poem also features the personae as part of the non-human world. Specifically, the couple both join in the coyotes' howls and move along the prairie with them:

> Coyotes roll their voices
> across the canyon
> We lift our heads and howl
> respond to the pack
> cry our humanness away
> howl with coyote wisdom
>
> The pack moves on (ll. 45-51).

The poem creates no distance between the human personae and the other animals, as the humans howl like coyotes and acknowledge their wisdom. The fact that coyotes are conferred the quality of wisdom in Crozier's poem may work on two different levels. On the one hand, coyote wisdom may be understood as this wild animal's innate knowledge of the natural world; a world, which according to ecocriticism, encompasses the human world as well (Buell, *Environmental Imagination* 7). On the other hand, coyote wisdom may refer to that of the trickster figure called Coyote in some North-American indigenous groups' oral storytelling traditions, such as the Stó:lō (Reder vii) and the Mojave (Bright xii).[46] Specifically, Coyote is a divine figure belonging to "a race of mythic prototypes who lived before humans existed. They had tremendous powers; they created the World as we know it; they instituted human life and culture – but they were also capable of being brave or cowardly, conservative or innovative, wise or stupid" (Bright xi). Indigenous scholar of Native American studies Cutcha Risling-Baldy stresses the importance of not

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[46] Other First Nations call the Coyote figure differently. For instance, the Anishinaabeg call it Nanabush, the Cree call it Wesakecak, and the Blackfoot call it Naapi (Reder vii).

viewing Coyote simply as part of indigenous peoples' mythologies, as this fact has historically contributed to the dismissal of indigenous traditions in order to promote colonialism (6). In its stead, Risling-Baldy asserts the need to understand Coyote as part of "the storytelling tradition that reaches from time immemorial, is built on an Indigenous epistemological framework that values story as a means of knowledge production and healing, and also builds systems of theory and philosophy" (8). In the third section of the poem, the personae cross the prairie and, on their way, they engage in naturalist endeavours, as they "follow footprints" (l. 68), "collect rocks imprinted with / fern leaves snail spirals / and the porous skin of a / dinosaur's thigh" (ll. 80-83). The human speakers in the poem are attuned to the natural world, and at the same time the natural world welcomes them – specifically human language and voice – as part of the ecosystem, as "Our words petrify / in the hard walls / of the sand maze" (ll. 86-88). If approached from a different perspective, the fact that the human personae have difficulties to communicate throughout the poem – "There is something / we should say to each other / but our bare voices drop / to the silent / empty pit" (ll. 52-56) – and end up silent – "We no longer speak" (l. 91) – attests to issues in their relationship. Accordingly, the journey across the prairie can also be read as a metaphor of the ups and downs of the couple's relationship, which ends up in a breakup. The ending of their love relationship is symbolised by the personae's arrival at the end of their journey: "We have reached the edge / of the ancient sea" (ll. 96-97). The use of the noun phrase "ancient sea" alludes to the use of the sea as a metaphor of both life and death in literature. In this case, it reinforces the demise of the couple's relationship: The couple "await / the lapping / of water" (ll. 101-103). In other words, the personae wait for water to instil life in their strained relationship, in an analogous way to how it helped create human life according to the poem. However, this is not going to happen, as the reader is told that there is no longer water; there remain

only "the hard curves of past waves" (l. 100). That is to say that love is no longer alive in their relationship, as only the memories of lived experiences remain.

The interrelationship between humans and non-humans that is fostered in a prairie environment is not present again in Crozier's work until Crozier's 2018 collection of poetic prose *God of Shadows,* with the prose poems "God of the Self-Defeating" and "God of Sloughs." Crozier's recuperation of this theme in her young old age, specifically at age 70, can be explained through theories of late style in aged writers. Particularly, Crozier's continuation of theme in an innovative way is best understood through age critic Anne M. Wyatt-Brown's categorisation of late style. Particularly relevant to Crozier's case is the first sub-category within Wyatt-Brown's first category, namely a model of thematic continuity characterised by different approaches and literary forms in old age as a trigger of creativity (51). Crozier's 2018 approach to theme is different from that of her former texts in terms of both form and sub-theme. As regards form, the 2018 texts are written in poetic prose rather than poetry. As regards sub-theme, both creative pieces incorporate new nuances in the relationship between human and non-human beings and elements in the context of the prairie that had not been explored before in Crozier's career. The first example of this renewed creativity is "God of the Self-Defeating," which depicts whirlwinds that are common on the prairies and the human interrelationship with such a weather phenomenon: "on the remotest road in Saskatchewan . . . a dust devil twists towards you" (ll. 13-14). The persona is not afraid of whirlwinds. As small dust devils are usually harmless, she "walk[s] into its grit with open arms though [she's] just had [her] only bath in days" (ll. 15-16). While the title of the poem already suggested that the attitudes taken by the persona are not sensible, these lines confirm so. That is, the persona should not walk into the dust devil, as it is an unpredictable climatic condition whose effects the persona cannot control. On a different note, the latter part of the quotation

attests to the implications of drought for prairie inhabitants, which in extreme cases may hinder the possibility of having daily showers. This latter consideration refers to the first subcategory of the prairie symbol in Crozier's work, in which the effects of the prairie on its inhabitants are examined. The situation described in the text does not favour healthy human – non-human interactions. In its stead, it depicts foolish human attitudes in relation to the more-than-human world by the persona not showing an understanding of the agentic forces of the non-human world; as a result, the human being jeopardizes her own well-being.

The piece of poetic prose entitled "God of Sloughs" tackles an important environmental matter on the prairies, namely the hydrologic functions of potholes for prairie-wetland ecosystems. Geographers Nathalie N. Brunet and Cherie J. Westbrook define sloughs or potholes as "[s]mall wetlands that often have no natural outflow under normal flow conditions [and that] are a common phenomenon of the northern glaciated terrain of North America" (1). Brunet and Westbrook go on to explain that sloughs are common in three Canadian provinces, namely Alberta, Manitoba, and Saskatchewan (1); that is, they are common in the so-called prairie provinces. Crozier's poetic prose piece valorises sloughs both as essential waterfowl habitats and as subject matter in a poem: "You can't drink from a slough, / but ducks paddle in the reeds, the eggs of red-winged black- / birds balance in the swaying bulrushes, and the sky falls into / it as it would into nice water" (ll. 6-9). Actually, Brunet and Westbrook stress the importance of sloughs in that they contribute to "water storage and flood attenuation, wildlife habitat, and improvements to downstream water quality" (1). Even though prairie landowners do not appear in the text, Crozier's recognition of the value of sloughs contains a respectful silence toward the complexities entailed in decisions about wetland drainage for farming and land tillage. According to Canadian researchers on hydrology and geology Garth van

der Kamp and Masaki Hayashi, "[a] large number of the wetlands in the prairie region have been drained since cultivation began, and drainage is continuing as farm operators strive to obtain greater farming efficiency and yields" (49). Such drainage, according to van der Kamp and Hayashi, "will certainly lower the water table in the vicinity of the wetland, drying out nearby vegetation and reducing the yield of nearby shallow wells" (49). While Crozier does not directly comment on the drying of sloughs in her poetic prose piece, her valorisation of the waterfowl that inhabit the wetlands suggests her positioning in favour of the respect of biota present in prairie sloughs as essential wildlife ecozones.

In sum, the relationship between the human and the non-human world has become more balanced in the later poems; this is because they do no longer depict an antagonism between humankind and prairie, but rather an internalization of it in all its complexity. In this sense, Crozier's poems bespeak the need for healthy interactions between humans and the non-human beings that inhabit the prairies for the well-being of all.

4.1.3. The Prairie Trope: Reflections on Late Style

The prairie weather is described as harsh, and even deadly for farm animals throughout Crozier's career. The poems define a reality which the speakers in the poems do not complain about, as there is nothing they can do about the extreme weather conditions. The poems thus avoid social constructions of good and bad weather, as shown by the oversimplification of such constructs in the idealised and unrealistic portrayal of the man who moves to live on the coast in the poem "Retired Farmer." That is, the personae in Crozier's poems live in what ecolinguist Arran Stebbe calls "the weather-world," as they are depicted as "being outdoors and [experiencing] the world in its constantly changing weather" (6). As such, the personae are engaged with "the life and lives around [them],

the busy swirling of air, currents, birds, insects" (6). In other words, they are connected "with the weather-world, through direct interaction with [their] local environment" (8). As a result, the prairie climate shapes a distinct identity in prairie inhabitants that is intrinsically connected to a strong sense of place. Such a collective prairie identity is based not only on resilience to the bleak climatic conditions, but it is also based on the strong aesthetic impact that the prairie landscape has on its inhabitants. Both features of sense of place as depicted in Crozier's poems arise from a first-hand experience of the prairies; that is, they originate in the personae's emplaced embodiment of the prairie lands.

The examination of both the effects of the prairie weather on both humans and non-humans and the relationship between the human and the non-human world suggests that a strong sense of place in relation to the prairies remains intact in Crozier's oeuvre to the present-day, as the prairies continue proving themselves a strong inspirational trigger for Crozier after three decades living away from them. Such a fact contributes to the definition of her late style. That is to say that Crozier's late style is defined by a rekindled creativity as based on new approaches to the prairie both thematically and in terms of literary genre. Besides such inspirational additions, Crozier's thematic continuity as regards the prairie trope suggests a complex place identity. In other words, while the material embodiment of place requires a direct physical and emotional contact with the land, the memories of those prairie places and spaces that mattered to Crozier in her youth have remained with her throughout her life. Therefore, Crozier's mindscape throughout her career has often been that of the prairies, and her spatial memory is, to alter a statement by humanist geographer Edward Casey, "still, even many years later, *in the places* [Crozier] [is] *subject* because *they are in [her]*" (Casey 688, emphasis original). In essence, the poems analysed suggest that Crozier's identity is highly influenced by what

Casey calls "the geographical self." Literary critics Ben P. Cecil and Lynn A. Cecil's interpretation of Casey's concept is especially useful to examine Crozier's case in their adaptation of the term to analyse the place-based identity of older individuals in novels by two prominent Canadian writers. According to Cecil and Cecil, the geographical self stands for "the personal nexus between our experiences in the landscape and our contextualization of those experiences through time" (240). Crozier's use of the prairie trope throughout her career thus features Crozier's own emplaced embodiment on the prairies and her translations of those hands-on experiences and memories of them throughout her oeuvre.

4.2. The Symbol of Drought: Resilience to Hardship

Whereas the previous section examined the different layers of meaning attached to the prairie trope throughout Crozier's oeuvre, this section will explore the evolution of the symbol of drought in its connection to the Canadian prairies as articulated in Crozier's work in order to examine the formation process of Crozier's late style. More specifically, and in line with the aims of the first section, this section intends to both analyse Crozier's portrayal of the impact of drought on both human and non-human prairie dwellers and its influence on the personae's sense of place. Drought is an important symbol in Crozier's poetics which has been present throughout most of her career, particularly from her first poetry collection *Inside Is the Sky* – published in 1976 – to her 2015 collection *The Wrong Cat*. Moreover, drought is part of the prairie experience and is, therefore, often implicit within the previously examined prairie trope. Crozier's use of the symbol of drought finds its *raison d'être* in the recurrence of such a long-lasting natural disaster, as exacerbated by human exploitation of the natural environment, in Canada. In fact, the Canadian

Prairies have experienced a number of drought episodes during the 1930s, 1960s, 1980s, early 2000s, 2009 (Fletcher and Knuttila 163) and the so-called 2017 flash drought, whose name refers to its rapid onset (Hoell et al. 2172). As environmental health researcher Anna Yusa et al. acknowledge, there is no agreement among scientists on a single definition of drought (8360) given that each drought is different (8361). This notwithstanding, the description of drought that they provide will prove useful to introduce the analysis of Crozier's portrayal of such an environmental hazard. Yusa et al. understand drought as "a prolonged period of abnormally dry weather that depletes water resources for human and environmental needs" (8360). Drought therefore has an impact on not only meteorological, hydrological, agricultural and socio-economic levels (Lloyd-Hughes 4), but also on both human and non-human health. Crozier's depictions of drought touch on many of such impacts of drought, as the subsequent analysis will show. Particularly, they are symbolically associated with the following five sub-themes, namely (i) creativity as a coping strategy; (ii) the ways in which drought affects farm life and prairie inhabitants' lives in general, with special emphasis on women's perspectives on drought; (iii) drought as a symbol of oldness and tiredness; (iv) learning from non-human beings that survive drought; (v) and drought as a metaphor for lack of love.

Crozier's images of drought in her poetry are at some points reminiscent of the sterility and despair that can be observed in T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* (1922). This is specially the case of those poems that describe the analogous dryness of the prairies with that of the Bentley's marriage in *A Saving Grace* (1996). As Crozier herself states in an interview with Elizabeth Philips, "[Mrs Bentley] mirrors the landscape; she and her husband are spiritually dry. That's a familiar condition of this last century, one that has fascinated poets since *The Waste Land*" (147). Nevertheless, it must be noted that Crozier's poems in *A Saving Grace* are poetic re-writings of Sinclair Ross's *As For Me*

and My House (1941); therefore, any possible intertextuality with Eliot's *The Waste Land* in *A Saving Grace* is not Crozier's but Ross's. Indeed, Ross himself experienced a waste land of sorts during the Dust Bowl years on the prairies in the 1930s and published *As For Me and My House* at the beginning of the Second World War, while Eliot had published his long poem in the aftermath of the First World War. Thus, both texts are imbued with notions of despair, harshness, and sterility, even if fertility is also present in both Eliot's poem and Ross's novel.

4.2.1. Drought and Creativity

Regarding the first sub-theme, the use of creativity in order to counter both the emotional and psychological effects of drought is present in Crozier's oeuvre from her first poetry collection, *Inside Is the Sky* (1976), to her 1996 collection, *A Saving Grace*. In the words of environmental health researchers Holly Vins et al., "[d]roughts pose a unique threat to mental health with their slow onset, extended exposure windows, and indirect mechanisms of effects" (13254). Crozier thus makes visible the impact of drought on prairie inhabitants' mental health and suggests some coping mechanisms. This is extremely relevant in the Canadian Prairie context – as well as in other similar agricultural areas around the world –, as even nowadays failing mental health in male farmers carries a social stigma. This is due to dominant discourses of masculinity according to which men must be "emotionally tough" (Vins et al. 13263). The first poem in which creativity as a coping mechanism in the context of drought is present in Crozier's work is "Drought" (1976), in which the prairie is described as ". . . a country / of bones / and broken horns" (ll. 1-3). The persona re-uses the animal bones in a creative way as both building and decoration materials: "i load my pack with vertebrae / and wing slivers for wind chimes / ribcages breastbones for fences" (ll. 7-9). Additionally, the bones also function as a

metaphorical shield for the persona to protect herself from emotional harm:

> and my suit of armour—
>
> this death to protect me
>
>
> from the moon's empty sockets
>
> and the bent trees on the rim
>
> of my world (ll. 10-14).

The persona thus turns to the dry prairies for both resources and symbolic protection despite the bleak landscape she encounters. The poem reminds us of the close connection between women and the non-human world as posited by cultural ecofeminists. Specifically, they argue that for centuries – and still nowadays in many third-world communities, as ecofeminist Vandana Shiva argues –, one of women's main gender roles has been that of the family providers of food through their gathering efforts in natural environments, such as the woods. Hence, cultural ecofeminists believe that such a long-standing, socio-cultural connection with nature allows women to be more sensitive to nature-preservation issues (Banford and Froude 173-174). Although the persona's gender in the poem is never explicitly stated or suggested, the persona's collection of elements from the non-human world for her self-protection is in line with the tasks that women have carried out for centuries, as described in ecofeminism. The poem also contributes to the (re-)valorisation of the prairies, by means of portraying them in a realistic way while acknowledging their potential, in this case for self-healing.

In terms of style, Crozier uses a lower-case first-person singular subject pronoun, which she used in her first three poetry collections, namely *Inside Is the Sky, Crow's Black Joy,* and *Humans and Other Beasts*. In these three collections Crozier combines the use of the lower-case and the upper-case first-person singular subject pronoun. Specifically,

in both *Inside Is the Sky* and *Crow's Black Joy* there seems to be no apparent reason to choose the lower-case or the upper-case version apart from creating effect, as the use of the upper-case 'I' is used when the persona is an animal, but also when it is a male speaker and a female speaker. However, in *Humans and Other Beasts*, the effect of the lower-case 'i' is salient, as it is only used in a section of the collection. Namely, in the section containing the long poem "She Makes Me Beautiful," which is a first-person recounting of child abuse in a foster home. In this poem, therefore, the use of the lower-case 'i' provides a contrast between the speaker's emotional belittlement by her abusive foster parents and the persona's courage in surviving, fighting back and empowering herself by telling her own personal traumatic life story. Nevertheless, the use of lower-case 'i' was not restricted to Crozier's first collections of poetry (1976-1980), but was present in the poetry of many other Canadian writers at the time. As critic in Canadian literature D. M. R. Bentley claims when discussing the poetry of Canadian writer contemporary to Lorna Crozier's bpNichol (Barrie Phillip Nichol), "lower case 'i' represents a denial of the status traditionally accorded to the self" (97). Bentley goes on to explain that those Canadian poets "of the sixties and later" (97) who used lower-case 'i' aimed at "becoming an object among objects . . . to subvert . . . ordered and ordering emanations of . . . form, myth, and ego" (97). In other words, the use of lower-case 'i' was related, among other things, to the unwillingness of those poets to become a vertical man (or woman) – to borrow the title from Ricou's book, *Vertical Man, Horizontal World* –, that is, a dominant anthropocentric figure. The Canadian poets that used lower-case 'i' were those that Bentley referred to as hinterland-oriented poets, a category that was already prevalent in the 18th century in Canada (5). According to Bentley, hinterland-oriented poets – as opposed to baseland-oriented poets – are the ones who use free verse rather than close poetic forms, among other characteristics, in order to adapt the Canadian reality and

environment to their poetry rather than adapting their poetry to imported British poetic forms (9, 15).

Another poem that features creativity as a coping strategy for drought is "Riding the Borders of the Land" (1983). The poem is set in an unidentified moment in the past when motor vehicles where not still common on the prairies. The unidentified persona retells the story of Steve and Liz, a couple who moved from New Zealand to the prairies to become homesteaders. The poem's main theme is the difficulties that the couple encounter to make a living on the prairies as a result of drought and the consequent poor harvests:

> It's a hard life:
> drought for two years,
> the fences need mending
> and if he doesn't pull down
> the old barn soon
> it will fall in the next strong wind,
> boards breaking like stubble
> under the horse's hooves. (ll. 9-16)

In order to avoid depression due to prairie hardship, Steve considers the possibility of moving away from the prairies: "talks of leaving" (l. 8). Nonetheless, they stay. Steve is hopeful and believes that this year they will have a plentiful harvest: "*But this year's going to be good*, / Steve says and laughs. *The barley's* / *thick and green as money*" (ll. 21-23). Actually, hopefulness is described by agricultural health researchers Helen J. Stain et al. as one of the elements that contribute to farmers' resilience to drought and therefore to mental health, together with sense of purpose and meaning (1595). On the other hand, Liz has two coping mechanisms, too. One of them is to write poetry: ". . . the poems / that

tear from her, working their way / through her heart like quills" (ll. 18-20). Her other mechanism is to imagine being surrounded by water as she used to back home in New Zealand: ". . . She wishes / the land in four directions / was ocean, blue and green" (ll. 29-31). Here Crozier adds a touch of magic realism to transform Liz's wish into reality: "The rain begins, gentle at first. / Soon it is a wall we break through" (ll. 36-37). Crozier continues her description of the rain by adding connotations that connect this imaginary rain to the one on the coast:

> she hears gulls, their cries
> circling the weather vane.
> The barn begins to creak.
> Like an old boat
> it sways in the rain (ll. 42-46)

This poem establishes a link to both "Retired Farmer" (1976) and "Badlands" (1979) in the sense that the sea is portrayed in a metaphorical and somewhat idealised way. Whereas in "Retired Farmer" the persona imagined a utopian life of the farmer by the sea, "Badlands" presented the sea as symbolic of the end of the couple in the poem's love relationship. The three poems were written long before Crozier moved to the coast in British Columbia. Therefore, the fact that Crozier had had little contact with the actual sea – as Crozier lived until 1991 in Saskatchewan, a province which is approximately one thousand kilometres away from the ocean in any direction – explains why her portrayal of the sea was first more symbolic while in collections published once she already lived near the coast her use of the sea became more of a material reality, and thus, less symbolic.

In a similar vein, the poem "Beauty in All Things" (1995) connects drought to rain, specifically to the sound of rain as generated by the wind: "During drought, wind in the corn stalks / makes the sound of rain. It is comforting / to sit there . . ." (ll. 1-3).

Whereas in the poem "Drought" (1983), the sound of rain is described by means of using a verb that connotes an act of violence – as it relates to the harm inflicted on the hawk's wings by the heat with the drumming of the hard soil –, in this poem the sound of rain is a soothing one. This change could be traced back to Crozier's own move to the milder and much rainier climate of British Columbia in 1991. However, this different portrayal of the imagined sound of rain in the dry season is also a conscious choice by Crozier, which underscores the other themes in the poems apart from the common background of drought. Namely, "Beauty in All Things" deals with the memory of the scattering of the persona's father's ashes on the family's prairie lands. Drought is a symbol of hardship, not only related to the prairie weather in which the action is set, but also in connection with the persona's and her family's mourning. The poem establishes a comparison between the prairies and the coast in British Columbia by means of providing the poem with these two different settings. While some objects and plants are not appreciated on the prairies, they become valuable elsewhere. This is the case of a "rusted chain, two-feet long, / with a hook on either end. Called a Come-Along" (ll. 15-16), which had been thrown away in "a garbage dump" on the prairies, while on the British Columbia coast it gains a new purpose, as ". . . Patrick hung a Japanese lantern / from the chain, hooked the other end / over a branch of our cherry tree" (ll. 26-28). Likewise, prickly pears ". . . with all their spines / . . . are pernicious on the prairies"[47] (ll. 19-20), while "[m]y brother and he [Patrick] had brought shovels / to dig up prickly pears for their gardens" (ll. 17-18). The personae's creative thinking – both in the metaphorical association of the sound of the wind shaking the plants' stems to soothing rain and in the re-using of unvalued prairie items in a different context – is the one that helps the female persona to work through the grief caused by the loss of her father. Drought works therefore on two interrelated levels

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[47] As Crozier mentions in the poem "In the Open" (*Saving Grace* 2-3), prickly pears might be harmful on the prairies for dogs, for example: "paws torn from prickly pears / padding the hills" (ll. 24-25).

in this poem. On the one hand, drought is the one the persona experiences in her daily life on the Canadian Prairies as well as on the scattering site of her father's ashes. On the other hand, drought also functions as a symbol of sadness as related to her father's demise.

Featuring a female writer on the prairies, as in "Riding the Borders the Land" (1983), the poem "Not the Music" (1996) describes the importance the persona attaches to dust, wind, and drought in the central role that these climatic features play as themes in her secret diary:

> everything I write – dust, moths,
> wind speaking in whispers
> across the page,
> the absence of rain,
> forgiveness –
> everything shrinking
> to the smallest
> thinnest letter,
> *I* (ll. 16-24)

In this case, however, the persona does not look for solace in such climatic elements, but feels empowered due to her ability to encapsulate them in her writing. The persona's secret journals and what she writes in them, namely everything that surrounds her and that is important for her, is what gives her an identity of her own separate from the hardship of the prairies: "It is this other thing / I keep from all of them / that matters. inviolable. // I scratch in my journals" (ll. 2-5). Hence, writing figures here not only as an emotional coping strategy, as was the case in "Riding the Borders of the Land" (1983), but becomes the source of the female persona's sense of identity. As a consolidated writer with nine poetry collections to her name, Crozier is able to argue in favour of the

importance of writing for women's sense of identity and self-esteem. In this sense, "Not the Music" also becomes a poem that pays homage to all those women throughout history who have not been able to publish their creative works due to social constraints that promoted double standards for women.

4.2.2. Drought and Farm Life

The second sub-theme within the symbol of drought in Crozier's work encompasses the ways in which drought affects both farm life and the lives of prairie inhabitants in general. Environmental health researchers agree on the specific impacts of recurrent drought on mental health, which encompass distress, anxiety, depression (Stain et al. 1594) and, ultimately, suicide attempts due to the poor harvests and the consequent financial strains that farmers must face (Smoyer-Tomic et al. 149). Other health outcomes of drought for humans are asthma and respiratory allergies due to dust, as well as poor hygiene that results from the lack of water and that may produce a number of illnesses (Vins et al. 13253). For farm animals, the reduction of "water quality [exposes them] to higher risks of sulfate, nitrate, salt, and bacteria poisoning," which results in cattle being found dead in pastures (Hoell et al. 2177). While the effects of drought on both human and non-human prairie inhabitants are present more or less explicitly in all poems containing the drought trope throughout Crozier's oeuvre, the following poems focus on such difficulties.

"The Whistling Swans Are Gone" (1983) revolves around both the human and non-human attitudes towards drought on the prairies. Each of the three stanzas has a different protagonist. The first stanza describes how the birds have migrated to the north because of the lack of water:

> The whistling swans are gone,
> the sandpipers, the Canada geese
> pull spring farther north.
> Mallards and teal no longer
> find ponds in ditches (ll. 1-5)

The wild fowl's possibility to escape the drought contrasts with the farming family depicted in the poem, who cannot run away from it. In the second stanza, the farm is shown covered by dust. The farmer is described as having a meditative attitude, looking out of the window, probably observing the weather: "In the house the farmer / stands at the western window" (ll. 7-8). This is suggestive of the farmer's concern for his family's survival, as it depends on a good harvest and without rain the seeds die. Moreover, his attitude in the face of drought reflects gender ideologies that are still present nowadays in the rural areas of the Canadian Prairies. As researchers on gender and the social dimensions of climate change Amber J. Fletcher and Erin Knuttila contend, "[f]arm men's psychological distress is also caused by dominant ideals of masculinity and, in particular, a stoic and independent form of masculinity commonly found in Prairie agricultural communities" (169). In turn, his wife is busy "turn[ing] plates / upside-down on the breakfast table" (ll. 11-12) in order to palliate one of the effects of drought, namely the ubiquitous dust. Such dust results from soil erosion produced by wind in dry landscapes. According to Yusa et al. such a side-effect of drought is no longer as common as it used to be due to changes in farming techniques (8362). Both adults in Crozier's poem look resigned to their fate, as there is nothing they can do to improve the situation. Nevertheless, children seem more hopeful in their lack of resentment from accumulated experiences of hardship due to drought and try to help by means of "step[ping] on spiders that spin" (l. 15). They do so following the popular belief among farmers that if you step

on a spider, it will bring rain (Farmers' Almanac). Finally, in the third stanza the farm animals, namely cows, are also looking forward to rainy days, as they "dream of green, of cool mud" (l. 19) and of the shade clouds make. However, animals also resent the drought and, as a result, they "move slowly" (l. 17). The poem sets both human adults and non-human beings at the same level, as they both suffer from drought in similar ways.

On a different note, the poem "The Photographs I Keep of Them" (1985) suggests that Crozier's inspiration to write about the bleak living conditions on the prairies as caused by drought can be traced back to her parents' own lives, whose youths were marked by the severe drought that swept across North America in the 1930s, and which "led to widespread agricultural devastation and exacerbated the economic burden of the Great Depression" (Vins et al. 13252). The persona in the poem describes a photograph of her parents as a young couple, before the persona or her brother were born. They are riding a motorcycle along the prairies. The poem presents the dry prairie setting of the picture ("Before them the prairie / tells its spare story of drought" (ll. 6-7)) as the only element in the photograph that offers a narrative; while neither the persona's parents' life and mindset nor their personal relationship as a couple are made evident by the picture:

> They tell no stories.
> Not how they feel
> about one another
> or the strange landscape
> that makes them small (ll. 8-12)

The feeling of smallness in the vast prairies has been historically recurrent in Canadian writers coming from the prairies, as noted by critic Henry Kriesel in his influential essay "The Prairie: A State of Mind" in 1968: "the . . . familiar one [image] of man pitted against a vast and frequently hostile natural environment that tends to dwarf him" (5). Such a

feeling of smallness can also be observed in Crozier's works, as the following lines from the collection *A Saving Grace*[48] (22) exemplify: ". . . There's no end / to it here, the sky gives you / all the room you need / to grow small" ("All the Room You Need" ll. 6-9).

Crozier's 1996 poetry collection *A Saving Grace* portrays the prairie in its extremes regarding weather and its effects on the prairie inhabitants. As such, drought is present clearly in nine out of the fifty poems in the collection. The depiction of drought in the poems is on many occasions accompanied by depictions of the scorching heat that produces drought, and the wind that sweeps across the dry prairies, collecting dust that settles on everything. The climatic conditions on the prairies are therefore often presented as a sum of these different elements, namely wind, dust, and heat that during the Great Depression made day-to-day life extremely challenging. As Crozier herself contends in one of her poems in the collection, it is important to understand how the combination of such weather conditions functions together – "you can't separate / the whole into any parts" ("Wilderness" 77-78, ll. 10-11) – in order to be able to fully grasp what living on the prairies implies.

A Saving Grace (1996) contains only two poems that refer to drought in isolation, namely "Two Eternal Things" and "Comfort Me." The latter will be analysed within the sub-theme of drought as a metaphor for lack of love. In both poems, drought is a symbol which is associated with the emotional strain caused by the hardship of the dry environment. The poem "Two Eternal Things" presents rock and thistle as the only two permanent elements in the landscape, which the male persona associates with the idea of

[48] *A Saving Grace* is a collection of poems by Lorna Crozier which was inspired by Sinclair Ross's *As For Me and My House.* Crozier's poetry collection becomes a feminist revisioning of Ross's novel, as her poems express the feelings of Ross's protagonist, Mrs. Bentley, whose first name is never acknowledged in the novel unlike that of the other main characters. Crozier notes such an omission in the poem entitled "Mrs. Bentley" (*A Saving Grace*). Crozier's poems are thus set in the same time period of the Great Depression and rural prairie setting as Ross' novel. As such, the prairies, alongside their extreme weather conditions, become one more character in Crozier's poems.

despair:

> Two eternal things
>
> in this godforsaken place:
>
> rock – what the drought
>
> cannot destroy,
>
> thistle – what the grasshoppers
>
> will not eat.
>
> Call it *Hope*, I say.
>
> *Despair*, he replies (ll. 7-14)

The male persona in this poem is Crozier's poetic rendering of the priest of the village, namely Phillip Bentley, in Sinclair Ross's novel *As for Me and My House*. The poem depicts Mr and Mrs Bentley discussing a picture that Mr Bentley will paint. Mr Bentley is an unsuccessful artist who works as a minister in a prairie village in the 1930s so as to earn a living; that is, he is a minister with no vocation. The female persona tries to extract some optimism from her husband's painting with vivid colours, specifically "sienna, gamboge [and] / burnt umber" (ll. 2-3), by suggesting that he entitled the painting *Hope.* According to Fletcher and Knuttila, women play an essential role in supporting their agricultural families emotionally (171). On the other hand, the male persona – despite "making a joke of it" (l. 4) – cannot avoid feeling hopeless by drought. This is probably because as the village priest he "prays for rain / and nothing happens / or the rainfall comes too late" (ll. 10-13), as explained in the subsequent poem in *A Saving Grace* namely "Bumper Crop."

The prairie inhabitants' despair during the Great Depression is also depicted from the perspective of women in the poem "The Truth" (1996), which is the last poem in the

collection and functions as a reflection on some of the prairie experiences with which the collection engages. As such, it offers a reflection on a number of situations which Mrs Bentley – the main poetic persona – has experienced throughout the collection: ". . . The years and years of drought: / Joe Lawson's wife, the dead baby in the well, / the Chinaman who opened his door each night to a woman's hunger" (ll. 29-32). Particularly, these lines in the poem remind the reader of the situations depicted in three previous poems in the collection and connect these three poems to drought, a climatic element that is not present in the poems themselves. Such three poems emphasise the harsh lives of those members of society that are often marginalised and made invisible, namely the widow of a farmer who committed suicide as depicted in the poem "Joe Lawson's Wife"; the woman who tried to kill herself by throwing herself and her baby into a well, but only the baby died as portrayed in the poem "The Kind of Woman;" and the ostracised Chinese restaurant owner who secretly fed a pregnant woman whose husband did not provide for her, as present in the poem "Names." In "Joe Lawson's Wife," Crozier explores Mrs Lawson's grief for the loss to suicide of her husband:

> She wouldn't leave,
> but covered her man with a blanket
> that smelled of horse, then sat
> in the dirty straw, his swollen head
> in her lap. . . . (ll. 29-33)

These lines depict Mrs Lawson's tenderness towards her deceased husband and suggest that their marriage was based on love. In addition, they also show a male body as vulnerable. This fact is relevant in the Prairie context in the sense that standards of normative masculinity did not allow men to either feel or look vulnerable. This is precisely the reason why Prairie men are still nowadays often reluctant to look for

psychological help or even to discuss their problems with others; a fact that increases their levels of stress and that may ultimately lead to suicide (Vins et al. 13259), as in the case of this poem. In addition, researchers on environmental health have found that the more a rural farmer in drought zones is connected to the land, the more adverse the psychological impact is on them when droughts worsen (Stain et al. 1594). In the poem, Mrs Bentley suggests such a strong bond when focusing on Mr Lawson's hands rather than on the rest of his corpse: "They were what you noticed / when you first saw Joe. Big, solid hands, / as much a part of the land as the stones / ice heaves from the earth every spring" (ll. 21-24). Mr Lawson's hands symbolise both his toughness and his close connection to the land, which contrast with the vulnerability of his corpse. In turn, the fact that Mrs Lawson continues with her farm chores by milking the cow once she allows for her husband's corpse to be removed from view suggests her own stoicism: "She pulled the wooden stool / to the stall and milked the cow / . . . / There was no pail, / milk streamed out and hit the ground, / pooled around her feet" (ll. 41-42, 45-47). This quotation suggests that Mrs Lawson is grieving her husband's death and that her stoicism and toughness are simply practical ways to survive prairie hardship. Nevertheless, it also challenges gender discourses that posit women as vulnerable and men as tough breadwinners, in line with Fletcher and Knuttila's findings (171).

On the other hand, the poem "The Kind of Woman" depicts a farmer's wife – Emma Humphreys – who tried to commit suicide together with her baby by jumping into the neighbour's well. While the women in the village pass judgement on her, Mrs Bentley cannot do so because she believes that there must be an explanation behind Mrs Humphreys' behaviour:

> Her husband took her home.
>
> He seems a decent man

but what goes on in houses

when no one's there

but family? . . .

. . .

The church women at Mrs. Finley's

over tea wondered what kind of woman

would do a thing like that?

I wish I'd said the kind of woman

like you, like me (ll. 20-24, 28-32)

Mrs Bentley's open mindset regarding Mrs Humphreys' actions bespeaks a deep insight into the situation of prairie women both in terms of gender roles and in the specific context of severe drought. Indeed, prairie women are in charge of a number of responsibilities that can be overwhelming. Specifically, and following traditional gender roles, women are expected even nowadays to do most or all of the household chores, to be the main caregivers in the family as well as moral supporters, and to help in farming tasks whenever necessary (Fletcher and Knuttila 161, 168, 170). Levels of stress, both for men and women, are exacerbated by drought. In Vins et al.'s words, "the more severe the drought and its impacts upon livelihoods, the larger the negative impacts upon the mental health for those affected" (13257). Despite that, the stigma that is attached to depression (Smoyer-Tomic et al. 151) – which may ultimately lead to suicide – in agricultural communities, such as the Canadian Prairies, hinders their ability to seek mental help (Vins et al. 13259-60). Additionally, feelings of embarrassment due to economic difficulties as worsened by drought may also potentially lead to domestic violence (Vins et al 13257). Mrs Bentley seems to suggest that this might have been one of Mrs Humphreys' reasons to commit both suicide and infanticide when she acknowledges that what happens in the

family sphere stays behind closed doors. Nevertheless, Mrs Bentley's viewpoint is only made possible by her position as an outsider. Specifically, she shares in the small town's farming struggles in economic terms, as the Bentley's are not paid for the minister's services regularly, but when the town's people can afford it. However, the Bentley's are not farmers themselves but failed artists – Mr Bentley is a painter and Mrs Bentley, a pianist. In this sense, they are not rooted to the town as the other town's people are, but have moved from town to town offering Mr Bentley's minister services. As a result, they can have a more objective vision of the situation.

In "Names" Mrs Bentley writes in her journal about the physical consequences of drought for a pregnant woman living in poverty: "I talked to the woman who lives / in the cook car abandoned by the CPR / at the edge of town" (ll. 22-24). This woman confesses to Mrs Bentley that she was forced to seek the help of the Chinese restaurant owner in order to feed herself while pregnant, as her husband did not provide for them:

> Her husband's Smiley Mitchell.
> Too proud to stand in line for relief,
> he's small and mean and wears a stupid grin.
> When she was pregnant, she told me,
> all she had to eat were eggs
> her mother sent from the farm.
>
> Every night for six months
> before Smiley stumbled home,
> she knocked at the café's back door.
> Woo Chow gave her a bowl of chop suey,
> the piece of pie no one bought

and all the tea she could drink. (ll. 28-39)

Mr Mitchell's attitude can be rationalised through the stigma that is associated in drought-stricken farming communities to requesting financial support. This is due to normative standards of resilience and stoicism among the population in such rural areas (Austin et al. 162). On the other hand, the poem highlights the supporting role of Woo Chow, who was otherwise ostracised by the rest of the townspeople – as explicitly mentioned in another poem in the same poetry collection: "few will talk to Dong / Woo Chow, or Ephraim, unless / there's business to be done" ("Skinning Horses," ll. 9-11). Mrs Bentley explains that this is because of racist and ableist beliefs among the population, who nickname each person that is different in a discriminatory way. For example: "Gimpy Bisset is the blacksmith / who lost his leg in the War; / . . . / All the Ukrainians are Bohunks" (ll. 9-10, 16). Woo Chow's help to Mrs Mitchell is an example of community support, which according to Vins et al. is essential in order to survive severe and prolonged drought (13264). The poem is thus an example of one of the damaging effects of drought on the population's health, namely the decrease in food security and the resulting threat to livelihoods (Vins et al. 13253). In this sense, the poem also depicts women's emplaced embodiment of drought on the Canadian Prairies as intrinsically different from that of men due to their embodiment of motherhood. Such different experiences of drought contribute to the entrenchment of both gender roles and inequalities on the prairies, as Fletcher and Knuttila claim (160).

After having reminisced about three examples of consequences of drought for prairie inhabitants, namely those depicted in the intertextual elements from the poems "Joe Lawson's Wife," "The Kind of Woman" and "Names," Mrs Bentley acknowledges in "The Truth" a complex sense of place. Particularly, the severe drought of the 1930s led to a sense of place based on both resignation to the extreme weather conditions and

psychological rejection of the unyielding prairie landscape. Note the long-lasting effects of drought, as underscored by the hyperbolic image in the last three lines of the quotation:

> . . . Everyone said
> the grass would never grow again,
> the sloughs never fill
> and no one would come to love
> this place. Even now as I write,
> so long after, my pen makes
> tracks across the dust. (ll. 32-38)

Place attachment to the prairie landscape during the Dust Bowl years was, therefore, very difficult to both attain and maintain. As psychologists Leila Scannell and Robert Gifford contend, place "attachment usually is defined in positive terms" (3). This is because a person is unlikely to form emotional bonds with a place in which its inhabitants can barely feed themselves. While Mrs Bentley presents a bleak situation met with despair by the whole population, the emphasis on the effects of drought on women – as present in the three intertexts – reminds the reader of the association between the climatic drought and the metaphorical drought both in Mrs Bentley's marriage and in her inability to bear children: "Truth is, the only ending / is the one you make up, the one you can't / live without, the sweet, impossible birth" (ll. 42-44). Crozier thus continually interweaves the embodied consequences of drought for prairie inhabitants with symbolic ones.

Within the same poetry collection, in the poem "Leaving" (1996), the persona explains how different families have abandoned the small prairie town depicted in *A Saving Grace* due to the harsh living conditions caused by a persisting drought. In fact, the concept of sense of place can barely be applied to this context, as despite the close attachment to the land that prairie individuals have in the poem, the lack of rain and

therefore pastures on which to feed the farm animals forces them to abandon their homes:

> This time it's the Bairds.
>
> No one expected them to go –
>
> his dad had homesteaded
>
> so he owned the place outright.
>
> . . .
>
> She said it was the horses
>
> finally broke them (ll. 1-4, 7-8)

The poem depicts the strong bond between Mr Baird and his horses – "He'd never say / how attached he was, / . . . / but you could tell by the way / he stroked their necks and spoke to them" (ll. 12-16) – as well as his pain when he had no other option left but to euthanise them because they were suffering from starvation and he was unable to provide for them: "he led them to the coulee's edge / though they could barely walk / and shot them one by one" (ll. 29-31). Once the farm animals are dead, there is nothing that attaches the Bairds to the prairies and its life of hardship. Mr Baird's feelings could be described by a psychological term coined by a team of environmental and health researchers called solastalgia. Glenn Albrecht et al. define solastalgia as the "distress produced by environmental change impacting on people while they are directly connected to their home environment" (96). In the case of this poem, the Bairds leave the prairies in order to avoid the high emotional and financial distress caused by drought that has disrupted Mr Baird's strong bond with his horses and that led to feelings of solastalgia. This poem thus connects place attachment, and especially the effort to survive in a harsh environment, to the ability to both forge and maintain a close relationship between human and non-human beings.

In line with “Leaving,” “Drought” (2005: 20)[49] reveals the utter desperation of farmers due to drought, which is also present in “Drought” (2005: 42). Both poems entitled “Drought” belong to the collection *Whetstone*, published in 2005, which contains a total of three poems entitled “Drought” at a time when Crozier was no longer living on the prairies but had been living for longer than a decade in the mild weather of the British Columbia coast. The recurrent use of the title “Drought” in *Whetstone* despite Crozier’s physical distance from the prairies at the time when this book was published, namely in 2005, finds an explanation in the extreme period of drought that the Canadian prairies experienced between 1999 and 2005. As environmental experts John M. Hanesiack et al. explain in their academic summary of these extremely dry years, “[t]his drought is considered one of Canada’s worst natural disasters (Wheaton et al., 2008) and caused the Canadian economy to suffer a loss of $4.5 billion in 2001 and 2002 alone” (422). Crozier’s poetic engagement with the theme of drought was therefore most likely triggered by the hardship that Crozier witnessed in her relatives and friends who still lived on the prairies as well as the general effects that such a drought produced on the Canadian economy and its impact on all its citizens, but especially on prairie farmers.

In “Drought” (2005: 20), prairie inhabitants are so desperate for rain that it is attributed the qualities of a god-like figure to whom both offerings and sacrifices are made: “In such a time rain could have anything / it wanted . . . / The farmers would even sacrifice / a daughter” (ll. 1-2, 5-6). This poem is related to “One Willow Grows” in the collection *A Saving Grace* (1996), in its reference to the adoration of pagan idols, if necessary, in order to obtain some rain. Crozier plays with Greek mythology in the poem, as the daughter sacrifice is reminiscent of Iphigenia, who was to be sacrificed to the goddess Artemis so as to appease her anger with her father, Agamemnon, in order for

[49] The reference to the page number arises from the need to distinguish between the different poems entitled “Drought” within the same poetry collection.

wind to return so that the ships could set sail for Troy during the Trojan War. Likewise, the lines "With a veil of rain, a thread of rain, / she'd walk into rain's labyrinth" (ll. 9-10), refers to the Minotaur and the labyrinth of Crete, and the seven Athenian men and women who entered the labyrinth every year to compensate for the death of Androgeus, son of Minos, who had been killed in Athens. The fact that drought is elevated to the level of myth underscores the strong effect that it has on the prairie populations. In other words, drought is presented in this poem as "a chronic stressor" which, according to Albrecht et al., ultimately leads to solastalgia (96). Farmers' solastalgia in the poem is shown in their drought-related distress, as provoked by their utter need of rainfall in order to survive, which becomes the central focus in their lives.

The inability to thrive because of drought on the prairies is also explained in the poem "Drought" (2005: 42), which links to the poem "Leaving," as in both cases the farmers are forced to move somewhere else. In this case, "Drought" emphasises the fact that this is very common on the prairies:

> Someone's nailed a foreclosure sign
> on the barley field . . .
> So many auctions in the country:
> that mad roll of syllables blowing in
> from all directions (ll. 5-6, 9-11)

This poem also connects to "Retired Farmer," a poem analysed in the first section devoted to the prairie trope. Both poems highlight the sale of lands on the prairies through bidding, as a sign of hardship. However, in this case, the emphasis is on the fact that the farmers lost the barley field as they could not pay the loan back to the bank. Hence, the feeling of helplessness due to drought is reinforced. In the poem, lack of rain is evidenced by either the absence of rainclouds or the presence of clouds that do not carry rain, which the

persona cannot stand:

> You begin to hate
>
> the colour blue even in delphiniums
>
> . . .
>
> High above the heat, clouds aren't good
>
> for anything but adding up the losses (ll. 6-7, 15-16)

Drought is the one responsible for farmers having to surrender their lands, unable to pay their debts. The poem does not reveal how the farmers feel in relation to sense of place. However, the persona appears to have strong feelings as regards the unfairness of the situation caused by drought, as revealed by the use of the verb "hate" (l. 6), and the adjectives "mad" (l. 10), "plaintive" (l. 12) and "crude" (l. 12), which refer to the auction.

A continuation of the meanings associated with the symbol of drought in its interplay with prairie farmers' lives can be observed in the poems examined in this section. In these poems, Crozier connects two different droughts, namely that experienced by her parents' in the 1930s, which is also the same drought that is explored in Ross's *As for Me and My House*, and the equally severe period of drought of 1999-2005. Despite the approximately seventy years that separate these two extreme droughts on the Canadian prairies, the effects on the population, as illustrated by Crozier's poems, are very similar. This is the reason why no major changes in the symbol of drought in its implications for rural families have been found between the poems about drought published when Crozier was thirty-five years old – in *The Weather* (1983) – and those published when she was fifty-seven years old, in *Whetstone* (2005).

4.2.3. Drought and Age(ing)

The drought trope is also symbolically associated with both the process of ageing into old

age and tiredness and, therefore, with the master narrative of decline, which associates old age with inevitable physical and mental decline (Gullette, *Aged*). Such a third sub-theme in the drought trope can be observed in two poems, namely "Dust" (1996) and "Drought" (2005: 16). Even though the poem entitled "Dust" (1996) does not make any explicit or implicit reference to drought, the context of the whole poetry collection *A Saving Grace* already provides such a link.

"Dust" is worth analysing in the connection that is established between the symbol of dust and the female persona's feelings of agedness:

> Rags stuffed under doors,
> around the windows
> . . .
> yet the dust
> settles everywhere,
> on my skin, my hair, inside
> my sleeves and collar.
> I feel old, used up,
> something found
> in the back of a cupboard (ll. 1-2, 5-11)

The resilience required to cope emotionally with the desert-like conditions on the prairies seems to have aged the persona prematurely from a mental point of view, as she feels exhausted, spent. This feeling is reinforced physically by the white colour of the dust, which, settling on Mrs. Bentley's hair, creates the effect of white hairs. The portrayal of ageing in this poem is rather negative, as old age is solely associated with tiredness and lack of usefulness. This notwithstanding, the examination of the poems in this collection must consider the original temporal frame of the 1930s, given that Crozier's *A Saving*

Grace consists of a poetic revisitation of the story of a Canadian prairie town during the Dirty Thirties, as articulated in Sinclair Ross's *As for Me and My House.*

In a different vein, "Drought" (2005: 16) focuses on the oldness and tiredness of water rather than on a human being. The protagonist of the poem is the water lying at the bottom of a pond "past the reeds" (l. 4), which is presented as old and weak in its inability to reach the surface:

> Water is suddenly old.
> It feels a stiffness,
> a lessening deep down
> . . . drop a bucket on a rope
> and pull it up,
> water won't have
> the strength to turn
> that darkness into light (ll. 1-3, 5-9)

Crozier personifies the water as an old person with stiff muscles who is unable to lift itself up to the surface. In addition, such old water is also depicted as being devoid of the properties that the human persona attributes to water, namely to transform the darkness of the bottom of the well into light. Such an analogy with human ageing portrays only a decline narrative; that is, the notion that old age implies both physical and mental deterioration. Such a pessimistic view is related to the despair that humans feel in times of scarcity due to pervasive drought, as depicted in most poems in which the symbol of drought is present. Indeed, climate and health researchers Emma Austin et al. found in their study of drought-related stress experienced by farmers in rural areas of the province of New South Wales in Australia that "drought-related stress persists beyond the end of the drought" (162). This is also the case with Crozier, for whom her family's retelling of

their harsh experiences of drought on the Canadian prairies became embedded in her own identity, as she acknowledges in an interview for *OPEN: Journal of Arts and Letters*:

> During the 1930s, the prairies where I grew up suffered from a ten-year drought. My parents were just children then, but it affected them profoundly. For ten years there were no crops taken off the fields. Children born during that time had never seen rain. I grew up with my parents' and grandparents' stories of that period of dust, grasshopper clouds, desolation. . . . What seeped into my blood from the stories was that nothing lasts, everything can be swept away until there is nothing left, even the grass can stop growing. (Streeby par. 14)

The pervading dust and resulting desolation that Crozier mentions in this interview is the one that informs the two poems, "Dust" and "Drought," which have been analysed in this section.

Concurrently, Crozier's articulation of the symbol of drought as associated with decline in old age may also find an explanation in the influential role that T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* played in Sinclair Ross's *As for Me and My House*, and, indirectly in Crozier's *A Saving Grace*, as discussed above in the introduction to the drought trope in Crozier's oeuvre. Actually, Crozier asserts in the same interview with Streeby that T.S. Eliot's work has had considerable influence in her oeuvre, along that of many other major writers, like Margaret Atwood, Alden Nowlan, Tomas Tranströmer and Rainer Maria Rilke (Streeby par. 17). In this sense, Crozier's associations of despair in "Dust" and frailty in "Drought" with old age is reminiscent of Eliot's oeuvre, as interpreted by Burton Blistein. As Blistein posits, "[i]f the infirmities of age are for Eliot the metaphorical equivalents of spiritual infirmity, it follows that his protagonists may be chronologically youthful or middle-aged and yet characterized as 'old.' They can be both 'withered and young'" (54). In Crozier's poems, the "spiritual infirmity" would refer to the spiritual dryness of the Bentley's as

analogous to the dryness of the land. Nevertheless, Crozier's lack of insistence on the association between drought and both agedness and frailty in her later work, since her 2011 poetry collection, is consistent with Crozier's recurrent non-ageist depictions of the life-course. Therefore, these two poems should be seen as an exception to Crozier's engagement with the ageing process in her poetry.

4.2.4. Drought and Learning from Non-Humans

Regarding the fourth sub-theme within the drought trope, the effects of drought on non-human beings and the teachings that they offer to humans who are attuned to the natural world can be observed in three poems in Crozier's work, namely "Drought" (1983), "One Willow Grows" (1996), and "Fox" (1996). The fact that this sub-theme is only present in two collections within Crozier's oeuvre must not be understood as an anecdotic feature, but as a contribution to the interconnection between humans and the more-than-human world, as a major concern within Crozier's poetic work.

In "Drought" (1983), the reader feels what drought is like through the actions of the hawk and its preys: mice and gophers. The hawk is personified by means of being referred to as "he" instead of "it," which grants it a central position in the poem. Although the poem has no explicit human persona, the fact that it is written in the style of a wildlife documentary implies that a human narrator is behind the description of the animals' actions. Human beings are thus subtly acknowledged to be part of this ecosystem. The poem describes a hawk which rests on top of a post during the hottest parts of the day in order to protect itself from the scorching temperatures, "head tucked in his shoulder" (ll. 2 and 12). While the hawk is at rest, its preys move around looking for food, although it is scarce because of the lack of rainfall:

> . . . mice

crackle through the yellow grass,

. . . Gophers

driven by the memory of seeds

move from darkness (ll. 6-10).

Both the personification of the hawk in Crozier's poem and its "sit[ting] on the post" (l. 1) rather than on a tree branch are reminiscent of British nature poet Ted Hughes's poem "Hawk Roosting" (1957). Hughes's poem is an ode to a predator who is presented as a king of the sky and earth, as the hawk claims: "Now I hold Creation in my foot" (l. 12). While Crozier's speaker also acknowledges the hawk's predatory nature, the tone is a completely different one. Namely, the hawk in Crozier's poem hunts to survive – "Soon he must hunt" (l. 13) –, whereas the one in Hughes's poem hunts to assert its superiority in the food chain: "I kill where I please because it is all mine" (l. 14). Hughes's poem has been examined by ecocritic Richard Kerridge "as possessing and soliloquizing an amoral ruthlessness [which, with] its "fatalistic attitude [,] leaves little room for the idea that environmentalist scruples might make a difference" (182). In Kerridge's sense, the hawk in Hughes' poem is full of human hubris, whereas the one in Crozier's poem is devoid of any human flaws. Crozier's poem is, therefore, in line with ecocritical tenets in the sense that its aim is not to personify the hawk, but to illustrate the effects of drought on wild animals. In addition, Crozier's poem presents the importance of both rain and shade for prairie non-human dwellers by means of showing the detrimental effects of its absence on both the hawk and its preys:

Soon he must hunt,

slice his wings through heat

that beats like rain

on the dry earth. His shadow

will offer the small

a moment's respite

before he drops and drinks

long and deep (ll. 13-20).

The depiction of animals, both prey and predator, struggling to survive the heat in "Drought" (1983) is analogous to such an effort by human beings. It is in this way that Crozier's poem invites reflection on the shared experiences of human and non-human beings; an idea that is nuanced later on in her oeuvre, specifically in the poems "One Willow Grows" (1996) and "Fox" (1996), in order to embrace the specific teachings from nature that arise out of human communion with the natural world.

In "One Willow Grows" (1996) the dry landscape is presented viz-à-viz a growing willow tree. The persona admires the willow because, despite the drought, it clings on to life. The willow's resilience makes the persona feel ashamed of her lack of faith in God to provide for her, which has resulted in her pagan adoration of false gods: "Bless me, for I have sinned. / I have cared too much for the rain. / I have made for her a golden idol" (ll. 4-6). However, the persona does not pray to God asking for forgiveness; in its stead, the persona entreats the wind, the dust, and the willow to bless her. The persona thus requests a communion of sorts with those climatic elements that make life harsh on the prairies, as if the fact that a willow can thrive out of drought suggests that so can she: ". . . Bless me, wind. / Bless me, dust. Bless me, willow. / How far in the darkness your roots must travel / to send such speaking to the light" (ll. 7-10). Therefore, the persona shows humility towards the non-human world in her willingness to adapt to the drought on the prairies, following the example set by the willow tree. The example of resilience that the tree sets becomes a coping strategy in order to avoid drought-related depression. The speaker's coping strategy suggests that she keeps a positive outlook on life in the face of

struggle. Indeed, the speaker's self-management of the situation is in line with what researchers on the psychological impact of drought ascertain, namely the importance of coping mechanisms like positive thinking, acceptance of the situation, thinking about the problem in a different way and discussing it with others in order to maintain mental health during periods of severe drought (Vins et al. 13261).

In a similar vein to "One Willow Grows," the poem "Fox" (1996) suggests a human community with the non-human world, specifically with a fox. While the emphasis in the first part of the poem is on the scorching heat in the warm months on the prairie, the emphasis is later placed on the meeting between the female persona, Mrs Bentley,[50] and a wild fox she encounters while walking along the railroad tracks. Such a meeting place, which is located between the small town and the open fields, is defined by its liminality between civilisation and wilderness; a liminality that the fox encapsulates, in its ability to thrive both in urban and in wild areas (Lariviere). Upon Mrs Bentley seeing the fox, she addresses the fox as sister and therefore as a female fox or vixen, with what could be claimed to be an ecofeminist mindset, and thus the communion between them is established: "I feel something watching me / and turn to see a fox. *Sister*, / I say without thinking, / and she seems to understand" (ll. 5-8). The female fox is granted agency and equal status to Mrs Bentley by means of the use of the pronoun "she" to refer to it. In turn, the fox's apparent understanding of the speaker's sororal address is reminiscent of the motif of the fox in folklore in many cultures all over the world. As literary scholar and folklorist Hans-Jörg Uher explains, "[i]n myths and legends . . . the fox predominantly appears in two roles, as . . . a divine/demonic being . . . [and as] a born deceiver who dupes bear and wolf in particular, yet often loses to other (weaker) animals" (138). In

[50] Mrs Bentley is the speaker in all the poems in *A Saving Grace* (1996), in the same vein as Mrs Bentley is the narrator in Ross's *As for Me and My House*, as the novel is, in fact, Mrs Bentley's fictional, secret journal.

addition, “the idea that foxes are spirits, witches, or devils endowed with the ability to shape-shift is widely reported” (140). The interaction between the fox and Mrs Bentley in Crozier’s poem while inspired by the trickster figure of the fox, departs from the common roles it plays in myths and folk tales. Specifically, the fox in Crozier’s poem is regarded as a superior being by Mrs Bentley, but the fox itself does not engage in any active role. It is only Mrs Bentley’s observation of the fox and the symbolic associations she attaches to its green eyes that produces an effect on her. Namely, Mrs Bentley finds solace from both the extreme heat and drought in the fox’s gaze, as the green in its eyes reminds her of leaves, grass, and ultimately the long hoped-for rain:

> Her eyes are green leaves,
> wet on the underside,
> deep pools of grass
> I wade into,
> rain suddenly so thick
> it casts a shadow as it falls (ll. 9-14)

The fox in Crozier’s poem thus becomes a symbol of hope for a future in which harvests would again prosper and prairie communities would again manage to thrive. The message of hope in this poem is atemporal, as it works not only in the context of the Great Depression in which this poem was set, but also in contemporary times. Once again hope is posited as essential to resilience and the diminution of drought-related stress. In addition, as Stain et al. posit, attachment to community is essential to find meaning in life and therefore to have emotional resilience during persistent drought (1595). In this case, the poem portrays attachment to the more-than-human world community as embodied by the fox.

4.2.5. Drought and Lack of Love

Finally, the fifth sub-theme presents the symbol of drought as associated to lack of love in the following three poems: "Comfort Me" and "A Man and a Woman" from the collection *A Saving Grace* (1996), and "Missing You" from *The Wrong Cat* (2015). In the case of the poem "Comfort Me" (1996), the symbol of drought is portrayed in connection with craving for love, as an analogy is established between lack of rain and lack of love:

> Comfort me with sweet grass
> wound around your fingers
> for I am sick with love
> . . .
> Let me follow the antelope's
> trails into the pastures
> of your flesh . . .
> Lo, winter is past,
> the seeds have been scattered
> and the rains do not come (ll. 3-8, 12-14)

The poem reflects on Ross' original narrative, in which Mr and Mrs Bentley are not emotionally close. Both their infertility and the fact that Mr Bentley cannot make a living out of his passion, namely painting, have had a strong negative impact on their relationship. In addition, the fact that Mr Bentley earns his living as a preacher but has no faith in God also contributes to the hopelessness caused by both the economic crisis triggered by severe droughts and the analogous strain in their marital relationship. In "Comfort Me," Crozier captures Mrs Bentley's unrequited love by her husband, both at an emotional and at a physical level. Mrs Bentley's embodiment of desire is metaphorically emplaced on an imaginary prairie covered by lush greenery. Therefore,

the reader knows that she is only daydreaming of both an ideal land and love relationship that does not exist in the specific time and place of Ross' narrative.

Likewise, in "A Man and a Woman" (1996), the symbol of drought is used in connection with lack of love in a marriage, while the symbols of wind and dust reinforce such a metaphorical association. The couple are lying on their bed "side by side, pretending sleep" (l. 3). Their relationship is as unproductive and loveless as the dry land on the prairies, as no communication exists between them: "A country lies between us, a prairie / winter, years and years of drought" (ll. 12-13). In addition, the lack of physical contact that these lines portray is also suggestive of the couple's inexistent sexual life. Both the room and the bed are covered by dust because of the wind that blows non-stop, which is analogous with the couple's failing marital relationship. However, the poem ends on a positive if naïve note, as the prospect of future rain suggests the possibility of solving their marital problems: "Surely even in this dusty room, / this marriage bed, / *the small rain down will rain*" (ll. 16-18). The persona has thus faith in the slow water cycle on the prairies to become more intense and thus for precipitation to eventually increase alongside love. While the poem underscores the strain in the lives of prairie inhabitants because of drought, the lack of love between Mr and Mrs Bentley cannot solely be blamed on the harshness of the climatic conditions. Conversely, the return of rain and its resulting economic prosperity is unlikely to solve their marital problems unless the two members of the couple work through them in a healthy way.

"Missing You" (2015) is a brief, 6-line poem within the sequence "Notes for a Small Pocket," which contains a total of eleven short poems mainly about the prairies, death and grief. In the poem, the persona establishes an analogy between her first-hand knowledge of long-lasting drought and the high value that is thus given to rain in her hometown: "In the desert country / of my childhood / the trees' roots / smell the water"

(ll. 1-4). By using the action verb “smell” to refer to the trees’ roots, Crozier highlights the agency of trees and their ability to find ways to survive. In turn, the value of the rain is equated to the emotional support for the persona that the addressee of the poem provides: “You are rain to me / where no rain falls” (ll. 5-6). In line with many of Crozier’s poems in which the prairie trope is present, this poem portrays a sense of both hardship and the necessary resilience to it that is the basis of both a psychological adaptation to drought and a strong sense of place in relation to the prairies in Crozier’s poetry. Besides, the poem’s revisitation of past emplaced experiences of hardship in Crozier’s young-old age – specifically at age 67 – suggests a life review process. Such continuity over time by means of memories is also enabled by the persona’s place attachment, as, in Scannell and Gifford’s words, place-related memories allow “individuals to compare their present and past selves” (6). In this sense, Crozier has her persona relate her present-day blissful love relationship to a remembered past dominated by a scarcity of water on the prairies.

4.2.6. The Drought Trope: Reflections on Late Style

The symbol of drought has been recurrent throughout Crozier’s work. That is, she has made use of the symbol of drought from her first poetry collection and in every decade of her career, with varying degrees of saliency in each of the different collections in which such a trope was present. The fact that many poems about drought in different collections, and even within the same collection, bear the title “Drought” can most likely find an explanation in the raw crudeness of the dry prairies in the summer months. The wearing effects of drought were associated with old age from the point of view of the narrative of decline in two poems separated by a decade around Crozier’s midlife. However, this connection is not present in her later work. Crozier’s recovery of the symbol of drought in *The Wrong Cat* (2015) in its association to lack of love after almost two decades, since

the publication of *A Saving Grace* (1996) – and its recovery one decade after Crozier's last use of the symbol of drought in her poetry in the collection *Whetstone* (2005) – demonstrates the lingering influence that the landscapes of drought have had throughout her career. Indeed, this is illustrated by Crozier's 2015 poem "Missing You," in which she underscores the interrelationship between memory and the emplaced self for the construction of the persona's identity. While Crozier may have experienced some instances of drought in her visits to her grandparents' home on the rural prairies, the stories that both her mother and her aunt explained to her of their own much harder youths during the Great Depression seem to have deeply influenced her writing, as Crozier herself acknowledges (*A Saving Grace* 93). Yet, the fact that Crozier has only published one poem about drought in ten years and that no other poems about drought have appeared in her 2018 and 2019 poetry collections suggests that drought is not a salient symbol in Crozier's late style.

The symbol of drought in its connection to the prairie trope encompasses a wide range of different viewpoints both human and non-human, from the perspective of different time frames, namely the 1930s, and from 1976 to 2015. Drought is presented both as trope and as a reflection of such a real-life climatic condition and, in its recurrence, it becomes a salient element within the personified prairies. The symbol of drought is used metaphorically to express personal feelings which are associated with emotional and psychological struggle, particularly the demoralisation of the rural Canadian Prairie population during persistent drought. As cultural geographer Mike Hulme states, "[p]lace, memory, emotion and identity are woven into people's conception of climate" (*Weathered* 66). Drought is also portrayed in all its complexity, since it is presented both as having potential for self-healing and as violent in its similar harmful effects on both the human and more-than-human populations. In other words, the scarcity of water affects both

human and non-human animals in a similar way. On the one hand, the lack of rain hinders the growth of crops, and as a result, farmers cannot thrive. On the other hand, the extremely high temperatures on the prairies affect both flora and fauna negatively. While some of Crozier's metaphorical uses of drought on the prairies follow traditional accounts of prairie life in Canadian literature, Crozier's poems are innovative in their portrayal of a multi-layered view of the prairies. That is to say, Crozier's portrayal of the prairies by means of the symbol of drought is associated with a sense of place shaped by both hardship and a sense of wonderment for the prairie landscape. In this way, Crozier honours her fellow prairie dwellers by underscoring their resilience to drought. Indeed, findings by mental health researchers in drought-ridden areas of Australia show that the greater the sense of place an individual has, the more distressed this person feels as a result of drought (Stain et al. 1595). Crozier's creative pieces also break with the traditional antagonism of human being versus prairie, and in its stead, Crozier paints a more complex picture in her poetry, such as human communion with the drought-ridden prairies. Thus, Crozier's texts are in line with the tenets on the writing of the Canadian prairies posited by Alison Calder and Robert Wardhaugh in their edited collection of essays, as Crozier "interrogate[s] anthropocentric perspectives and consequently emphasize[s] the human connection to the environment, rather than human alienation from it" (16). Moreover, Crozier conducts a feminist revisioning of the prairies through the prairies' empowerment of the female personae. In this manner, as Tanis MacDonald claims, Crozier "challenge[s] Canadian literary tradition on the basis of . . . gender, and region" (250). For instance, at a first reading "One Willow Grows" (1996) and "Not the Music" (1996) seem to portray contradictory ideas regarding the relationship between the female persona and drought, wind, and dust. At a deeper level, the female persona is granted a complex personality, which is made up of different types of human – non-human

relationships. As a result, Crozier's depiction of drought in relation to wind and dust is multi-layered, and thus it is attuned to a realistic, down-to-earth portrayal of the prairies. Crozier's physical distance from life on the prairies has granted her a more holistic perspective, as in her acknowledgement of the different value that is given to the same objects within and outside the prairies. Despite Crozier's physical detachment from the prairies since 1991 – except for the regular summer writing retreats at a monastery on the prairies and visits to her parents –, the continuity in the use of the prairie trope throughout the years as well as the complex depiction of the prairies she offers render the prairies highly valuable. That is, the prairies are not only portrayed as apt subject matter and trope in Canadian poetry, but their depiction also empowers literature on and about the prairies by means of distancing it from the narrowing label of regionalism, as in Crozier's own words, "[r]egionalist has always [been] a derogatory term in Canadian letters. It means you write about grain elevators and old aunts who speak in dialect" (Philips 149). Instead, Crozier becomes a writer of place, as she herself acknowledges to be (Philips 149). From both her insider – as having lived until age forty-three on the prairies – and outsider perspective – as writing about the prairies from the diametrically opposed landscape of the Saanich Peninsula, on Vancouver Island – Crozier is able to analyse the prairie as a socio-historical construct. From a cultural geography perspective, the internal logic behind this is that "[a]s people and ideas become increasingly mobile in a globalised world, it becomes routine to experience diverse climates and encounter different ways of living climatically" (Hulme, *Weathered* 64). Such physical mobility allowed Crozier to partly re-construct the prairies through the drought trope from a female, ecocentric point of view. Hence, the prairie trope in Crozier's work contributes to opening up new alleys for both female and non-human agency, as it both deconstructs prairie history and partly re-inscribes it as not only *his*tory but also *her*story; this is especially salient in Crozier's

poetry collection *A Saving Grace*, in which Crozier conducts a poetic retelling of Ross's *As For Me and My House* from the point of view of its female protagonist. In this sense, Crozier's work situates itself in relation to a tradition of female Canadian literature from the prairies. Notably, in *A Saving Grace,* Crozier follows the lead of novelist and short story writer from the Canadian prairie province of Manitoba, Margaret Laurence (1926-1987), in her depiction of the hardships that four generations of women experienced on the prairies from a woman's perspective in her Manawaka cycle.[51]

4.3. Chapter Conclusions

In Chapter 4, an examination of the prairie and drought tropes in Crozier's poetry has been conducted as the main symbols that define the literary construction of the Canadian Prairies exclusively. That is to say that there are indeed other tropes in Crozier's poetry that could be related to the prairies, but that are not restricted to them, namely the symbols of wind, snow, light, and rain. The symbol of light will be examined in Chapter 5 in its interconnection between the local, the national and the global and, therefore, as relevant to a macro-level of spatial analysis.

The present chapter has analysed the prairies as a meso-level of spatial analysis throughout Crozier's poetry in order to track the formation process of her late style. Particularly, Chapter 4 has interrogated the evolution in Crozier's articulation of the interplay between sense of place and identity in the Canadian Prairies, as a place which is imbued with both personal and collective meaning. In this vein, the significant influence of Sinclair Ross's literary depictions of prairie life in the 1930s in his novel *As*

[51] Laurence's Manawaka cycle consists of four novels and a collection of short stories set in the fictional prairie town of Manawaka. The novels are: *The Stone Angel* (1964), *A Jest of God* (1966)*, The Fire-Dwellers* (1969), and *The Diviners* (1974). The collection of short stories is *A Bird in the House* (1970).

for Me and My House for Crozier's articulation of the prairie experience has been noted. Such an influence has been observed in Crozier's retelling of Ross's novel in poetry in the collection *A Saving Grace,* in which Crozier adopts Ross's narrator, Mrs Bentley, as the persona in her poems, and nuances the portrayal of this character's life. In turn, the discussion in the section on the drought trope of the influence of Eliot's *The Waste Land* on Ross's novel and, to a lesser extent, on Crozier's poetry situates Crozier's work as partly engaging with the English literary canon while also departing from it by aligning her poetry with prairie-based experiences.

Actually, research on place attachment reveals that the individual connections with place and the symbolic meanings associated to them are closely related to those shared among the members of this individual's community (Scannell and Gifford 2). In this sense, while Crozier depicts a wide range of individual experiences with place which create different meanings for different prairie inhabitants, most of the poems contribute to the portrayal of a collective pride in resilience to the harsh weather conditions on the prairies. Besides, the particular emplaced embodiment for women on the prairies that is depicted in Crozier's poems contributes both to the depiction of the complex web of meanings associated to the prairie environment and to counter the "historical invisibility and marginalisation of North American farm women's contributions to agriculture" (Fletcher and Knuttila 167). In general terms, the symbols of both prairie and drought contribute to an unwavering portrayal of a strong sense of place in relation to the Canadian Prairies despite the mentally challenging periods of persistent drought.

However, the symbol of drought has not been recurrent in Crozier's later poetry, unlike the symbol of the prairies. The implications of this fact for the formation process of Crozier's late style regarding the prairie and the drought tropes are that the prairie appears as an ongoing, relevant symbol in Crozier's later poetry whereas, to date, drought

does not. In this sense, Crozier's late style can be defined by a continuity in the use of prairie-related symbolism despite some changes. Namely, the scarce use of the symbol of drought since 2005 and the attachment of new meanings to the prairie symbol. Such modifications foster a renewed creativity in Crozier's late oeuvre, in line with Wyatt-Brown's first sub-category of late style. This notwithstanding, the fact that the prairie and drought tropes are often interwoven implies that when Crozier uses the prairie symbol in her poems, her readers can easily picture drought in relation to it in their minds' eyes. This connection is emphasised by the fact that both the prairie and drought tropes share similar sub-themes, such as the effects of weather on human and non-human prairie inhabitants and the close interconnection between the human and the more-than-human worlds.

Despite the interplay between the prairie and drought tropes in Crozier's poetry, no animosity against nature is depicted in Crozier's poems. Crozier's depiction of prairie hardship is thus different from the one defined in Atwood's *Survival* regarding earlier Canadian literature, as Crozier's portrayal is not triggered by loathing, but by her love of the prairies (Tracie ix). Some examples of such love as associated to the interconnected symbols of prairie and drought are the acknowledgement of the beauty of the prairies, the willingness to learn from observation of the non-human inhabitants of the prairies, and the belief in the healing properties of the prairie lands. Crozier herself has acknowledged her fondness for the prairies ("Masterclass"). Specifically, Crozier asserts that writing about the prairies means writing about a landscape she cherished and found beautiful, contrary to the opinions of many others, who, in line with major literary works like Eliot's *The Waste Land*, found the prairies a desolate landscape with no beauty in it. Moreover, growing up on the prairie landscape shaped who Crozier is, as she believes that if she had been raised where she now lives, namely on the West coast of British Columbia, she

would have become a very different person as a result of the strikingly different landscape ("Masterclass"). In this sense, Crozier shows place attachment to the prairies in the meanings that such lands have in the definition of her personal identity, which inspires her poetic work.

CHAPTER 5

Light as Crozier's Life-Long Muse: From the Canadian Prairies to a Worldwide Perspective on Sense of Place

"Poetry / is a changing of the light"

(Robert Kroetsch, "hornbook C" 84)

The symbol of light is recurrent throughout Crozier's poetic oeuvre, including two poetry collections whose title contains the word 'light,' namely *Everything Arrives at the Light* (1995) and *Apocrypha of Light* (2002). As literary scholar Marilyn Rose asserts, "[l]ight is everywhere in Crozier's poetry: it is immanent and it is contagious, light constantly bringing forth life" (57). Indeed, Crozier closely connects poetry to the symbol of light in her *ars poetica*,[52] which is defined in the poem "A Cow's Eye" (*Small Mechanics*): "You want the poem to be a thing of light / moths can land on, without singeing / their *en pointe* feet" (ll. 13-15). As these lines suggest, Crozier associates poetry with light in its ability to illuminate everyday life, with a special emphasis on the non-human world, as the reference to the moths implies.[53] Moreover, light becomes the inspirational trigger of much of Crozier's poetry, in Crozier's recurrent connection of light to the prairie landscape and both her own and her mother's narratives of lived experiences there. This is how the symbol of light is related to place and the embodiment of such a place, as Crozier explains in poem number 10 of the sequence entitled "Time to Praise," which is

[52] Please note that even though I use the common term *ars poetica* here to describe Crozier's own understanding of poetry, she has a poem entitled "Against Ars Poetica" (*Inventing the Hawk* 126-127). Therefore, this is my choice of words rather than Crozier's.

[53] Crozier's lines also point towards the idea that poetry must be able to capture through a carefully-crafted form the uniqueness of life, which the writer notes through her poet's eye. That is, Crozier, the attentive observer, is able to capture even the position of such a small animal as the moth's limbs.

devoted to both discovering and recovering a piece of family history set in the prairie farm of her maternal grandparents, namely that of an uncle that died as a child:

> For me the farm has always been
> her stories. Where I take up the telling,
> where I begin and she stops,
> I no longer know. There are only
> a few things I am sure of
> and these I set down here:
> It is not the land
> that spells the end of things.
>
> From the bones we lay
> forever in the earth,
> at the urging of sun and wind
> something grows,
> something rises to the light
> and has its say" (*Inventing the Hawk*, ll. 33-40).

In this poem, Crozier empowers the life stories of the different generations of farmers who became rooted to the prairie landscape by tilling the prairie lands and ultimately dying there, like the uncle she never met. Their corpses, Crozier's poem suggests, became the compost that, together with the climatic elements, contributed to the growth of the fruits of the earth. Interestingly, the collection in which this poem was published coincides in time with Crozier's move away from the prairies to work at the University of Victoria, in British Columbia. Thus, Crozier's place identity as prairie-based is reinforced at this transitional time. Nevertheless, as concluded in Chapter 4, Crozier's place identity

becomes much more complex with the passage of time. Thus, the ensuing chapter draws on such a central tenet of Chapter 4 in order to analyse the evolution of the symbol of light throughout Crozier's work and its implications for the definition of her late style. More specifically, this chapter examines different experiences of light as depicted in Crozier's oeuvre. While some of these experiences illustrate the speaker's emplaced embodiment – that is, the concept that has been the guiding thread throughout this dissertation – of light, others are not concerned with embodiment; finally, there are a number of poems in which light is portrayed in such general terms that it is neither embodied nor emplaced. This finds an explanation in Crozier's inspiration from two different yet complimentary sources, namely the emplaced embodied experience of light in everyday life and light as a construct, as related to philosophy, art, mythology, and the Christian religion.

5.1. The Prairies as the Cradle of Light in Crozier's Poetry

For Crozier, the symbol of light originates in the Canadian prairies, that is, the region her hometown, namely Swift Current, Saskatchewan, belongs to. The ensuing section showcases the evolution of the connection between light and the prairie landscape throughout Crozier's work. To this end, the examined poems have been classified into three distinct but interrelated groups, namely those poems in which the pervasiveness of light on the prairies is associated with a deity; those poems in which light is connected to a sense of home and the mother figure; and those poems in which the effects of light on the prairie landscape, its flora and fauna are linked to the speakers' engagement with the non-human world.

In her memoir, *Small Beneath the Sky* (2009), Crozier avows that the prairies are her primordial source of light in the poem "First Cause: Light." In the poem, the flatness

of the terrain and the inexistence of major woodlands on the prairies allow for the dazzling sunlight to permeate everything:

> YOU DON'T KNOW what light feels or how its thinking
> goes. You do know this is where it's most at home. On the
> plains where you were born, there are no mountains to
> turn it back, no forest for it to shoulder through.
> . . .
> Nowhere else in your travels will you see
> light so palpable and fierce." (ll. 1-4, 16-17).

The speaker describes light as one more character by means of personification. That is, light is endowed with human qualities such as "feeling" and "thinking," and it is almost embodied, as light is "so palpable" that can nearly be touched. Indeed, the importance of light for Crozier is already made explicit in the poem's title, "First Cause: Light." The notion of First Cause was introduced by Aristotle in *Metaphysics* A.7 (350 B.C.E.) and is applied both in philosophy and theology. Aristotle intended to elucidate what the initial cause that triggered the chain of cause and effect in the world was. Ultimately, he reasoned that there must have been a First Cause or Prime Mover which was self-created and was at the origin of everything. This argument led Aristotle to believe that there must be a God that created itself and later on created the rest of the universe, namely a Prime Mover or First Cause. In *Small Beneath the Sky*, Crozier intersperses a number of poems between different chapters of the memoir, which all bear the title "First Cause" and as a subtitle, a specific person, namely, her parents, or a specific element, namely, light, dust, wind, rain, snow, sky, insects, grass, horizon, and story. In this way, Crozier voices the importance that these people and elements have in her oeuvre as major inspirational triggers. Light appears as Crozier's first "First Cause" poem on page one of her memoir. Both this initial

position and the subject matter of the poem confer light utmost importance as a symbol in Crozier's literary universe.

The poem "First Cause: Light" is also relevant in so far as it contains Crozier's first explicit definition of light, and more specifically the light of the Canadian prairies. The poem describes the speaker's both emplaced and embodied experience of light, which entitles her to define it: "Here, light seems / like another form of water, as clear but thinner, and it / cannot be contained. When you touch it, it resists a / little and leaves something like dampness on your skin" (ll. 6-9). Crozier's persona defines light by comparing it to water, given its similarities with it despite differences in terms of density and containment. As these lines show, light is not defined as metaphorically representing something else, but as an element that stands on its own due to its pre-eminence on the prairies. Elsewhere in Crozier's poetry light will often be imbued with symbolic connotations.

Prior to Crozier's explicit mention of light as a First Cause in her 2009 memoir, Crozier had already asserted the centrality of light to her creativity in the poem "Country Dweller" (1996). She did so by imagining light as a divinity; a prairie god that cannot be tamed:

> Paul, the school teacher
>
> who drops by to see us
>
> now and then, tells me
>
> *pagan* means *country dweller* –
>
> that's where we've gone wrong.
>
> We've tried to tame the wild gods
>
> and make them one.

Maybe even Philip

could believe in them.

A horse god. Among the reeds

and rushes, a wind god.

In aspen leaves, a god of light. (ll. 1-12)

Mrs Bentley, the persona in the poetry collection that contains this poem, namely *A Saving Grace* (1996),[54] is the wife of a Christian preacher from a small prairie town called Philip who does not genuinely believe in God, but who accepted his job because of the supposed financial stability that it offers. This is the reason why Mrs Bentley says that her husband might find it easier to become a believer if the gods were those of their everyday life on the prairies, namely a horse, wind, light and rain: "The smallest, the most slender / is the god of rain" (ll. 13-14). That is, a horse represents their main means of transportation and it was sometimes also used to plough the fields; the wind invades their lives, as the story is set in the Dustbowl Years; light is omnipresent during the day; and rain is scarce and therefore becomes the item the priest futilely prays most for on behalf of the town, as depicted, among others, in the poem "Bumper Crop" within the same poetry collection: "Now Philip prays for rain / and nothing happens / or the rainfall comes too late" (ll. 10-12). Therefore, when Crozier writes about light, it is often her emplaced experience of light on the prairies the one that informs her depictions of it.

The fact that light is presented as a deity in the poem reveals Crozier's alignment with animistic beliefs like the ones held by First Nations in Canada. In this sense, Crozier connects the term "*pagan*" to its original meaning of "*country dweller*" instead of the

[54] *A Saving Grace* is a poetry collection published in 1996 which expands on the literary universe of Canadian author Sinclair Ross' prairie novel from the Dustbowl years *As For Me and My House*, which was originally published in the USA in 1941, but which gained popularity in Canada with its Canadian re-print by the major Canadian publishing house McClelland and Stewart (M&S) in 1957. M&S, which published *A Saving Grace,* is Crozier's usual publisher. Thus, *A Saving Grace* serves as tribute to Ross' work on behalf of both Crozier and M&S.

meaning of *heathen*. This is what the first settlers believed the indigenous peoples of Canada to be, a belief which eventually led to assimilation policies into Euro-Canadian, Christian societies, such as The Indian Residential School System, as enforced by the Indian Act (1876, and its subsequent amendments in 1951 and 1985). Specifically, Crozier hints at the indigenous beliefs of the original inhabitants of the Canadian lands, namely First Nations and Inuit, as making much more sense than monotheism in Christianity.[55] This is because of the importance for Canada's First Peoples of the natural environment and weather features, two elements that are essential for the survival of prairie inhabitants, too, as has been extensively discussed in Chapter 4.

Similarly, in the poem "Apocrypha of Light" (2002), light is the First Cause, the one that is self-created, and it is light the one which speaks God into existence: "On the first day, light said / *Let there be God*. / And there was God" (ll. 1-3). Hence, this is a poem that is part of Crozier's rewriting of Biblical stories. By placing light as the original creator, Crozier replaces theocentric beliefs with nature-centric ones. Further, light is said to have taken an embodied form in order to be able to both travel and interact with other elements: "Light needed shape to move inside / . . . / It strode into the absence we call night / . . . / It splashed and rolled in water / . . . / It went everywhere, glossed all" (ll. 4, 6, 10, 18). However, there is no reference to any specific place in this poem. Thus, light is not emplaced in any particular environment in this poem. Instead, light is articulated in the poem as a superior entity, a trickster figure of sorts, that becomes embodied in order to be able to play with both the universe and the natural world.

Ten years earlier, in 1992, Crozier had provided, in the poem "On the Seventh Day," an apparently opposed cosmogony, specifically a Christian-influenced account of

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[55] While many civilisations, like the Egyptian, the Greek, the Roman, and the Scandinavian, have attributed some of these weather features to gods, the specificities of the Canadian context and Crozier's focus on the prairie land suggest an implicit reference to local indigenous beliefs.

the origin of the world, in which it is God the one that creates light and not the other way around:

> On the first day God said
> *Let there be light*.
> And there was light.
> On the second day
> God said, *Let there be light*,
> and there was more light.
> What are you doing? asked God's wife,
> knowing he was the dreamy sort.
> *You created light yesterday*. (ll. 1-9)

Initially, the poem agrees with the Genesis account of God's seven days of creation, to later depart from it. This is part of Crozier's endeavour to both grant voice to female Biblical characters and to insert female characters where none are present. In this case, Crozier imagines a humanized, imperfect God whose wife needs to remind him to do his tasks correctly. Beyond such a feminist revisioning of God's creation story, Crozier also aims at explaining why there is so much light on the prairies and why its sky appears so vast to the human eye:

> When she returned there was only
> the sixth day left. The light
> was so blinding, so dazzling
> God had to stretch and stretch the sky to hold it
> and the sky took up all the room –
> it was bigger than anything
> even God could imagine (ll. 22-28)

Crozier's own emplaced and embodied experience of light on the prairies is translated into a creation story that affects the micro-cosmos of the prairies exclusively. In it, Crozier rewrites a part of the Genesis to relate the excess of light on the prairies to God's absentminded, repetitive making of light for five out of the six days of the Creation. This forced God to enlarge the sky to an extent that was much beyond his own expectations. By so doing, Crozier again reduces the stature of the Christian god; while God is indeed omnipotent in his generational abilities, he is not presented as being all-knowing as the Bible claims. In other words, God's lack of acquaintance with larger spaces than the ones he had originally crafted on Earth is what shows his limited knowledge.

The vastness of the prairie sky and its interplay with light can also be observed in the poem "The Sky Demands a Certain Patience" (2005), in which Crozier also deconstructs some Christian beliefs. The size of the prairie sky becomes a lead-in to discuss the attention that humans receive from both Jesus and the devil, respectively: "With all this sky to cross / how can Jesus find you? Surely / there's too much of it, even for one / who's called the Lord of Light" (ll. 1-4). While God's son might find it challenging to reach out to humans on the prairies, "[t]he devil seems to have more focus; he believes / you deserve his full attention. If you hang your soul / on the line he's right there" (ll. 15-17). Jesus' apparent lack of concern for human beings and diminished abilities as a result of the prairie geography find their explanation in the fact that the non-human world is a priority for Jesus: "There are coyotes to save, the wheat itself, short / and shriven, and the skunk who's about to eat / the poisoned egg" (ll. 12-14). On the other hand, the devil pays attention to humans if they commit suicide. Crozier adds that he is particularly interested "if [your soul]'s pinned / beside a good woman's laundry, / her cotton underwear so thin from all the washings, / light passes through it and is changed" (ll. 17-20). The fact that light is transformed when shining through the good woman's old

underwear is an image that is reminiscent of Crozier's poetic references to her own mother. Indeed, a very similar phrasing can be found in the poem "Angel of Grief" (2011), which depicts Crozier's grief following her mother's passing away and her emotional struggle while "emptying [her] mother's dresser" (l. 10), namely "white cotton bras / and briefs she ordered from the catalogue, / a few with bare elastic showing, all intimate / and washed and washed – I couldn't be sadder" (ll. 16-19). As evidenced by these lines and as present in other poems throughout Crozier's oeuvre, the mother figure in Crozier's work is often an industrious, good-hearted woman from the working classes with a close emotional bond with her daughter, the persona. The transformation of the light when passing through the mother's underwear suggests the nuancing of light with the mother's aforementioned defining features. In such instances, light is even further personalised; it is brought home completely.

Indeed, light in Crozier's work primarily arises from her home experiences as a child, teenager and young adult; it is therefore not only her native emplacement on the prairies that informs her depictions of light and their attached symbolism, but also her life-long close relationship with her mother. Indeed, Crozier refers to her mother in her memoir, *Small Beneath the Sky* (2009), as her "shining light" (159). This is a metaphor that Crozier has also used in her poetry, both while her mother was alive – in the poems "Angel of Happiness" (1992) and "Behind the Camera" (1995) – and after she passed away, in the poem "The Sun's Handiwork" (2019).

In "Angel of Happiness," the speaker claims that her mother embodies light, which metaphorically stands for her friendly and content way of being and acting, as the title of the poem already alludes to:

> Myself, I think of my mother
>
> though she hasn't had

> a happy life. Still
> she carries with her
> a certain brightness.
> It magnifies the air
> the way an angel would
> if she walked
> through your house,
> light falling from her hair (ll. 11-20).

These lines reveal the deep love and admiration that Crozier's persona, which in this case is Crozier herself, has for her mother. As such, Crozier's symbolic use of light to describe her mother bespeaks the importance that light has for Crozier. The poem further connects the association of mother-daughter love with light to old age, as the following lines illustrate:

> But mostly I wish that
> for my mother. I wish
> she'd had more chances
> to get her feet off the ground,
> to shine with that clarity
> I see so often
> now she's old.
>
> When she comes to visit
> her beauty is right there,
> it's moved to the surface
> where even she can't deny it (ll. 39-49).

Crozier's emphasis on the beauty that her mother irradiates has both personal and general implications. On the one hand, it reveals the great love that Crozier's persona has for her mother. On the other hand, it becomes a statement about the need to both cherish the older members of our Western societies and to regard older bodies as beautiful. Therefore, Crozier's poem challenges ageist narratives that view senior corporality as unattractive (Higgs and Gilleard 1624).

In "Behind the Camera" the mother figure is inspired by Crozier's own mother, as the similar use of imagery to "Angel of Happiness" reveals, even though the portrayal of the mother is slightly different. The time frame is also different, as the poem refers to a mother of three young girls. Hence, it is no longer the depiction of an aged woman. The poem is about photography and the role it plays in remembering the past. The mother is the one that is taking a photograph of her daughters and, most significantly, "the one who is making / the three children smile" (ll. 3-4). This is probably the reason why the persona, who despite not identifying as such seems to be one of the daughters as an adult person, claims that "[t]he most beautiful / is the woman behind the camera" (ll. 1-2). However, the mother is not in the picture. This is the reason why she will not be remembered in the same way as her children, who have a treasured memento of their past: "Years later / they'll laugh at the photograph, / the funny hair, the bony knees / . . . / in their Sunday dresses white as wings" (ll. 4-6, 9). The speaker insists three times throughout the poem on this idea of missing the mother in the photo and the consequences that this has: "No one will remember the way / the woman looked" (ll. 10-11). This first complaint is about not being able to have a physical memory of the mother alongside theirs. The second complaint involves the persona saying: "Everything at this moment / conspires / to make her invisible" (ll. 22-24). Here, Crozier's feminism is made apparent, as Crozier plays with different meanings attached to the word invisible. On the one hand, not being part

of the photograph would have erased the woman from the narrative that the photograph tells if it had not been for the persona's retelling of it. On the other hand, the mother's working-class background, as implied by "the ordinary house, the narrow garden" (l. 19), is the one that limits her agency and that renders her socially invisible to a certain extent. The third complaint is voiced in the last two stanzas of the poem, which describe the effects of taking the photograph. Namely, what her daughters were like as children on that particular moment is remembered but not the mother's:

> at the touch of her finger
> her three small daughters
> turning into memory
> turning into light
> and the other side of light
>
> where the brightness
> she is
>   disappears. (ll. 25-32)

Light and darkness are part of the making of the photograph, but also suggest that the daughters are in the limelight as the protagonists of the family photograph. However, the mother remains in the dark, despite the speaker's awareness and appreciation of her personality. Moreover, Crozier emphasises the last line, containing the verb 'disappear,' by indenting it to the right. Actually, the verb disappear means that something vanishes, and as such it is very similar to the former idea of the mother as invisible. Thus, the last line of the poem reinforces the need to value the mother figure.

Such an idea finds its continuation in "The Sun's Handiwork," which depicts light as a form of honouring the persona's late mother. Specifically, sunlight is endowed with

the ability to manufacture some precious fabric to both adorn and dignify the late mother's hands:

> Across the tablecloth, the sun weaves another
> out of light and lace. If it persists, even
> for an hour, . . .
>
> You'll drape it on the hands
> of your mother, dead these fifteen years,
> so her bones can finger the sun's
> quick handiwork and move in memory
> through all the tasks they used to do
> to give a hard life, however
> fleeting, a touch of grace. (ll. 1-3, 8-14)

This poem is another instance of intergenerational love, particularly that of the daughter towards her late mother. The fact that the speaker, the daughter, wishes to wrap this unique fabric made of sunlight on her late mother's hands is significant. In the 19th and early 20th centuries, the word hand used to be a synecdoche for a manual worker, as they were only useful members of the staff if they could use their hands to work (Haran 1). In line with such a meaning of the word hand in industrial times, Crozier's emphasis on the mother's hands points at speaker's mother's working-class background. Indeed, Crozier's mother is depicted in Crozier's memoir, *Small Beneath the Sky*, as having a job as a cleaning lady and also cooking, kneading bread, doing housework, working on the vegetable garden, etc., all of which are tasks that require manual work. That is to say that the mother's hard life is both symbolically and literally embodied in her hands. Moreover, in this poem Crozier intends to repay her mother for her goodness, which is highlighted in her memoir

for instance in the following fragment:

> The opposite of frugality, the lilacs made us special: they hid the poverty of the house, the messy yard, the worry that lived inside the walls. My mother could give and give; her natural generosity had a chance to show itself. I couldn't walk by the bushes without burying my face in the purple flowers and inhaling deeply, taking in with the scent my mother's pleasure, her small pride in being able to bestow on whoever asked such a lush and momentary beauty. (60)

This last sentence is precisely what Crozier does in the poem with the image of light as regalia for her late mother's hands.

The experience of light on the prairies is also connected to the image of vast fields of golden wheat that dominate the prairie landscape either prior to or immediately after the harvest season. "Children of Dream" (1983) illustrates the importance of light on the prairies for Crozier at different levels. The poem revolves around the children that the persona has in her dreams, who are described as "thin as bands of light / from under closed doors" (ll. 2-3), thus reinforcing the oneiric nature of such children. The speaker, as imaginary mother, thinks about the central aspects of life that she should teach her "children of dream," such as "innocence, its loss, / love, its many failures" (ll. 15-16). However, she decides on something different, namely the importance of the local non-human world in its interactions with light:

> Instead my refrain
> is what they'll see:
> the slight shift of colour
> in stubble fields, the light
> spilling from a magpie's wing,
> if they would only open

their eyes to the morning. (ll. 17-23)

On the one hand, the last two lines in the stanza suggest that the speaker craves becoming a mother of flesh and blood children. On the other hand, the whole stanza reveals the speaker's close attention to the effect of light on the local landscape and fauna. Such an attention is the one that poets (and landscapists) cultivate. Hence, these lines show how the persona, through her poet's eye, wishes to transmit her craft to another generation of people, as a mentor would. Indeed, Crozier has "helped many beginning writers with their work" (n.p.), as is already stated in her bio-note in *The Weather*, even before she became a professor of Creative Writing at the University of Victoria and contributed to the formation of the new generations of writers in Canada. As Crozier explains in a personal interview,

> I've been a mentor to dozens, and dozens, and dozens of younger writers, partly because I was a teacher at a university for some twenty-five years. And those students that showed a spark, I wanted to help them in their careers and in their understanding of what good writing was; I wanted to give them a boost over the wall into some kind of success, and I still am in touch with them. (Mina-Riera, "Writing" 224).

Hence, the poem also becomes a call for Crozier's mentees, or as she refers to them in her poem, her "children of dream," including the readers, to open their eyes to the non-human world that surrounds them. Crozier's intergenerational support of her mentees, as articulated both in the poem and in the interview, is best described in Margaret M. Gullette's words: "'Mentor' is an honorable title, betokening unselfish benevolence toward the young. Because raising the young well is so important to any functioning society, mentors have become a necessity" ("Saviors" 69). Even though the collection that contains this poem, *The Weather*, was published when Crozier was only thirty-five

years old, mentorship is not necessarily about the age of the mentor, but about how s/he can contribute towards the well-being of mentees and in this case, the development of their poetic eye via the awareness of the interplay between light and the prairie land and its ecosystem.

Light is similarly associated with the ripe wheat that has been reaped in the poem "Summer's End, Saskatchewan" (1999):

> Swaths of wheat cross the fields
> in currents so thick they cannot move.
> Summer run-off. How much ripeness
> they must carry, how much light
> caught in stalk and seed head" (ll. 1-5).

Light is symbolically embodied by both the plant's cut stem and the grain. This is connected to the ripe wheat's golden colour later on in the poem: "Wind minnows flicker in the streams of wheat, / in the lingering of an eye, golden" (ll. 11-12). Moreover, both the bare infinitive "carry" and the past participle "caught" refer to the fact that wheat has been growing in the sun for many months and, thus, it has somehow ended up absorbing some of its light. Crozier's persona not only feels comfortable in such a landscape, but she is also willing to become enmeshed in it: "I want to float down their clotted water, / my body's sails catching the heart's / held breath" (ll. 6-8). That is, the speaker wishes to enter the stalks and navigate along them as if they were a water stream, marvelling at the breath-taking views, as suggested by the noun phrase "the heart's held breath." In other words, the persona desires to be emplaced within the wheat, which, in turn, embodies light.

The connection between light and wheat fields is also established in "The Father: A Thin Poor Music" (1999), within the same poetry collection. Nevertheless, in this case,

she incorporates the wild roses alongside prairie roads, specifically "[n]ear Maple Creek" (l. 19), a small town in Saskatchewan: "On the road everything changes / with the changing light. Pods of clouds / swim over fields, darkening the wheat. / From ditches wild roses drench me" (ll. 13-16). The male persona observes how variations in sunlight affect his own perspective of the natural environment, as the wheat loses its golden splendour and instead the wild roses are the ones that produce an effect on him, as he feels a "brief and helpless longing / [he] thought [he]'d lost" (ll. 17-18). Such a longing, which is what the "thin poor music" in the title of the poem metaphorically refers to, arises when observing the landscape while driving through the rural prairies. The situation described in the poem is most likely one that Crozier herself has experienced, as she probably missed the prairie landscape after around eight years living on the West Coast. At any rate, it is not merely observation of the non-human world that the speaker yearns for, but it is also the establishment of some connection with non-human animals:

> a herd of antelope bunch in a circle,
>
> a sure sign of cold coming on.
>
> I can't help but wonder what a man
>
> would feel in the centre, their
>
> soft breath, those dark eyes upon him" (ll. 20-24).

Nonetheless, the poem does not clarify the reason why the speaker does not stop the car and try to approach the antelope. Even if this immersion among non-human, wild animals is, therefore, only an imaginary one, the reverse gaze is telling of a nature-centric perspective. That is to say that the human speaker is curious about the embodied experience of being both surrounded and closely examined by a group of pronghorns, as antelopes are also called. However, this is the opposite of what usually happens, namely the human being is typically the predator who hunts them. Given that "[p]ronghorn

populations have shown strong growth across their range," the Government of Saskatchewan allows for their hunting during the hunting season at specific quotas established by wildlife managers (Government of Saskatchewan, par. 9).

All in all, this section has shown that the light trope has been explicitly connected to the prairie environment from Crozier's fourth poetry collection, *The Weather* (1983), to her memoir, *Small Beneath the Sky* (2009). Thus, the association of light with the prairies survived Crozier's move to the significantly different landscape of Vancouver Island in the early 1990s. Nonetheless, from the year 2009 onwards, light is no longer explicitly associated with the prairies. This suggests that Crozier's memoir functions as a threshold of sorts, which leads to a lesser explicit emphasis on the prairie environment as the source of light. On the other hand, the connection of light with the mother remains important for Crozier, as the poetry and photography collection *The House the Spirit Builds*, published in 2019, contains similar reflections on filial love for the deceased mother figure to those present in Crozier's memoir. Therefore, Crozier's sense of place in relation to the light trope gradually becomes less strongly tied to the prairie landscape and acquires a more general overview, in the symbolic association of light with the non-human world. While this outcome is already partly visible in this section, the subsequent sections are fully devoted to illustrate such a change in perspective.

5.2. Painting Light with Words: The Universality of Light in Art

Crozier's depiction of light is influenced by the use of light in painting and, to a lesser extent, in photography. This can be observed in her explicit descriptions of landscapes, in the poems in which she crafts still life paintings with words, and in the poems in which a conversation with a photograph that is printed next to the poem is established. In this sense, the poems examined in this section are instances of ekphrastic poetry, as they are

inspired by artwork. As comparatist William J. T. Mitchell explains, "[t]he narrowest meanings of the word ekphrasis as a poetic mode, 'giving voice to a mute art object,' or offering 'a rhetorical description of a work of art,' give way to a more general application that includes any 'set description intended to bring person, place, picture, etc. before the mind's eye'" (153). The latter, broader interpretation is the one that will prove useful to analyse Crozier's verbal representation of visual experience. Particularly, the subsequent section will reveal that Crozier's depictions of light in her ekphrastic poems detach themselves from particular associations of light with prairie environments; they become universal portrayals of art, which are emplaced on an explicit specific location only on one occasion, namely in the poem "Hemingway in Spain" (1992), and an implicit one, namely the Great Bear Rainforest in British Columbia in the poems from *The Wild in You* (2015). The following ekphrastic poems illustrate not only Crozier's admiration for the effect of light on people, objects and landscapes, but they also make visible the relevance of light as a symbol via which Crozier both deconstructs and provides a fresh perspective on prejudice against fat women and domestic violence against women, respectively.

Crozier reflects on the human embodiment of light by writing a poem about women sunbathing on the seashore in the poem "Still Life with Nude" (1985). The specific emplaced embodiment of these women allows Crozier to offer a critique against social prejudices towards overweight women and to empower them by describing them as both desiring and desired individuals. The speaker describes the seaside as a place which is dominated by a common wish to be thin. However, there is a woman who dares go against such a socially-established norm regarding body weight: "On this beach everyone / wants to be skinny / except the Rubens nude / sleeping in her flesh on the pier" (ll. 1-4). Crozier alludes to Rubens, the seventeenth-century German painter whose female characters in his artistic compositions were usually plump following the

Renaissance beauty canon, in order to underscore the aesthetic beauty of the woman who has a non-normative body. Crozier further describes the woman's big body and its interaction with the sunlight by claiming: "The sun is too small, her skin consumes it" (l. 5). This hyperbolic image of the woman's body absorbing all the sunlight becomes a lead in Crozier's subsequent connection of her physical appearance to another artistic piece, namely an intertextual reference to American, modernist poet Robert Frost's "The Silken Tent" (1942):

> When she gathers the light, billows past
>
> the young women, thin in their bones,
>
> she is a bright silk tent
>
> breathing in and out
>
> with wind off the water (ll. 9-13).

Frost uses the symbol of a tent, which is introduced as a simile of the beloved woman he is describing in his poem ("She is as in a field of silken tent" l. 1), to illustrate the traditional virtues of a woman with whom he feels loved and sheltered from the outside world. On the other hand, Crozier firstly employs the tent trope to explain how the woman both embodies light and the interaction of her body with the sea breeze. Secondly, she transforms Frost's description of the interior of the tent, as a metaphor for the inner qualities of his beloved, into a real tent in which both humans and animals enjoy themselves:

> Inside its walls, a cat licks
>
> the sweetness from an empty cup. Flies
>
> dip their feet in the pulp of figs.
>
> On red cushions a man kneels by a woman
>
> who lifts her buttocks

round and glistening with sweat

in the perfumed light (ll. 14-20).

This image, reminiscent of oriental accounts in both the atmosphere and abundance of a harem, adds depth to the woman's identity. That is, her identity is not limited by her size and weight, but her inner self is presented as teeming with life and eroticism. Therefore, Crozier uses the symbol of light to deconstruct the cultural stereotype in Western societies of the fat-Other. That is, bodies which are "the Other of neoliberalism . . . [and, as such,] refuse to regulate themselves" (Walkerdine 205). In this line of thought, Crozier's poem challenges the cultural prejudice that only slim women can be regarded as attractive (Walkerdine 205), and hence that only they are fitting sexual partners.

Another type of social criticism, specifically that of domestic violence, is illustrated in the poem "Hemingway in Spain" (1992). In this poem, Crozier alludes to another well-known American writer, namely the twentieth-century journalist, novelist and short story writer Ernest Hemingway. Nonetheless, in this case as different from "Still Life with Nude," Hemingway becomes a character in the story that the poem tells. Specifically, he is depicted painting the coastal scenery in the Andalusian town of Adra rather than writing: "[Hemingway] was sitting on a camp stool, / painting three little fishing boats / turned over in the sand to keep them dry" (ll. 3-5). Crozier's further description of the landscape and seascape that Hemingway is painting entails the use of light as a magnifier of the aesthetic beauty of what is being painted: "the nets' giant webs stretched / across the wood to catch / the thousand locusts of the light / that rose from the sea on brilliant wings" (ll. 6-9). In these lines, Crozier's vivid imagery is ekphrastic, given that the shiny, flying locusts are a metaphorical way to describe the small strokes of the brush that represent the sunshine that the sea reflects. Crozier's choice of locusts as the insects of light is paradoxical, as locusts often become highly destructive pests for crops.

Indeed, a plague of locusts is the eighth plague that the Egyptians suffered, according to the Bible (Exodus, 10:1-20), as a way of convincing them of Yahweh's might and thus to force the Egyptians to liberate the Israelites from slavery. While Crozier's locust image metaphorically stands for the beauty of the vast brightness of the sunlight on the sea water,[56] it also foreshadows a great hazard, namely domestic violence.

Actually, the speaker in "Hemingway in Spain" explains that she was in Adra to spend some time with a friend and when they met she saw her friend's "bruised and broken lip / where her husband had punched her with his fist" (ll. 38-39). She also laments not being able to help her, as "[n]othing [the speaker] said made sense / to her" (ll. 56-57). The speaker's attitude is in line with Crozier's critique of the recurrent abuse suffered by victims of domestic violence: "some nights she was loved and others / beaten black and blue" (ll. 55-56). The persona sees that her friend is suffering from "terrible pain" (l. 47), yet she is not willing to report the abuse: "We never spoke of Adra / when we met again in Canada. / In fact, we were no longer friends – / I knew what she wanted no one else to know" (ll. 62-65). Crozier's poem thus functions on two interrelated levels. On the one hand, it criticises domestic violence and empathises with its victims; on the other hand, it portrays a landscape of light to provide comfort to such victims: "If I could speak to her about that time / . . . / I'd tell her of the fishing boats" (ll. 66, 75). The symbol of light thus reveals social issues both in "Hemingway in Spain" (1992) and in "Still Life with Nude" (1985).

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[56] The interplay of light and water can also be observed in other poems by Crozier which are not ekphrastic. For instance, Crozier observes the effect of light on water in a lake in "Fishing in Air" (1985), in which the speaker is describing an unidentified man who practises angling: "What he fishes for changes / as light changes on water" (ll. 1-2), an analogy which refers to the different modifications that light suffers as refracted on water; they are as varied as the type of fish caught by the man. Conversely, the effect of light on seawater is described in the second ghazal in "If I Call Stones Blue: Ghazal Variations for the Spring Equinox" (1995): "Light slides across the sea like a boat / full of dreamers, their hair undone" (ll. 1-2). Crozier compares the way that light moves on seawater to that of a boat, with an added nuance of freedom and recklessness, as suggested by the fact that the boat in the analogy carries "dreamers" or idealist people with "their hair undone," thus unconcerned about social etiquette.

Later ekphrastic poems by Crozier generally abandon social critique and become concerned with self-reflexion and self-knowledge. This is the case of "Picture: A Window, a Woman, Night" (1988), "Setting" and "Brushes Made from Animal Hair" (2005), "The Dead Twin 2" (2011), "Photographer" (2015), and "Teacups on Windowsill" (2019). An exception to this is "God of Acceptance" (2018), in which Crozier criticises anthropocentrism.

The poem "Picture: A Window, a Woman, Night" depicts a woman sitting at a window which is moonlit. The speaker asserts that such an image is reminiscent of a painting: "The window hangs / from the night sky. / Like a figure in a portrait / a woman sits in the centre of its frame" (ll. 1-4). Crozier acknowledges in the epigraph that this poem was written after reading a poem by her then partner and later husband, the late writer Patrick Lane, namely "There Is a Time." The poem was originally published in the 1980s and later collected in *The Collected Poems of Patrick Lane* (2011). The two poems are similar in the presentation of the characters and their inactivity, as the first lines of Lane's poem illustrate: "There is a time when the world is hard, / the winters cold and a woman / sits before a door, watching through wood / for the arrival of a man. Perhaps a child is ill" (ll. 1-4). In Crozier's poem, the speaker imagines different reasons that explain why the woman is sitting by the window at night without doing anything; for example, that she is waiting for her husband to come home: "The woman is waiting. / A man moves towards her / . . . / Perhaps no one moves toward the house" (ll. 10-11, 18). Of all the things that a woman would generally do at this time, like "ironing, her hair in damp curls" (l. 76), "writing, adding up her losses, / knitting something from blue wool" (ll. 79-80) she is doing none. "Tonight she is only sitting in a chair, / hands in her lap" (ll. 81-82). At the end of the poem, the speaker clarifies why, namely "[s]he is imitating / loneliness, practising absence" (ll. 83-84). In this sense, the woman is training for a possible future

in old age when she might be living alone, possibly a widow, and will miss her dear ones.

In Lane's poem the woman waits for the man to contribute emotionally to a hard situation, namely help her face the fact that their child is unwell, while the man spends his time with his horse on the stable to delay meeting such a challenging situation. However, Crozier's poem does not partake in the worry for a sick child and even contemplates the possibility of the woman not expecting a man at all, thus empowering the woman. Moreover, Lane's poem does not contain any references to light. In Crozier's poem, the moonlight entering through the window has the effect of highlighting certain items in the room:

> The moon slides by the window,
> light touching one object,
> then another.
> First the table, its white cloth,
> then the kettle, the copper
> reflecting a face
> the woman should know.
> She sees her high forehead,
> her pale neck
> but what is in between
> is too open, too beautiful (ll. 45-55).

The objects that gain saliency, namely the table and the copper kettle, reveal that the woman is in the kitchen. Moonlight reflects a face on the kettle, which should be assumed is the woman's own face, given that no one else is described as being in the same room as her. She recognizes the attractiveness of parts of the face, but she cannot describe the face itself. The woman's lack of identification with her reflection on the surface of the

kettle suggests that she does not recognise herself in the domestic setting that the moonlight brings to light; a feminist concern that many women writers have elaborated on in their writing, notably American poets Sylvia Plath and Adrienne Rich (Carey). In addition, the speaker's description of the woman's face as being "too open and too beautiful" (l. 55) without clarifying in what sense reinforces the suggested lack of identification with the domestic space; that is, the woman is apparently too beautiful to be eternally waiting at a window. In turn, this image of the static women waiting for no apparent good reason is reminiscent of the theatre of the absurd, and particularly of Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*; in the sense, that both the woman in Crozier's poem and the main characters in Beckett's play are aware of the fact that the person who they are respectively expecting is not going to come in the end, and yet they continue waiting.

Moving from the kitchen to the dining room, in "Setting" (2005), Crozier mixes the influence of painting with that of the haiku, a Japanese poetic form that she is often inspired by and uses loosely, in terms of syllable count, throughout her poetry; that is, she seldom uses the five-seven-five traditional syllable structure. Crozier's poem, which is formed by four stanzas of non-rhyming tercets, except for the second stanza which is a non-rhyming couplet, starts with a haiku. Each line of Crozier's haiku gradually adds to the depiction of the scene, as in classical haikus, leading to an image typical of still life paintings: "Light dozes into autumn and late afternoon. / The good dishes clean, the table set. / One place missing a spoon" (ll. 1-3). Such a portrayal of the light is metaphorical, as Crozier wants her readers to identify the light she is referring to by associating it with the specific shades of yellow or golden that the sunlight has in autumn and before dusk. The still life painting involves a table laid for a meal. This loose haiku connects with the second stanza, which explains the reason why a spoon is missing in the table setting: "The crow's flown off with it. / He's laying his own meal on a black cloth" (ll. 4-5). The

influence of the 17th-century Japanese haiku master Basho, who Crozier admires,[57] is evident in this poem, particularly the intertextuality with the following haiku by Basho: “On a bare branch / a crow settled down / autumn evening” (54). Crozier blends the haiku in which she represents with words the visual experience of a still life painting with Basho’s haiku of a crow in autumn. This functions as a transition from everyday life scenes of a table setting and a crow’s collection of bright objects like spoons to reflections about the persona’s own emotions:

> Something you can chew on,
> something you can spit out,
> something you can share
>
> with that part of you
> you’ve given nothing to
> all your life. (ll. 6-11)

This statement works as a life review, in which the speaker, whose age is unacknowledged in the poem, realizes that s/he has neglected a part of her/himself. Concluding the poem in this vein confers the poem great strength, as readers are left wondering whether they too have neglected a part of their inner selves and what they can “share,” as Crozier says in the poem, with such a part in order to attain emotional wellness.

A move from a commonplace situation to a profound consideration about life can also be observed in the poem “Brushes Made from Animal Hair” (2005), within the same poetry collection. In this case, the speaker describes a game of tug of war of sorts between

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[57] Crozier explains in the chapter entitled “May, 2018” of her non-fiction book *Through the Garden: A Love Story (with Cats)* (2020) that her husband, the late writer Patrick Lane, and she had named one of their cats Basho in honor of the poet Basho because of the cat’s natural beauty, like that of Basho’s poetry. Moreover, Crozier praises some of the characteristics of Basho’s personality and life-style, which involved careful observation and attunement to the non-human world (124-126).

a boy and a badger as an analogy to explain the relationship between the painter and his/her brush:

> The badger clamped the broken branch
>
> between his teeth.
>
> The boy gripped the other end,
>
> . . .
>
> This is the pull
>
> the painter feels in the brush. (ll. 1-3, 10-11).

Crozier reproduces such a pull and push between the boy and the badger and between the painter and the brush by means of a combination of regular lines and indented lines. Crozier suggests in the poem that the final painting is as much planned by the painter as is the result of allowing free creative range to the brush. This is an idea that is analogous to Crozier's understanding of creativity in poetry. That is, Crozier confesses in an interview with Jay Ruzesky that when she undertakes the creation of a poem, she does not know where the poem will lead her; it is only by continuing to craft the piece of poetry that she eventually discovers the story behind the poem (Ruzesky 51). Therefore, Crozier employs Roman poet Horace's concept of *ut pictura poesis,* which he introduced in his *Ars Poetica*, to stress the existence of a common ground between painting and poetry (Brink 370-371). Nevertheless, Crozier's specific use of a brush made of badger hair is not innocent, as the brush seems to retain the agency of the animal from whose fur it is made. Thus, Crozier highlights the active role of the non-human world in human creativity. Indeed, *ut pictura poesis* is based on the belief that both painting and poetry engage in mimesis, specifically imitation of non-human nature (Pich 1), as Crozier's poem also suggests. These reflections on the non-human world trigger some further thoughts in the poem, which are expressed in the form of the following rhetorical

questions: “What happened when the boy made it, almost home? / What happened when his arms gave out? / What is the source of light?” (ll. 12-14). These questions follow regular lineation, as different from the rest of the stanzas in the poem, which signals the change of the material tension between the human and the non-human world to deeper philosophical questions. Specifically, the speaker wonders about the possible effects of the resolution of the conflict in the tug of war between the boy and the badger. In other words, Crozier asks the reader to ponder about the consequences of human victory over the non-human world and vice-versa. In the subsequent line, which is also the last line of the poem, Crozier suggests that light results from the outcome of the previous conflict between the human and the non-human world. That is, Crozier applies one of the building blocks of writing to painting, namely that of conflict as an element that triggers action in the story. In this case, light is understood as action or progress in the story depicted in the painting. Concurrently, Crozier’s rhetorical questions in lines 12-14 also point to the many possible philosophical and religious implications of light. In other words, Crozier leaves the poem ending open for the readers to complete it with their own belief systems, namely an anthropocentric viewpoint if the one who wins in the conflict is the boy; a nature-centric one if the one who wins is the badger; or a middle ground.

In “The Dead Twin 2” (2011), Crozier inserts a reflection of light that resembles a painting within a single-stanza poem devoted to a number of the persona’s reflections about the self. The ungendered speaker engages in a life review to convince her/himself that s/he is not as good as a twin she imagines to have had as a foetus, that is, the persona’s doppelganger. This poem is the continuation of “The Dead Twin” on the previous page within the same poetry collection, namely *Small Mechanics*. In it, Crozier explains that “[i]t’s best not to know most of us *in utero* / are half a set of twins, the brother or sister dead, / absorbed by the survivor until there’s nothing left of it / but a thin-as-paper glyph”

(ll. 1-4). The persona starts her/his life review at a moment in which s/he considers that "[her/his] life in this world is almost done" (l. 5). While the specific age of the speaker is not acknowledged, this line suggests that s/he is no longer young. Crozier's persona confesses to have "cheated, lied, envied [her/his] betters, / pinched a child just to hear it cry, / mourned a cat more than [her/his] father, / betrayed, betrayed" (ll. 6-9). On the other hand, the unborn twin is described as "gentle" (l. 11) and "pure and never tried" (l. 13). The speaker's betrayal also seems to extend to her/his guilt as a person for the human mistreatment of the non-human world, as illustrated by the fact that "[n]ewt, wren, snow cricket . . . nudge [at her/him] / like a memory, it hurts to look at them" (ll. 15-16). In the midst of so many negative aspects about the self and the self as part of the human species, Crozier introduces a break by means of crafting an image of light that soothes the mind: "Light douses the beauty in a lily's throat, / falls across a wrist, turned just so / on a windowsill" (ll. 17-19). Again, Crozier uses an image typical of haikus, namely an image divided into three lines, within a poem to produce a certain effect. In this case, the haiku image slows down the rhythm of the poem, as readers need to take their time to capture the full image. In terms of meaning, though, the reflection on light does not add any further nuance to the poem besides introducing the concluding lines, in which the persona restates the superior worthiness of her/his doppelganger: "All my life I've praised / the moon but it loves best the nearly born, / the little death that won't lie still / until I die" (ll. 19-22). Given such an allusion to the moon, the previous lines about the light must refer to the moonlight, as was also the case with the poem "Picture: A Window, a Woman, Night" (1988). This notwithstanding, moonlight functions in the same way as sunlight, as an element that reveals the true nature of situations. In this case, the moonlight reinforces the beauty of the image described in lines 17-19.

Light's qualities in Crozier's poetry also include the ability to modify the

speaker's mood. In "Photographer" (2015), one of the poems in the poetry and photography collection *The Wild in You: Voices from the Forest and the Sea*, Crozier is inspired by one of Ian McAllister's photographs from the Great Bear Rainforest in British Columbia. In this photograph, light is the protagonist, as it blends with fog, to present a blurry coastal landscape. In her ekphrastic poem, Crozier imagines a blind photographer whose artistic skill lies in his/her close attention to the other senses. This is a lead-in into Crozier's main theme in the poem, namely a definition of the light and its effects on the persona: "There are days when you blind yourself / with too much longing. Light is / tactile then" (ll. 12-14). While the persona is not blind like the photographer that she imagines, her desire for something or someone distant that is not acknowledged in the poem blinds her in a metaphorical sense and does not allow her to enjoy life. This is in stark contrast with the blind photographer that she describes, "who lists fourteen colors of the rain" (l. 6). On these occasions, the speaker feels that light is an embodied entity which cleanses her of feelings that do not contribute to her well-being and transforms her melancholic mood into positivity, as "[w]ith its many hands / it washes the dullness / from your skin, touches all / that can't be seen and makes it glow" (ll. 14-17). Both light and water are natural elements that are essential for life on Earth and, as such, have become imbued with different symbolic associations and meanings both in literature and in religion world-wide. In the case of this poem, and specifically of lines 14-17, light is granted qualities that are often associated with water in religious rituals, namely that of cleaning the body in pre-prayer rituals and that of metaphorically cleansing the spirit in baptism. The definition of light in these lines is very similar to the one Crozier provides of light on the prairies in "First Cause: Light" (2009), which is examined in the first section of this chapter, as both poems describe light by comparing it to water. The use of such analogous images of light and water suggests that although Crozier has lived almost

half her life far away from the prairies, the symbol of light continues to be informed to some extent by her experience of the prairies. It is in this sense that Crozier blends the local, specifically the prairies, and the global, particularly general images of light and water, in the light trope.

In a similar vein, Crozier also interrogates the possible transformative effects of the embodiment of light on humans. In "Teacups on Windowsill," which belongs to the poetry and photography collection *The House the Spirit Builds* with photographs by Peter Coffman and Diane Laundy, Crozier writes a poem inspired by a photograph of clean, china teacups piled on top of one another on a windowsill in the sunshine. While the title of the poem is descriptive and depicts the bare essentials of the image, the body of the poem, which is formed by five unrhymed tercets and a final, concluding line, tells a metaphorical story. Crozier personifies both the teacups and the sun that shines on them by claiming that the teacups have decided to carry sunshine rather than tea, and by granting the sun the ability to speak: "*Drink this*, the sun says / though it knows / you cannot hear" (ll. 7-9). The use of such a literary device allows Crozier to introduce the idea that communication between the human and the non-human world is not always possible. Nevertheless, the sun finds other ways to interact with humans, specifically entering their bodies when they drink from the teacups:

> When you raise the cup
> to your lips, what happens
> to your tongue, the dark
>
> cave of your mouth?
> What happens to your throat,
> its slow, blue pulse,

as the light slides down? (ll. 10-16)

As these lines illustrate, Crozier does not propose possible outcomes of the human embodiment of light. This notwithstanding, the description of each of the parts of the mouth and pharynx helps the reader visualise such transformations. The fact that Crozier alludes to "the sun // as mother, pouring / into [the teacups] morning's / golden lumens" (ll. 3-6) earlier in the poem suggests that the effects of the light on the human body will not be noxious, but will result in some beneficial changes, given that the sun-mother in the poem is presented as caring.

In a different vein, Crozier criticises the anthropocentric objectification of the non-human world as mere scenery for human artistic representation, as can be observed in the prose poem "God of Acceptance." This prose poem offers a description of a landscape painter at an artist colony whose outdoor painting is disturbed by mosquitoes, which either bite her or do not allow her to take photographs of the views:

> The landscape painter at the artist colony in the country noted for its messianic light, its sparse, hard-to-capture beauty, complains she's come all this way to paint *al fresco* but the mosquitoes have driven her inside, no matter the netting on her hat, her cuffed sleeves and pants, a heavy dose of Deet. They bite through everything. And when she tries to snap a picture, a breathy handkerchief of mosquitoes flutters over the lens.

The artist wishes to paint a landscape that is not the real one in which insects thrive but one whose light is idealised and in which there are no non-human nuisances. In other words, the poem depicts an artist whose romanticised emplaced embodiment in the non-human world does not meet her/his expectations. To this human-centred attitude, Crozier provides a wise solution, uttered in the voice of an invented God of Acceptance, namely

"Paint the mosquitoes." Crozier thus opens up new ways of relating with the non-human world from a biocentric perspective, which in turn allows for mosquitoes to become the subjects of artworks, too. Indeed, Crozier's work abounds with poems in which she focuses her poetic eye on animals that have not usually been the subject of poetic attention, or that have been written about from culturally-biased perspectives, such as beetles, cockroaches, moths, and snakes.[58]

In summary, Crozier's ekphrastic poems relate to both real and imagined paintings, and to photographs. Crozier's use of ekphrasis in relation to light, which has spanned most of her career, does not usually aim at an exact reproduction of the pictorial or photographical work or art; it provides a description of its most relevant elements, which Crozier subsequently embeds with symbolic associations that carry critiques of social issues and reflections on the self. Specifically, Crozier's poems make visible and empower by means of art the women who suffer from discrimination due to their non-normative bodies and those who suffer from domestic violence. On the other hand, the symbol of light is associated with emotional well-being and transformation of the self, with a particular emphasis in some of the poems on the positive impact that the non-human world is likely to have on human beings if we allow such an interaction. While the notion of emplaced embodiment is only present in two of the poems, namely "Still Life with Nude" (1985) and "God of Acceptance" (2018), the interplay between embodiment and light is recurrent in Crozier's ekphrastic poems. The fact that Crozier's latest poetry collections to date, namely *The Wild in You* (2015), *God of Shadows* (2018) and *The House the Spirit Builds* (2019), contain ekphrastic poems related to light suggests

[58] Some relevant examples are: "An Extraordinary Fondness for Beetles" (*The Wrong Cat* 15) – which is analysed in the section The Transformative Power of Light –, "Cockroach" (*What the Soul Doesn't Want* 37-43), "Finding Four Ways to Celebrate the Huge Moths that Keep Me Awake by Banging Between the Blind and Window and Falling on My Pillow" (*Small Mechanics* 12), and "What the Snake Brings to the World" (*Apocrypha of Light* 19).

an ongoing interest in this poetic technique in her late style.

5.3. Deconstructing Light and Darkness: Unseating a Deep-Seated Dualism

The symbolism that Crozier attaches to the culturally-constructed binary of light and darkness is diverse, as darkness and light are sometimes presented as realities that complement each other, and indeed that are part and parcel of one another, while on other occasions, they are depicted as opposites. Crozier's portrayal of light and darkness is often informed by the non-human world, and often differs from Western, Judeo-Christian belief systems, in her recurrent revision and rewriting of Biblical accounts. As regards the evolution of theme in Crozier's oeuvre, darkness is defined much earlier in Crozier's poetry than light for no apparent reason. Specifically, Crozier provides a definition of darkness in the poem "Night" (1995), whereas a definition of light as related to darkness appears in "Rebuttal to the Higher Power" (2005). Nevertheless, a definition of light on its own is not found until the publication of her memoir, in the poem "First Cause: Light" (2009), which is analysed in the first section of this chapter. The fact that Crozier defines light in her memoir could find an explanation in her creative writing process of such a book. As she explains, while writing her memoir, she was "[f]ocusing on dust, sky, wind to trick herself to write about her own life" (Crozier, "Masterclass"). Light also fits in this list of climatic elements which Crozier used as a trigger to explain the effect that "writing about a landscape [she] cherished has had on who [she's] become" (Crozier, "Masterclass").

Providing an innovative point of view in the definition of darkness as a form of light, Crozier proposes in "Night" that darkness is "just the light / falling so far into itself / it hasn't reached the bottom yet" (ll. 26-28). Therefore, Crozier does not describe

darkness in the common understanding of absence of light, but as light folding itself and travelling towards an end point that must be assumed leads to daylight. Such a description of darkness is the one provided by the children "who are never called [in]" (l. 19) from "where [they] play" (l. 8), as reported by the speaker in the poem. These children, who are presented as social outcasts as they "wait just beyond the lilacs, the garden gate. / [and someone tells them] *Come away, come away*" (ll. 20-21), are the ones the speaker is fond of: "They say the words / you love to hear: *Nightjar. Firefly.* / *Honey Possum*" (ll. 21-23). The speaker admires such children because "[l]ike these [animals] they move / with ease through any kind of dark" (ll. 23-24). Crozier's simile empowers these neglected children by underscoring their resilience, given that the word 'dark' refers both to the night-time and, metaphorically, to hazardous situations which these children are exposed to.

Crozier also provides a definition of sorts of the interrelated concepts of darkness and light in "Rebuttal to the Higher Power." In this case, darkness and light are described in the context of the non-human world, which is the one that is said to generate light. By stating so, Crozier once more challenges Biblical accounts, specifically that of God's creation of light, which is the counter-argument to the existence of a divine creator that the title of the poem alludes to. Crozier also questions strict divisions between darkness and light, arguing for non-human nature's agency in its ability to transform what we perceive as darkness into light: "Beneath you grass stretches its roots / . . . / They douse for darkness, / draw it up to meet the light, or is it light // the dark becomes on this other side / . . . ?" (ll. 9, 11-13). Furthermore, the speaker explains the process by which the darkness of the underground soil, metonymically referred to as "the can't-be-seen," becomes lighted up:

> Through hollow stems, grass siphons
>
> the can't-be-seen

and sends it out ignited.

It's what gives the shine to everything

that roots, inclines, or rises only inches.

Dirt, lichen, stone, their telluric under-glitter (ll. 15-20).

Crozier's use of indentation functions as a longer pause that contributes to a certain magical effect or wow factor when reading the poem, as Crozier encourages the reader to share in her marvelling at the non-human natural world.

Almost the same idea is articulated in "Genesis" (2011), in which Crozier emphasises that the light within the soil is the one created at the beginning of the world in the Bible, as suggested by both the title of the poem and the following lines:

Not that light.

The gleam on leaf and skin,

on any moving thing.

But light

at the bottom, under

stone, under each

tread of the bear's wide paw (ll. 1-7).

Nevertheless, as different from "Rebuttal to the Higher Power," Crozier equates the light of earth to that within the body: "[E]arth-light under earth, / light of the burnt-out, / light under the eyelid, / under-tongued" (ll. 8-11). Crozier does not clarify whether the body is a human or an animal one; therefore, it must be assumed that it refers to both of them. However, such light is described as "the fierce // unsaid, un- / redeemable light" (ll. 12-14) that originated in "the dark / angel's *let there be*" (ll. 16-17). Crozier rewrites Biblical

accounts by positing Lucifer, who is considered the dark angel because he rebelled against God, as responsible for the creation of underground and inner-body light. Such a light is described with the same adjectives that define Lucifer, namely “fierce” because of his bravery to disobey God; “unsaid” because Lucifer is the fallen angel that must not be worshipped; and “unredeemable” because Lucifer chose to betray his creator, and as the Prince of Hell, his sins cannot be forgiven. In spite of following the Biblical story of Lucifer, Crozier’s implication that there are two types of light and that Lucifer’s is neither superior nor inferior to God’s, but simply hidden both within living and non-living beings implies her break with traditional beliefs which associate God with goodness and light and Lucifer with evil and darkness. Hence, a dualistic view of the world is questioned in Crozier’s “Genesis.”

Crozier provides a poetic explanation for the origin of darkness, which initially differs from Western cosmologies but later on converges with them to a certain extent, in the prose poem “Darkness, Its Origin” (2013). The existence of light is presented as predating that of darkness, and darkness as an element that light required so as not to be alone: “Before there was anything, there was chaos, and chaos was not darkness but light. Darkness came next because light needed a companion.” Crozier’s depiction of chaos as light is contrary to Western religious and philosophical accounts, in the common belief that God creates light in order to turn chaos, which is closely connected to darkness, into order. For example, in the Genesis, God creates light to release the Earth from chaos and darkness, the latter being restrained to the night-time. In addition, darkness is traditionally presented as existing before the creation of light and not the other way around. As a matter of fact, Crozier’s depiction of light and darkness is more in line with Eastern philosophies than with Western ones, specifically with the notion of yin-yang. Such a concept refers to the two complementary forces, namely yin and yang, that make up all aspects of life in

the universe. Yin is mainly a symbol of darkness, and yang of light. Both forces, which are in constant flow, are necessary for balance. As a result, there is not a hierarchy of light over darkness, as is the case in Western beliefs.

Crozier connects her interpretation of the origins of light and darkness in the universe with their metaphorical human embodiment. Crozier claims that the increase of darkness in the world is tantamount to the expansion of darkness within humans. This is due to the fact that Crozier adapts the Biblical creation story of the woman from Adam's rib to explain how darkness appeared: "Light removed a bone from its own rib cage so that darkness could appear." Here darkness is imbued with the traditional meaning in most cultures of emotional states and feelings that are noxious for both inter-personal and intra-personal relationships:

> The darkness inside people grew, too. It settled and deepened in the small simulacrum of the place where it was born, that gap in the ribs closest to the heart, and the heart, neediest, most susceptible of organs, developed the muscle to draw it in.

This notwithstanding, Crozier is not fully in line with Western traditional associations of darkness with evil, given her ironic portrayal of the supposed "creatures" of the dark: "[U]pside-down things, animals with masks, others with naked tails and little claws, big-eyed birds that flew without a sound, flowers that bloomed only for the blind, night crawlers." Indeed, none of these animals or the flower are malevolent beings, but it is the human fear of darkness and anything that is reminiscent of it that has posited them as such in the Western collective imaginary.

Nevertheless, Crozier also provides another possible interpretation for the darkness inside people, namely mourning, in the poem "The New Day" (2011). Crozier plays with contrasts in the poem, as its title suggests a new beginning with positive

outcomes, but it leads to bereavement instead:

> Over the eastern farmlands and into the city
>
> light spills unimpeded. Now you can go
>
> into the dark that lives inside you
>
> Even flies have a mother,
>
> a hard-won grief. (ll. 1-5)

Dawn and the shining of light over both rural and urban environments give way to the persona's mourning for her mother's passing away, which she associates with her inner darkness. Daylight thus allows the persona to consciously think about her mother, unlike the night time, when we cannot choose who or what we dream about. In line with Crozier's valorisation of insects, the poem establishes an analogy between the speaker's own grief and that of flies. As such, the persona's crying during her mourning process is metaphorically presented in the last stanza of the poem as flies obsessively cleaning themselves up: "Someone has taught them / to wash and wash their faces / until they shine" (ll. 6-8). As the last poem in the collection, Crozier closes on a sad note. The poem is powerful in its brevity, as it is made up of eight lines, its emphasis on the grief for the passing away of the mother figure, and the relevance of light and the non-human world in Crozier's literary universe. Bereavement for a mother's death is a theme that can also be observed in the poem "Dostoevsky" within the same poetry collection. However, in "Dostoevsky," there are no references to either light or darkness.

All in all, in the poems that have been examined, Crozier deconstructs the Western dualism that associates light with goodness and darkness with evil. In the mid-1990s, mid-2000s, and early 2010s, Crozier re-wrote the symbolic connotations attached to light and darkness. Three different meanings of darkness can be observed, namely darkness as

light going down quickly, as if submerging into a pool of light instead of water; light as being generated by the agentic power of the non-human world within the darkness of the soil; and darkness as the companion of light, which finds its way in the human heart, for instance, in mourning. Hence, Crozier offers alternative perspectives from which to understand light and darkness, not as absolutes, but as interconnected, interdependent, flexible entities in three different decades in her mature poetry and in the collection that has been identified as the beginning of her late style.

5.4. The Transformative Power of Light

Crozier endows light with the ability to modify the human perception of reality, both in a literal and in a metaphorical sense. In turn, the non-human world is also granted the ability to transform light into something else. The transformative power of light in Crozier's poetry is found in poems that associate the light trope with love and with death, respectively. Love and death are two of the main themes in the history of poetry. In this sense, the subsequent poems by Crozier are in line with traditional, poetic subject matter. Nevertheless, Crozier's emphasis on the interaction between the non-human world and light in its implications for both love and death is what provides a novel approach. As regards the interplay between light and love, Crozier's fifth poetry collection, *The Weather* (1983), contains three instances of light which metaphorically stand for well-being in a couple. This was an emotionally complex time for Crozier, as she had recently divorced her first husband and was building a love relationship with her future husband, the fellow writer Patrick Lane. Such a personal situation informs Crozier's poems, in which the persona often yearns for the transformative power of light to solve the issues in her love relationship and thus, to strengthen the bond between her and her partner.

Crozier endows light with magical powers in "The Weather" (1983), the poem

whose title becomes the title of the poetry collection, and which is the second poem in the book, within Section One: "I want to wade in liquid heat, / submerge in the light / where all things are possible" (ll. 1-3). A believer in the transformative power of light, the persona expresses her desire for light to strengthen her relationship with her partner: "I want to believe in you. / I want your hands / to carry the sun to our bed. // Instead the cold follows us" (ll. 7-10). Nonetheless, the persona's wishes are not fulfilled, as the sunshine does not appear: "*Christ, it's summer*, we say, / thinking the word / will make it happen" (ll. 12-15). As a result, the poem ends on a pessimistic note, as none of her wishes have come true. That is, she cannot enjoy sunshine, she does not believe in her partner, and the sun, as a symbol of both literal warmth and the warmth of love, does not shine on the couple's bed. This poem is connected to the poetic genre of the aubade, as it discusses sexual intimacy in relation to the sunshine. However, Crozier reverses the usual theme of the aubade. In traditional aubade poems, the lovers feel frustrated at the sunrise because it means that they must separate. On the other hand, the lovers depicted in Crozier's poem do not enjoy their sexual encounter because the sun is not shining, as a metaphor for the relationship problems that the couple need to deal with.

In a similar vein, "Beneath Our Feet," which is the last poem in Section One, also discusses relationship issues, specifically it portrays the persona's concern about her partner's lack of both communication with her and awareness of the non-human world. Nevertheless, in this case, sunlight is present and shines on the couple, as stated in the last lines of the poem: "See how all the light / flows around us" (ll. 29-30). Therefore, the poem concludes on a note of hope, unlike "The Weather." Emplaced outside, the couple go for a walk and while the persona pays attention to the non-human world, her partner does not:

You walk beside me. Shadows

repeat the shapes of trees,

how they sway across the grass.

My shadow darkens your face.

You are silent, removed

from my words, the touch

of my fingers. (ll. 5-11)

The persona demonstrates that her emplaced embodiment of the outdoors is important for her, in her attention to the trees and the grass in this stanza and in two other whole stanzas devoted to imagining what a gopher is doing within the soil – which is what the title of the poem refers to – and observing it when it surfaces. As such, she does not understand why her partner is not sharing in her enjoyment of the non-human world around them. Moreover, she is concerned that he might fall into a depression, as she wonders:

What caves do you move through?

Will you find a pool

lit by a pillar of sun

or will you find a darkness

so deep at the centre

that all you believe

falls away? (ll. 12-18)

Unlike many of the representations of light and darkness in Crozier's poetry, as examined in the previous section – Deconstructing Light and Darkness: Unseating a Deep-Seated Dualism – these lines present light and darkness in their traditional associations with well-being and unhappiness, respectively. This connection is further reinforced in the last stanza, when the persona confesses: "I want to call you / to the sun, call you away / from silences and caves" (ll. 25-27). Crozier's use of the symbolism of the light and the cave

is also reminiscent of Plato's Myth of the Cave, in the sense that for Crozier's persona, the non-human world and the human interaction and observation of it is tantamount to Plato's truth and superior being that the light symbolises. On the other hand, the cave that for Plato represents humankind's ignorance is used by Crozier to stand for her partner's detached attitude, which prevents him from discovering the relevant truths about the non-human world that deciding to be fully emplaced and embodied in it might reveal to him.

This is precisely what is attained in "With Your Steps You Measure," the last poem in Section Four and in the poetry collection. Namely, the persona describes her partner as being focused on their life together, specifically by visiting the place that will become their home: "With your steps you measure / the ground our house will fill" (ll. 1-2). The persona confesses that "we aren't young, / love isn't easy anymore" (ll. 5-6), which bespeaks the persona's maturity and awareness that love relationships are always complex, particularly with age, as suggested in lines 5-6. This notwithstanding, the speaker also makes clear that the relationship is stable and strong, as implied in the lines "[t]he house we have imagined / builds itself around us" (ll. 17-18). Indeed, the house is metaphorically described as embodying a sound love relationship in which the partners have intimate knowledge of each other and feel comfortable together, as the poem goes on to say: "Like the bodies of lovers / who have been together years / the boards find their places, / fit snugly one against the other" (ll. 19-22). This idea is reinforced by the closing lines, in which the use of light and, in this case, also wind, symbolises the final step towards a mature love relationship: "[D]oors and widows that have opened / inside of us, open in the rooms / so all our empty spaces / fill with wind and light" (ll. 24-27). Literal and metaphorical wind and light become one in Crozier's poem, as the windows of the house will open to such meteorological conditions and their hearts will welcome the fresh air and warmth that wind and light symbolise here.

A progression towards a healthy, stable love relationship can be observed in these three poems within *The Weather*, as mediated by the transformative power of light. On the other hand, light is often connected to reflections of death in Crozier's poems. Specifically, the poems in which death is depicted as causing light to disappear involve both reflections on a parent's death and personal thoughts on mortality.

Crozier's persona has an unexpected encounter with her late father in "Visit" (1999). Her description of such a meeting emphasises the changes in her father's embodiment, as it relates to her memories of his physical demise:

> Tonight my father's at the door.
>
> In the wedding suit he's grown big
>
> enough to fit again. . . .
>
> . . .
>
> Before my eyes, he grows thin again,
>
> his jacket merely cloth without the breadth
>
> to make it him, standing there in front of me,
>
> so many moths stuttering from the gabardine
>
> they dust the light until the light goes out. (ll. 1-3, 19-23)

The persona first sees her father as a strong-built man, as he used to be in his youth. At the end of the poem, however, he starts losing size – like he did during his illness – until he completely disappears. In place of human flesh, moths appear, thus symbolising the death and subsequent gradual decomposition of her father's body. Moths, as a metaphor for death, extinguish the light in the porch. The subsequent darkness, which is only implicit in the poem, also works at a symbolic level. The experience of seeing her late father again and losing him before her eyes once more reminds the persona of all her family's suffering during his illness and ultimate death. Therefore, it brings back the grief,

which is reinforced by the persona's personal reflection in the middle of the poem: "Maybe death / leaves us our afflictions – / they're what the living won't let go" (ll. 12-14). The intensity of such mourning is emphasised by Crozier's use of a fragment of this last line as the title of the poetry collection in which this poem is collected, namely *What the Living Won't Let Go*. This is actually rare in Crozier's work, as the titles of the poetry collections are usually the title of a poem within the collection.

Death is also metaphorically represented by the non-human world in "An Extraordinary Fondness for Beetles" (2015). Nonetheless, as different from "Visit" (1999), it is the persona herself the one that wishes for such a transformation, as she states right at the beginning of the poem: "I like to think of my soul / taking the shape of a beetle" (ll. 1-2). Such an embodiment of the soul in an insect finds its explanation in the title of the poem, as Crozier greatly admires all kinds of animals, especially those that are often despised and treated as pests in Western culture, such as insects, rodents, amphibians and reptiles. Crozier's appreciation of beetles is partly in line with ancient Egyptian beliefs, in the sense that the Egyptians saw in the dung beetle "a vision of rebirth into paradise, the resurrection of the soul; they saw the daily rebirth of their most powerful symbol, the sun, as it appears each morning over the eastern horizon" (Ward 187). Crozier's poem contains the same elements that were relevant for the Egyptian beetle motif, namely a beetle, the sun, the soul, and death. Nonetheless, Crozier does not refer to either eternal life and the afterlife or resurrection. Crozier's persona shows her appreciation for the beetle by means of explaining at length in the poem what "[a]s a beetle, the soul will do" (l. 12) that the speaker cannot do as a person. Specifically, the speaker describes a beetle that "can roll dung as if it were / a dogged Dinky tractor chosen to shove the sun / from one galaxy to the next" (ll. 23-25). A beetle with such characteristics is the one the speaker imagines as both embodying her soul and carrying

her soul when she dies: “I like to think / of my soul as that beetle, pushing what’s left / of the light that once was me / out of the world” (ll. 25-28). Thus, the persona identifies herself with light and relates death to the extinguishment of such a light. Nevertheless, unlike the previous poem in which the speaker’s father’s death is traumatic, in this poem, the persona’s thoughts of her own death do not portray any death anxiety. On the contrary, the fact that the speaker is able to transform her own future death into a poetic experience involving the non-human world conveys a sense of peace and acceptance of death. The poem’s ending, i.e. lines 25-28, is reminiscent of the refrain of British modernist poet Dylan Thomas’s poem “Do Not Go Gentle into That Good Night”: “Rage, rage against the dying of the light.” While Crozier’s line “the light that once was me” and Thomas’s line “dying of the light” contain very similar metaphors of approaching death, the speaker’s attitude in each of the poems is diametrically opposed. Specifically, in Thomas’s poem, the speaker pleads his father to stay alive by fighting against upcoming death, whereas in Crozier’s poem, the speaker accepts her own human mortality with equanimity.

On the other hand, the transformative effect of light and its influence on human reflections on mortality can be observed in the poem “Reading Merwin” (2017). Specifically, this poem depicts the effect of sunlight on an outdoor object and the thoughts about death that its observation triggers in the persona: “The early sun makes of the small glass feeder / a twist of light, the kind the dying say / they move toward” (ll. 1-3). While the persona does not explicitly state how such a thought about death makes her feel, the fact that she confesses that she is “loath / to raise [her] head, to face the morning” (ll. 4-5) suggests a certain death anxiety. That is why the persona decides to focus on her reading with “its plain / immovable type” (ll. 6-7), as the written words do not undergo change, whereas life is often uncertain. In other words, the persona uses the reading of

twice US poet laureate W.S. Merwin's poems, as suggested by both the title of the poem and the concluding lines, in order to shelter herself from her own fears of death: "The poem my finger traces / as if I'm writing words in air / insists, 'Something I've not done / is following me.'" (ll. 7-10).[59] Actually, in the context of Crozier's poem, Merwin's lines insinuate that death is following the persona, and thus that death might be near.

In Crozier's musings about the interplay between light and death, the poem "The Underworld" (2017) is another example of the major role that the non-human world plays in Crozier's work. The poem, written in sections one to four, depicts the mourning for the persona's late mother. The speaker visits the underworld and describes it, finding that "[t]he River Styx . . . / . . . / [is] merely / a metaphor for grief" (ll. 1, 3-4) and not coming across her late mother: "Mother, mother, you say, hoping she'll appear" (l. 9). Despite her failure in meeting her loved one, the persona finds the Underworld is lit to some extent: "Not as dark as you thought. / Something gives off a kind of light" (ll. 18-20). Although this light would sooth the persona, she cannot stand the absence of natural elements and non-human beings: "What makes you inconsolable is the silence. / No wind in leaves. No grass speaking" (ll. 20-21). Thus, for Crozier, light has the ability to transform the bleakest of situations into more manageable ones, often with the assistance of the non-human world.

In brief, the fact that the transformative power of light in connection to love and the speaker's need to establish a stable relationship can only be observed in *The Weather* suggests that these autobiographically-informed concerns were solved. As a result, there is not a continuation of this subject matter in further poetry collections. On the other hand, death as an element that metaphorically extinguishes light can be observed in a poem

[59] This is a quotation from the opening of Merwin's poem "Something I've Not Done" (1970). Citation corresponds to the original date of publication in a literary magazine. However, Crozier explains in the Acknowledgements section within *What the Soul Doesn't Want* (2017) that she read the poem in Merwin's collected volume *Migration: New and Selected Poems*, 2005.

within Crozier's 1999 collection *What the Living Won't Let Go* and another one within her 2015 collection, *The Wrong Cat*. Light allowing for shifts in perspective not only of the light per se but of the metaphorical connotations it is imbued with is found in two poems from Crozier's 2017 collection, *What the Soul Doesn't Want*. Thus, the same subject matter, namely concerns about death and its interplay with light, but from different perspectives figures prominently in Crozier's work from the mid-2010s. This suggests that death was both an important concern and source of creativity for Crozier during such a period of time. Indeed, both *The Wrong Cat* and *What the Soul Doesn't Want* contain many images of death and grief besides the ones specifically examined in this section.

5.5. The Emplaced Embodiment of Light in the Non-Human World

The light trope in Crozier's poetry is often presented in the context of the non-human world. That is to say that the human speakers are emplaced in non-human nature and light is embodied by non-human animals. More specifically, the emplaced embodiment of the symbol of light in the non-human world can be classified into three main subcategories, namely the human speaker's observation and interaction with light, which leads to emotional well-being; the symbol of light as related to the awe of the non-human world, which leads to three different considerations: A critique of the ill-treatment of non-human beings, deep admiration of non-human animals and of non-human nature, and fear of their wildness; and the light trope in connection to grief for the passing away of the family dog.

The observation of light in the non-human world contributes to the ungendered persona's emotional well-being. In "Anglin Lake" (1992), the persona is camping on the shores of a lake and waking up at night from a dream, observes the light coming from the stars: "The stars above me burn / like old scars that shine / because a scalpel/ let in light" (ll. 15-18). Her observation of such a light shields her from emotional pain, as she

subsequently claims: “Nothing / more can hurt me” (ll. 18-19). Her emplacement outdoors allows for her naked body through its porosity to almost become one with the night, as she states: “[I] stand in the dark / with only my skin / separating me / from the night” (ll. 11-14). The interplay of her body with the climatic elements, in the suggested “viscous porosity” of the speaker’s body, to use Nancy Tuana’s term (“Viscous”), bring her closer to the non-human world. Indeed, all the non-human elements that she pays close attention to are connected to light: “I watch the white fires of the birch / along the lake ignite / as the heron fans his wings / above their branches” (ll. 25-29). Such metaphorical light becomes a source of wellness not only for the persona but also for non-human animals, as the poem concludes: “so whoever he might be / he can warm himself / as he finds his way / back home” (ll. 30-33). Crozier’s personification of the heron, and especially the line “whoever he might be,” are the elements that point towards the comforting qualities of the observation of the non-human world and interaction with it for both human and non-human beings.

Nevertheless, it is not only visible light in non-human nature that contributes to the persona’s well-being, but also the imaginary light that emanates from farmyard animals when they are well taken care of. This is the case of “Poem for a Hard Time” (2005), in which the persona observes the chickens in a coop:

> Chickens
>
> in a shed with screens to let in air,
>
> . . .
>
> the proper attention paid
>
> so that around them
>
> there seems a kinder light. (ll. 1-2, 7-9)

Apart from observation, the persona’s physical contact with the eggs that the hens lay

gives her peace of mind: “Each tiny sun contained, / unbroken, no need for it to rise / or fall, no need for anything / to harm you” (ll. 12-15). Continuing with the metaphor of light, the persona imagines that the yolk of the egg is a sun that does not require either dawn or dusk but remains stable and safe in its protective shell. Such an image is the one that the persona seems to relate to herself, namely the need to attain emotional stability in a place that is free of destabilising stimuli. In this vein, the poem depicts a modified healing garden, also known as a healing farm (Jang et al.), as instead of greenery, what allows the mind to heal – most notably, the reduction of stress levels – is both the observation and interaction with poultry.

The light trope in Crozier’s poetry also showcases a sense of awe of the non-human world. The articulation of awe of non-human nature in literature is a legacy of Romanticism, in which awe was related to the sublime. Ecocritic Louise Economides argues that ecocriticism has not overcome the connection between awe and sublimity, in the sense of both humility towards and fear of the non-human world (16). Economides further claims that sublimity “distorts a welcoming of otherness into a power struggle between subjects and objects” (16-17). In order to overcome such a nature-culture dualism, Economides supports an alternative proposed by environmental historian William Cronon, namely wonder for local landscapes, such as “[t]he tree in the garden” (Cronon 88, qtd. in Economides 17). Crozier’s sense of wonder for the non-human world shows humility towards it in her admiration of non-human nature in micro-, meso-, and macro-natural environments. Hence, Crozier’s poetry does not longer engage with a sense of awe for the non-human world in relation to sublimity, but in the speakers’ willingness to interact in non-dominant ways and learn from non-human nature.

Awe for non-human nature, in its interplay with light, leads to social criticism towards animal ill-treatment in the poem “Fear of Snakes” (1988). The poem is the first

one in the collection *Angels of Flesh, Angels of Silence*, and the first one within the first section, namely "Childhood Landscapes." Thus, Crozier gives prominence to this poem by placing it as first and foremost within the poetry collection. Crozier uses light in this poem to present the snake as a formidable creature who "can separate itself / from its shadow, move on ribbons of light" (ll. 1-2). Such a metaphorical way of depicting the sinuous movement of the snake as both beautiful and deserving admiration contrasts with the typical depictions of snakes as evil creatures in Western culture, as posited by the Bible, in which the Devil takes the form of a snake to tempt Eve into eating the apple, thus contradicting God's commands, and upon which women and snakes become enemies (Genesis 3:14-15). Crozier's persona admits that she too was afraid of snakes: "I remember / when my fear of snakes left for good" (ll. 4-5). Nevertheless, she was able to challenge the culturally-constructed dread of snakes because of the shared harassment that both she and the snake suffered:

> . . . In Swift Current
> the boys found a huge snake and chased me
> down the alleys, Larry Moen carrying it like a green torch,
> the others yelling, *Drop it down her back*, my terror
> of its sliding in the runnel of my spine (Larry,
> the one who touched the inside of my legs on the swing,
> an older boy we knew we shouldn't get close to
> with our little dresses, our soft skin), my brother
> saying Let her go, and I crouched behind the caraganas (ll. 6-14)

Crozier adds a layer of complexity to the poem by placing in brackets, which are usually used to add extra details, a piece of information that was actually crucial for the persona's childhood, namely the fact that she was molested. Furthermore, the same older boy that

molested her was the one that bullied both her and the snake, ultimately torturing the animal to death:

> watched Larry nail the snake to a telephone pole.
> It twisted on twin points of light, unable to crawl
> out of its pain, its mouth opening, the red
> tongue tasting its own terror, I loved it then,
> that snake. The boys standing there with their stupid hands
> dangling from their wrists, the beautiful green
> mouth opening, a terrible dark O
> no one could hear. (ll. 15-22)

The image of the nailed snake on a pole is reminiscent of the crucifixion of Jesus in the Bible and the open, silent mouth, of Jesus's loud cry before passing away. Such an analogy deconstructs Christian beliefs, as the snake becomes a victim of human fear just like God's son. Furthermore, neither of their deaths is in vain; Jesus dies to redeem humanity of their sins whereas the snake's death, in the impactful image of its mute cry, changes the speaker's view on snakes forever, and contributes to changing the readers' perspective on snakes, too. The speaker's empathy for the snake and their shared embodiment of trauma can also be understood through an ecofeminist lens; the boys symbolise patriarchy and the girl and the snake symbolise the oppression exercised on both women and the non-human world. Crozier's retelling of this experience, which actually happened to her, as she explains in her memoir *Small Beneath the Sky* (70-73), empowers both the woman and the snake by giving voice to those that have been victimised, and by the persona becoming an ally of the snake.

In close keeping with "Fear of Snakes," Crozier's only published villanelle to date, "Who Is She, Then?" (2002), depicts a woman's communion with non-human nature in

its interplay with the symbol of light. One of the few poems in Crozier's poetic work that has a specific form – except for the ghazal – and that is not written in free verse, this villanelle underscores in each of its five tercets and final quatrain the deep insight that an unidentified woman has about the non-human world. She is presented as a goddess of sorts, as Mother Nature, as she is all-knowing about the non-human world: "She knew each beast and all the secret names / of tree and star and every bird in flight" (ll. 1-2). Moreover, she is also a creator figure, given that she crafts all kinds of life via the manipulation of climatic elements: "She scrolled from alphabets of wind and rain / the wasps of winter and a blossom's blight" (ll. 4-5). In this sense, Crozier's poem is reminiscent of indigenous creation stories, as a creator figure, which in this case is Mother Earth herself, shapes the non-human world. As Mohawk researcher in rural planning Sheri Longboat explains, "[r]esponsibilities to take care of water for Mother Earth come from the authority of the Creator" (12). Longboat's statement, which would be equally valid to refer to all the natural elements that Mother Earth provides, demonstrates the ongoing importance for First Nations of customary law and traditional responsibilities towards the non-human world. The prevalence of such indigenous knowledge informs Crozier's poem, as it moves from the past simple to the present simple to refer to the creator woman in the penultimate stanza, the one that specifically contains the association between light and the non-human world: "Who is she then who knows each creature's pain / and how it makes an opening for the light? / All things to her are different and the same" (ll. 13-15). Such a change in verbal tense implies that this female creator is still living, that she is not merely a myth from the past. In addition, this line alludes to "Fear of Snakes," since the pain that the creator figure feels in "Who is She, Then?" is also the one the speaker in "Fear of Snakes" experiences. The "pain" that "makes an opening for the light" is also reminiscent of "Fear of Snakes;" the opening is that of the snake's mouth

and its mute cry of pain, and the light metaphorically refers to the change of perspective about the snake, namely from being scared of it to seeing it as a beautiful non-human animal. In other words, such light is understood as the "light of the [snake's] grace," to modify a statement in the prose poem "God of Cats" (2018), in which Crozier highlights the cat's qualities. In a more general sense, the pain that makes an opening for the light also refers to all those animals that are mistreated by human beings, whose suffering the poem both voices and criticises.

The interplay between light and the non-human world also puts forward a sense of awe of non-human animals as instances of close attention to and admiration of the non-human world. This is prominently the case of "Two Swans Float Past" (1995) and the ekphrastic poem "Change the World" (2019).[60] "Two Swans Float Past" is a loose ghazal, the seventeenth within the section "If I Call Stones Blue: Ghazal Variations for the Spring Equinox" in *Everything Arrives at the Light* (1995). This section is devoted to reflections triggered by the observation of a new landscape[61] for Crozier once she had moved to Vancouver Island from the prairies. The speaker in the poem sees "[t]wo swans float past" (l. 1) and states that this is the wrong time for these birds to be on that part of Canada: "You can set your clocks. / According to the book // they shouldn't be here" (ll. 3-5). Crozier thus portrays a criticism of climate change alongside a marvelling at these birds' embodiment of the light: "At dawn they carry all the light // in their white feathers" (ll. 6-7), which metaphorically stands for the fact that the swans' whiteness seems to absorb all the light. The poem ends with an image of awe of these birds, as when the persona observes them ". . . the breath / stops" (ll. 15-16). The indentation of the verb "stops,"

[60] Even though there is a section devoted to ekphrastic poems that depict the emplaced embodiment of light, namely section 5.2., the specific focus on the non-human world in this poem and in "Being Seen" and "What Does It Mean to Be Open" makes them more suitable for analysis under the current section.

[61] This new landscape is not only dominated by the sea but it is also inhabited by people, like First Nations people that Crozier met and made explicit mention of in ghazals number 9 and 11.

which is placed immediately under the space following the noun "breath," underscores the breath-taking sight of the swans.

Similarly, "Change the World" is about the admiration of a non-human animal, specifically a dragonfly, and its interaction with light. Moreover, the poem urges the reader both in the title of the poem and in the last stanza, to become a steward of the planet and its non-human inhabitants: "Even for a moment / before it flies away, / think of all the splendid things / this myriad of you can do" (ll. 25-28). These lines also speak of a reversal of the gaze, as mindsets can change if we think from the experience and gaze of the non-human animal and not only from our human viewpoint. The poem is printed next to a close-up photograph of a golden dragonfly sipping nectar from a white and pink flower. Crozier pays close attention to the body of the dragonfly, which she regards as "[a]n exquisite jewel / a goldsmith designed" (ll. 1-2) due to its beauty. The complex artwork of the dragonfly's body is the one that interacts with the light:

> . . . all that
> fretwork in the wings. There,
> the thinnest lenses,
> shattered, reassembled,
> fused together,
>
> now stop
> the light
> a nanosecond
> then let it
> through. (ll. 6-14)

The light shines through the dragonfly's wings, with the dragonfly embodying the light

for a minimal period of time. After an embodied human experience of the dragonfly, the persona realises that "it's too alive to be / a man-made thing, / too glis, glis, glistened and fierce" (ll. 19-21). Crozier's use of onomatopoeia in this line to imitate the sound that a dragonfly makes in flight is reminiscent of Ontario-born poet Don McKay's poetry (b.1942). Crozier's poem is thus in line with Travis V. Mason's claim that McKay "attempts to construct a community, if not an ecology, of listening that has potential to inflect the way readers hear and think about contemporary poetry interested in humans' relations to the non-human world" (78). Indeed, Crozier's close attention to the visual and aural features of the dragonfly encourage readers to take a small step towards changing the human attitudes towards the non-human world, as the title of the poem already suggests.

Nevertheless, awe or deep admiration of the non-human world is not only related to non-human animals in connection to the light trope in Crozier's work, but it is also related to non-human nature. Such is the case, for example, of "As the Line Moves. The Leap! Thrashing There" (2002). This poem is part of the section "The Book of Praise," which is devoted to different elements about life that Crozier is both fond of and grateful for, among which are poems in which different climatic elements and non-human animals gain saliency. This poem aligns with the former, given that light and snow are presented together as two elements that the speaker admires due to their splendour. The speaker wakes to a snowy and frozen landscape and is delighted when the sun shines on the frozen snow: "Night's flurry and fall. / . . . / At last! The sun glints / in every crystal" (ll. 1, 5-6). Nonetheless, the light is paradoxically personified as being violent: "light throwing punches // oracular and quick / from every corner. It bruises // the eye" (ll. 8-11). Such violence metaphorically stands for the high intensity of the light as reflected on the snow, which hurts the human sight. Nevertheless, the speaker goes on to reinforce the stunning

effect of the light on the snow by stating that "beauty [is] / too small a word for what's // so radiant and fast" (ll. 11-13). These lines suggest that signifiers in human language are often lacking in nuance as compared to the complex nuances of the non-human world, a philosophical discussion that dates back to Plato's *Cratylus* dialogue and that was more recently amply examined by philosopher and writer Fritz Mauthner and philosopher and linguist Ludwig Wittgenstein, respectively, in the first half of the twentieth century (Barroso 2-3). Human language may, thus, be insufficient to represent the non-human world, even if Crozier's poem – and poetry in general – does not falter in its attempt to do so. The poem ends by the speaker's assertion that "[t]he heart // can't hide in / such a light" (ll. 14-16). In this vein, Crozier's symbol of light is no longer associated with a particular landscape but becomes universal, as anywhere it snows, when light is reflected on it, this feeling of awe that leaves no one indifferent, as suggested by the latter quotation, can be experienced. In addition, these final lines also suggest that light becomes a vehicle into spiritual transcendence, given that the speaker's soul, as metaphorically conveyed by the word "heart," reveals its true nature when exposed to the light that is magnified by the snow.

The sense of awe of the non-human world in connection to light is not only expressed as admiration but also as a certain fear of wild animals, for instance in the ekphrastic poems "Being Seen" (2015) and "What Does It Mean to Be Open?" (2019). "Being Seen" is written in relation to a photograph of an enormous black bear that takes all the space in the photograph and that looks directly at the camera while chewing a plant. In the poem, the speaker realises that there is an animal hidden in the forest which has noted her human presence: "Whatever watches from the shadows / can smell you now" (ll. 5-6). This alarms the human speaker to the possible danger of being attacked, as she has previously seen half-eaten animal bodies on the ground: "On the forest trail, a rabbit's

/ chewed-off foot, a torn wing / slick with spit" (ll. 1-3). The speaker's dread, which becomes embodied, is explained via her interaction with light:

> . . . Startled
>
> from your body,
>
> what you are inside
>
> flinches in the naked light,
>
> not wanting to be looked at. (ll. 6-10)

The light is personified as "naked" because this is how the persona feels after being spotted by the wild animal, namely unprotected and at risk. Such a fear lingers in the persona's mind, as recalling the memory gives the speaker goose bumps: "Even now, you try to name / the prickly patch of flesh / on the back of your neck / under your hair" (ll. 11-14). The speaker's emplaced embodiment of fear in the Great Bear Rainforest remains embodied even when the speaker's emplacement changes: "Being seen / has a skin: the air glistens with it" (ll. 14-15). The persona imagines that the terror she feels becomes embodied and shimmers, thus the human becomes even more visible for the hidden wild animal that is stalking her, which renders her more vulnerable. Acknowledging human vulnerability in the non-human world is a sign of humility, as the speaker is aware that the trails she walks are not under human domain; that is, that humans may become the prey, as opposite to what is usually the case.

While "What Does it Mean to Be Open?" (2019) also features an awareness of being observed by wild animals, it is devoid of the utter dread that permeates "Being Seen." The poem is accompanied by a photograph of a patch of grassland bordered by a forest. There is a tree more or less at the centre of the picture and a beam of sunlight that illuminates it coming from the forest. The persona notices that non-human animals observe her both in her emplacement indoors and outdoors. While she is indoors she

observes that "[a] buck lowers his antlers / and looks through the screen / at the bed where you sleep" (ll. 1-3). However, the persona's awe of the non-human world is shown when she is emplaced outdoors and meets a fox: "A black fox steps into the clearing / where you sit on a rock, / book in hand. She stands / so still your heart stalls, too" (ll. 6-9). The speaker's embodiment is modified by the fox, as she is so awe-struck that she metaphorically claims that her heart almost stops beating. Crozier's use of the pronouns "he" to refer to the buck and "she" to refer to the fox contributes to a portrayal of these non-human animals as agentic beings. As the picture suggests, Crozier depicts the light coming from the trees. Although, as different from the photograph, in which no human being is depicted, it is the speaker who is illuminated rather than the tree: "Deep in the trees / a door swings on hinges – you thought / it was branches creaking in the wind – / and light strides toward you" (ll. 12-15). Crozier's depiction of what could be called a magical door in the forest is reminiscent of magical doors in fairy tales and novels. The fact that Crozier endows the light beam with such references to magic bespeaks Crozier's awe of light in the non-human world and explains the recurrence of this symbol in Crozier's work. Furthermore, the light that shines on the persona from the heart of the forest also suggests spiritual transcendence, in a similar vein to the poem "As the Line Moves." Crozier's hint at spiritual transcendence in the forest is evocative of the poetry of American transcendentalist writers, such as Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau, and their poetic translations of their personal unravelling of the connection of man with non-human nature while living in isolation in the woods. In this light, Crozier concludes the poem by restating the fact that humans are only a small part of the ecosystem: "Everywhere in this place / you've come to be alone, / something sees you" (ll. 16-18). Therefore, the poem invites a wider awareness of the non-human world that surrounds us.

Light is also personified in Crozier's poetry and is symbolically associated with grief for a pet's death in "Late Afternoon" (1996). While this poem is emplaced on the prairies as all the poems in the collection *A Saving Grace*, the embodiment of light is related to the persona's late dog. Therefore, this light does not necessarily define prairie light, but light related to grief, which happens to be emplaced on the prairies. The poem expands on Mrs Bentley's mourning for the death of her dog, which she and her husband had named El Greco. Mrs Bentley, the speaker, goes for a walk and all the climatic elements remind her of El Greco. As such, she provides an analogy between light and a dog: "Crossing the open, light moves / low to the ground / like a hound on a rabbit trail" (ll. 12-14). She also believes that the wind is her late dog, "tug[ging] [her] around the bend / where something waits, / something shimmers" (ll. 21-23). Mrs Bentley further imagines what she might come across, which is related somehow to her late dog and her mourning of him:

> It could be coyote,
>
> it could be the light's
>
> tawny muscles that heave
>
> into the sky
>
> what I won't let go. (ll. 24-28)

On the one hand, meeting coyote refers back to the beginning of the poem, in which the speaker explains that the coyotes were responsible for his death, as they "called [the wildness] out of him / before they dragged him down" (ll. 4-5). On the other hand, the light is embodied by being described as having "muscles" and as metaphorically lifting to heaven the dog's spirit, which she is not ready to "let go." In turn, the last line in the poem, "what I won't let go," becomes part of the title for Crozier's subsequent poetry collection, entitled *What the Living Won't Let Go*, which was published three years later.

This is different from most of the other poetry collections by Crozier, in which the title of the collection is usually named after the title of a poem in such a collection.

In a nutshell, Crozier's poems depict the emplaced embodiment of light in the non-human world in every decade of her career, except for her first two poetry collections, which were published in the mid- and late-1970s. This, together with the fact that two poems on the topic are present in Crozier's latest poetry collection to date, namely *The House the Spirit Builds* (2019), evidences the ongoing importance of the light trope in connection to non-human nature in Crozier's late style. Furthermore, the light trope is not attached to particular locations. That is to say that while emplacement is relevant in all the poems, the specific place is not given saliency; the poems ultimately underscore the fact of being present in non-human nature and its interrelated, embodied interplay with light.

5.6. Chapter Conclusions

Chapter 5 has traced the evolution of the symbol of light throughout Crozier's oeuvre. The analysis has revealed that the Canadian prairies, where Crozier is originally from, are presented in Crozier's work as the primary source of inspiration for her elaboration of the light trope. That is to say that the micro- and meso- levels of the home and prairie environments have had a major influence on the connotations associated with the symbol of light. This notwithstanding, light in Crozier's poetry is not limited to the influence of micro- and meso-levels, but it also embraces the effects that light has in painting and photography at macro-levels. In other words, Crozier's symbol of light in her ekphrastic poems depicts light as a universal phenomenon. This is also the case of the poems in which Crozier both deconstructs and rewrites the meanings of light and darkness, those in which Crozier endows light with the ability to transform unwelcoming and traumatic situations into manageable ones, and those poems in which the personae interact with the

emplaced embodiment of light in the non-human world.

More specifically, Crozier's speakers show an emplaced embodiment of light, especially on those poems that are emplaced on the Canadian prairies, whereas in other poems their emplaced embodiment is not necessarily of light per se, but it is related to the meanings associated with the light trope. Light is regarded as such a powerful element that, on some occasions, light becomes both embodied and deified, thus contradicting Biblical accounts. When light is embodied by both plants and animals, Crozier's light trope puts forward a social critique against the ill-treatment of the non-human world. In turn, when humans embody light, Crozier both deconstructs prejudices against fat and older women and empowers them. On all occasions, light is admired in Crozier's work as a precious element in both everyday life and art that provides a sense of home, of love, well-being and emotional stability, and that encourages meaningful human interactions with the non-human world.

In what concerns the evolution of Crozier's poetry in her late style, the examination of the light trope and its emplaced embodiment has contributed to illustrate how Crozier's poetry can be classified within Wyatt-Brown's first model for late-style creativity. That is to say that light remains a relevant symbol in Crozier's latest poetry, especially through her continuous use of ekphrastic poems, the connection between light and the late mother figure, and the emplaced embodiment of light in the non-human world. Nevertheless, some other connotations associated with light do not find a continuation to date into Crozier's late style, namely the explicit connection between light and the prairie experience, and the dismantling and re-inscription of the symbols of light and darkness. It has been argued that a possible reason to explain this change is Crozier's move from the prairies to the diametrically opposed landscape and weather of Vancouver Island. Significantly, Crozier's use of ekphrasis as related to photographs printed on the

page next to her poems, rather than mental images of paintings, in her 2015 and 2019 poetry and photography collections becomes a new source of creativity in old age. Collaboration with photographers Ian McAllister, Peter Coffman and Diane Laundy, in their shared love of the non-human world and close attention to detail, offers Crozier renewed perspectives in the dialogues that are established between the photographs and the poems. Therefore, such synergies established between photographic art and poetry are a new aspect of Crozier's late style, in which Crozier's poetic images are inspired both by direct contact with non-human nature and by photographic representations of such nature. In this sense, the poems both in *The Wild in You* and *The House the Spirit Builds* ultimately convey both Crozier's poetic stance and the photographer's perspective on non-human nature.

CONCLUSIONS

This dissertation brings notions of ageing studies together with notions of ecocriticism through the proposed concept of emplaced embodiment, in order to elucidate the formation process of Lorna Crozier's late style. The term emplaced embodiment is defined in this dissertation as the experiences lived through human bodies and these bodies' interconnections with the spaces and places in which such experiences occur. More specifically, the notion of emplaced embodiment is based on new materialism, particularly on the importance that materiality has for embodiment theories both in ageing studies and material ecocriticism, a sub-field of ecocriticism. In turn, conceptualisations of time and place that are crucial to ageing studies and ecocriticism, respectively, are interwoven via the relevance that sense of place has for a (senior) person's identity, as examined in the sub-field of environmental gerontology. The emotional attachment to place that the concept of sense of place encapsulates is understood as being deeply influenced by the human, embodied interaction with the non-human world. Such an understanding of sense of place is based on Diego Sánchez-González and Vicente Rodríguez-Rodríguez's reconceptualization of the three levels of environmental analysis in environmental gerontology (i.e. the micro-, meso-, and macro-levels), which incorporates the role that the natural environment plays in the lived experiences of older persons.

Such joint considerations of embodiment and emplacement, and especially the suggested concept of emplaced embodiment, contribute to aligning approaches from ecocriticism and ageing studies, which had not gained saliency in the literature until recently. Together with the present dissertation, the upcoming volume of research articles entitled *Aging Studies and Ecocriticism: Interdisciplinary Encounters*, edited by Nassim W. Balestrini, Julia Hoydis, Anna-Christina Kainradl, and Ulla Kriebernegg, which also

features an article by the author of this dissertation, brings to the fore debates about the shared alienation of the aged and the non-human natural world in Western societies, as well as the effects that climate change has on ageing populations. Such emerging work inspired by the synergetic interrelationship between ageing studies and ecocriticism contributes to the exploration of the necessary interdisciplinary nature of both fields of study (Gullette, "Aged" 22; Gifford 23).

In this dissertation, the term emplaced embodiment has proven useful to examine the interplay between the ageing human speakers and the non-human world in Crozier's poetry, while the three levels of environmental analysis have served the purpose of structuring the analytical chapters. These chapters examine the continuities, discontinuities, and modifications in three major symbols and one of the most prominent themes in Crozier's work. Specifically, the garden trope and the theme of sexuality and intimacy, in the specific context of the home, are interrogated from a micro-level of environmental analysis; the prairie trope is examined from a meso-level of environmental analysis; and the light trope, mainly from a macro-level of environmental analysis, even though the three levels of environmental analysis converge in this symbol. The examination of these salient symbols and theme throughout Crozier's oeuvre has been essential to unravel the formation process of Crozier's late style, given both their prominence and recurrence in Crozier's poetry.

The analytical chapters reveal that Crozier's late style, the beginning of which can be traced back to Crozier's 2011 poetry collection *Small Mechanics* (Mina-Riera "Beginning"), is in line with Wyatt-Brown's first model for late style creativity. This implies that thematic continuities can be observed in all the examined major tropes and salient theme in Crozier's work, while discontinuities and new approaches suggest a creative impetus for Crozier's writing in old age. Crozier's thematic continuities include

death in connection to the garden, the interaction between humans and the non-human world in the context of the garden, depictions of sexuality at home, including masturbation, lust and infidelity, which can be observed from the 1992 to the 2018 poetry collections, and the sustained relevance of the prairie and light tropes. On the other hand, the main thematic discontinuities encompass the speaker's lack of trust in her lover, which is only present in Crozier's early collections; the drought trope, which was last present in Crozier's 2015 collection *The Wrong Cat*; the association of light with the prairies, and the deconstruction of the Biblical and patriarchal implications in the symbols of light and darkness, and their re-writing from a female perspective.

Such thematic discontinuities are partly explained through Crozier's move from the prairies to Vancouver Island. The land where she grew up, namely the small town of Swift Current, Saskatchewan, and the rural prairie landscape of her grandparent's farm, as well as the house she moved into on the prairies when she married her first husband, have remained an inspirational trigger throughout her career; that is, the prairie landscape has become embedded in her identity, in line with Susan Clayton's term "environmental identity." Clayton defines the concept of environmental identity as "the extent to which the natural environment plays an important part in a person's self-definition" (52). In spite of Crozier's prairie-based environmental identity, the move to North Saanich, a rural area north of Victoria, BC, has implied a certain distancing from the everyday realities of prairie life. This has resulted in an increasingly diminished interest in some of the thematic associations related to the prairie trope. Yet, it has not engendered any significant incorporation of themes as informed by the new landscape on the West Coast, with evergreen forests, abundant rain, the sea, little snow, and mild temperatures. This finds an explanation in Crozier's confession to the author of this dissertation that "[w]hen [she's] writing and imagining a landscape for the setting of [her] poems, more often than not it

will be the prairies" (Mina-Riera, "Writing" 221).

Although Crozier no longer actively engages in her poetry with the symbol of drought since 2015, the association of light to the prairies since 2009, and the re-visitation of patriarchal prairie constructs from a female perspective since 1996, these three interrelated concerns find a continuation in a theatrical play she has collaborated in. Hence, Crozier has not fully discarded either the drought trope or the need to redefine prairie ontologies in her work. The play is entitled *A Saving Grace,* and its main author is poet, playwright and actor Tina Biello, who has also received the writing support of drama professor at the University of Alberta and dramaturge Jan Selman. Biello's *A Saving Grace*[62] features poems from Crozier's poetry collection of the same title. The play is a contemporary theatrical adaptation of Sinclair Ross's *As for Me and My House* and is thus about the analogy between the harshness and dryness of the prairies and that between a couple whose relationship is failing. In this sense, Biello's play contains the same themes as Crozier's *A Saving Grace.* The main implications of Crozier's collaboration in this play are a regained visibility of Crozier's *A Saving Grace* and the themes it explores, as well as the implicit currency for contemporary Canadian, and especially prairie, audiences of topics that were first present in Ross's novel about the 1930s and Crozier's 1996 poetic rendering.

In terms of style, a change in Crozier's tone from a more aggressive one in her earlier collections to one that introduces humour as criticism was already observed at the beginning of her career by other scholars (MacDonald; Boyd). Indeed, Crozier was already listed in 2002 as one of the major Canadian writers who have "produced works of humour and satire" alongside authors like Margaret Atwood and Alice Munro (Andrews 514). Even though Jennifer Andrews does not mention any specific books by

[62] Biello's play remains unpublished to date and is awaiting theatrical production. Nevertheless, Biello graciously sent me a copy of the latest version of the play, namely that of 28 October 2021.

these writers, in Crozier's case, the poetry collection *The Garden Going on without Us* immediately comes to mind because of the erotic sequence "The Sex Lives of Vegetables." This dissertation's contribution to the description of Crozier's use of humour has been the examination of Crozier's deconstruction via irony of social stereotypes regarding the emplaced embodiment of sexuality in old age. Another modification in terms of style is the move from using the first-person pronoun in lower case at the beginning of Crozier's career (1976-1980), which was part of a literary trend to break with traditional understandings of prairie life by means of literature, to employing the regular, normative upper-case "I" in Crozier's subsequent poetry (1981-to the present date). At the crossroads of style and the different meanings associated with theme, especially as regards sexuality and couple's relationships, Crozier's 1985 and 1988 collections have been interpreted as transition works towards her mature poetry, which purportedly starts with her 1992 collection *Inventing the Hawk*. The fact that Crozier was awarded the Governor General's Award for English-language poetry for this collection reinforces this claim.

Crozier has also incorporated new thematic and genre-related emphases along her career. Analogously to Crozier's own ageing into old age, Crozier has introduced the effects of ageing on a couple's sexuality, and an emphasis on older women's desire. Both sub-themes offer a continuation with Crozier's career-long criticism of ageism and the positive stance from which she describes the ageing process as favoured by the healing properties of gardens. Crozier's ongoing depictions of sexuality in her late poetry can be explained to some extent through her belonging to the Baby Boomer generation, whose members experienced the sexual revolution of the 1960s and many of whom continue to engage in sexuality in old age (Wada et al. 43, 45). Indeed, Crozier's continued engagement with the theme of sexuality, and especially old-age sexuality, in her late

poetry contributes to countering social stereotypes of older people as asexual (Berdychevsky and Nimrod 225).

Crozier has also published two short stories about sexuality in young-old age and old age, respectively, namely “The Door,” published in 2017 and “Rebooting Eden,” published in 2019. While the analysis of these two works falls outside the scope of the present dissertation, which focuses on Crozier’s poetic oeuvre, Crozier’s venturing into a new genre in her old age – specifically, in her late sixties and early seventies, respectively – suggests a rekindling of her creativity in her late style. Furthermore, these erotic short stories underscore Crozier’s non-ageist portrayals of sexuality throughout the life-course, which contribute to normalizing the continued interest in sexuality for many in old age (Srinivasan et al. n.p.). Future studies may compare at length the portrayals of late-life sexuality in Crozier’s two erotic short stories with those in her poems.

Moreover, new approaches to the prairie trope have been identified, as regards both genre and theme. As far as genre is concerned, Crozier developed the prairie trope further with the publication of her memoir *Small Beneath the Sky: A Prairie Memoir* (2009), a book of prose interspersed with poems in which Crozier traces her relationship with her prairie hometown and her family. In what regards theme, the prairie trope has gained a more complex portrayal, in Crozier’s balancing of associated themes of hardship with emotionally-sustaining ones in her later poetry. Furthermore, the use of ekphrasis in Crozier’s poetry and her collaboration with professional photographers has resulted in a new source of creativity in old age.

Concerning form and poetic genre, Crozier has mostly used free verse throughout her poetry. However, the influence of both the Japanese haiku and the Persian ghazal are notable. The haiku as an inspirational source is especially salient in Crozier’s ekphrastic poems. On the other hand, Crozier has used a contemporary adaptation of the ghazal in

the section "If I Call Stones Blue: Ghazals" in the poetry collection *Everything Arrives at the Light* (1995), and in the poetry collection *Bones in Their Wings: Ghazals* (2003), in which all the poems are ghazals. In the latter collection, Crozier provides an afterword in which she explains that the ghazal form was introduced into Canadian literature by the posthumous publication of John Thompson's collection of ghazals *Stilt Jack* in 1978, and the profound impact that reading such a book of poems had in her (53) and other fellow Canadian writers like Phyllis Webb and Patrick Lane (57). Crozier's section-long and later book-long venture into this form once she was a well-established writer indicates her confidence in her craft, a mature voice at middle-age that dares to experiment with different forms and genres. Similarly, Crozier published her first collection of prose poetry, *The Book of Marvels* (2013) at age sixty-five, and her second one, *God of Shadows* (2018), at age seventy. Therefore, Crozier's late style is defined by a life-long willingness to reinvent herself as a writer, and keep a fresh, self-renewing perspective on both symbol and theme.

The definition of Crozier's late style is not definitive though, given that Crozier continues to actively engage in writing projects in her old age, as she stated in an interview with the author of this dissertation: "I don't know how I'd survive without my writing, without being a writer, without getting up with a writing project in mind. A tonic for me, an elixir, is thinking, 'Maybe I'll write a poem today.' That's so exciting to me" (Mina-Riera, "Writing" 221). Crozier's ongoing creativity in old age as well as her experimentation with literary genres different from poetry and the memoir contribute towards "deconstructing pervading stereotypes of decline and loss of creativity in later years" (Casado-Gual et al. 18). In fact, Crozier's forthcoming collection of poems, which is entitled *After That* and is going to be published in the autumn of 2023, was written by Crozier after the passing away of her beloved husband, the late writer Patrick Lane, in

2019, as a way to articulate her grief for this loss. Therefore, creativity becomes a source of hope for both Crozier, in old age, and for her readers. In this sense, Crozier's poetic engagement with bereavement allows for catharsis in widows and widowers who are undergoing similar mourning processes, as they may empathise with the themes in the poems and, as a result, feel less alone.

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[63] Uher was Crozier's married surname, which she used while she was married to her first husband. Crozier reclaimed her maiden surname when she divorced her first husband and did not change it when she married her second husband, fellow writer Patrick Lane.

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