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ICCS Research Report

Project idea

My PhD dissertation, which is preliminarily entitled *A Poet's Seasons: A Gerontological-Ecocritical Approach to Lorna Crozier's Poetry*, examines both the thematic and stylistic evolution of Crozier's poetic oeuvre in order to observe the formation process of her late style. More specifically, my thesis analyses the changes in a number of recurrent thematic concerns in Crozier's work in their relationship to sense of place throughout her oeuvre, with a special emphasis on Crozier's depictions of the relationship between humans and nature alongside the ageing process. The diachronic analysis of Crozier's poetic oeuvre to date, which has not been studied in full despite both the national and international recognition that her work has garnered, constitutes one of the original contributions of my PhD dissertation. The other original contribution of my thesis is the theoretical basis that I establish for my analysis, as developed in the Theory Chapter of my dissertation, in which I interweave theories of embodiment and emplacement from the research fields of ageing studies and ecocriticism. Indeed, the interests that ageing studies and ecocriticism share are currently gaining academic attention, as evidenced by the preliminary title of the forthcoming edited collection of essays *Ageing Studies and Ecocriticism: Growing Old amid Climate Change* (2023), edited by Drs. Nassim W. Balestrini, Julia Hoydis, Anna-Christina Kainradl, and Ulla Kriebeneegg, for which my academic article entitled "Embodying Age(ing) in the non-Human World in Lorna Crozier's Poetry" has been accepted for publication.

Research hypotheses

Nature, or the non-human world, as it is referred to in ecocriticism, figures prominently in Crozier's poetry, which often underscores the interactions between the human and the non-human world in specific locations. This is particularly the case of the landscape and wildlife on the Canadian prairies and the Pacific coast, as places which Crozier has inhabited, and the man-planted nature and both domestic and wild animals in her garden. Therefore, the research hypothesis of my research stay at the University of Victoria was that by sharing time with Crozier in the places that are important to her, observing the non-human world that she cherishes and that figures prominently in her poetry, and

discussing both Crozier's own ageing process and the role of place in her work, I would gain a deeper insight into Crozier's poetry. Concurrently, discussing Crozier's work with professors of Canadian literature from both the University of Victoria and other Canadian universities – namely, participants in the ALECC conference in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, in which I presented a paper on Crozier's poetry entitled "The Non-Human World as Teacher in Crozier's Poetry" (June 16, 2022) – would enable me to better understand Crozier's position as a poet within contemporary Canadian literature.

Method

My interaction with Crozier entailed both field work and in-depth both informal discussions and formal interviews on Canadian literature, in general, and her work, in particular. Field work consisted of my observation and experience of the natural environment that permeates Crozier's poetry, which took place on an almost daily basis, except for the week in which I travelled to Saskatoon to present a paper at the ALECC conference, where I could briefly familiarize myself with the prairie environment, which was Crozier's main place-based source of inspiration in her early to mid-career. The time in nature together with Crozier was divided among time spent in Crozier's garden, walks in Coles Bay Park, and two weekend excursions, one to Nanoose Bay and another one to Salt Spring Island. Commuting between Victoria and North Saanich, where Crozier lives, on the rural roads that cross forest land, fields and Tsartlip reserve, also offered a relevant insight into the place that inspires Crozier's poetry. In all instances, Crozier showed me the local and planted flora, and the local fauna, describing the names of autochthonous species and their characteristics, and telling me about her past encounters with such plants and animals in different landscapes. This often led to informal discussions about the role of such flora and fauna in both Crozier's poetry and Canadian literature in general. In what concerns formal interviews with Crozier, I led two of them, one at the beginning of my stay and one at the end of it. The first interview was about Crozier's origins as a poet and the influence of the Moose Jaw Movement, where Crozier flourished as a poet; and the second interview was about the present, and more specifically about creativity and ageing as an older woman writer in relation to both her edition of her late husband Patrick Lane's posthumous collection of poems, *The Quiet in Me* (2022), and Crozier's forthcoming poetry collection, *After That* (2023).

As regards my interactions with professors at the University of Victoria, I held both informal conversations at the beginning of my stay and formal interviews towards

the end of it. Informal conversations about Canadian literature, Crozier's poetry and Crozier's legacy as a former professor of creative writing were held with professors Kevin Kerr, chair of the Writing Department; Dr. Iain Higgins, professor in the English Department and editor of the literary magazine *The Malahat Review*; Dr. James Dopp, professor of contemporary poetry in English; and Dr. Nicholas Bradley, ecocritic and professor of Canadian poetry in English. Subsequent formal interviews about Crozier's role in Canadian poetry were conducted face-to-face with Dr. Dopp and Dr. Bradley, as the main lecturers in the field. The questions to the interview were also sent by email to two professors in the Writing Department who were not in the faculty during my research stay, namely poets Tim Lilburn and Shane Book, and are awaiting response. Additionally, Crozier introduced me to writer and seasonal professor Susan Olding, who also provided a written response to my questions.

During my visit to Saskatoon for the ALECC conference, I also held informal discussions of Crozier's work with some of the professors of Canadian literature that attended the conference, and subsequently sent them the questions for the formal interview by email. I received the responses of Dr. Matthew Zantingh (Briercrest College) and Dr. Tanis MacDonald (Wilfried Laurier University), who published an article on Crozier's erotic poems that I cite in my dissertation, and am awaiting response from poet and professor Nancy Holmes (University of British Columbia).

Finally, concerning attendance and participation in literary events, I participated in the book presentation of Patrick Lane's posthumous poetry collection, held at the bookstore Russell's Books in Victoria on June 3, 2022, by opening the event with a reading of some of Crozier's poems that I had translated into Catalan and that are published in the following chapbook Mina-Riera, Núria. *Lorna Crozier*. Edited by Julián Acebrón-Ruiz and Amat Baró. Edicions i Publicacions de la Universitat de Lleida, vol. 63, 2019. In addition, I attended the presentation of The Planet Earth Poetry Poets Caravan, a documentary available at <http://planetearthpoetry.com/poetscaravan>, at Russell's Books on June 10, 2022, in which the poets from the area of Victoria that appeared in the documentary read some of their poems. Moreover, I also attended "Word Splash" a poetry reading and musical event by First Nations' and Métis' artists from Saskatchewan, and a Poetry Trail Walk, with readings from their own poetry by poets Tanis MacDonald, Lisa Bird-Wilson, Ariel Gordon, and Rhona McAdam, during my stay in Saskatoon, as events organized concurrently and within the ALECC conference programme, respectively. Unfortunately, the poetry workshop that I was to hold together

with Dr. Dopp and Crozier at the University of Victoria could not be organized in the end due to a lack of students in June, as it is the summer season.

Findings

Firstly, field work with Crozier allowed me to note Crozier's genuine care for non-human nature. This was made evident by the many hours Crozier spent both gardening and enjoying her garden, and our frequent walks in the forest. In both instances, Crozier paid close attention to the natural environment and showed great knowledge about both animal species and plant varieties, as is reflected in her poems.

Secondly, my interviews with Crozier provided an insight into both her origins as a poet in the Canadian prairie context of Saskatchewan, and her present writing as a consolidated older writer for whom daily life is an ongoing source of creativity. In addition, informal discussions with Crozier also painted a more nuanced picture of contemporary Canadian literature.

Thirdly, the informal discussions and interviews with both literature and creative writing professors from both the University of Victoria and other universities in Canada emphasised the long-reaching influence of Crozier's mentorship to many contemporary writers in Canada, both through her creative writing classes at the University of Victoria and her private workshops.

Fourthly, the literary events that I attended and participated in introduced me to the burgeoning community of poets in Victoria. On the other hand, the readings by First Nations and Métis writers enriched my knowledge of Canada as a post-colonial country.

Finally, future actions will entail the inclusion of the acquired nuance of Crozier's relationship with the non-human world and of the Canadian literary context into my PhD dissertation, as well as the submission for publication of the interview with Crozier about her present work to an academic journal.