Regarding the Male Body: Lorna Crozier's Specular Erotics

By

Tanis MacDonald

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A Thesis/Practicum submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of The University of Manitoba in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree

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Abstract

This paper will examine female specularity and the male body in Lorna Crozier's "Penis Poems," a suite of poems from her 1988 collection, Angels of Flesh, Angels of Silence. Her eroticization and de-mystification of the male body challenges cultural limitations placed upon women's appreciation of the male body. Crozier searches for new ways to write and think about pleasure while acknowledging the apparent contradiction of heterosexual feminism. She reconfigures the so-called male "desiring gaze," and writes the male body as both object of desire and locus of vulnerability. Crozier insists that the male body can bear the burden of the gaze, and further, that the female gaze opens up the cultural definition of the male body, and encourages erotic mutuality.

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Introduction: A Woman's Bawdy Appreciation

> . . . as feminist women of my generation have grown into maturity, [. . .] many of us are finding that it necessary to assert that it is possible to hate sexism and love individual men. Along with poems of rage, sadness and sometimes, redemption, there must be room in our literature for a woman's bawdy appreciation of the male.
>
> Lorna Crozier, "A Secret Indulgence"

> Until recently, [. . .] so much was unknown and unwritten about the lives of heterosexual women like myself that I used to feel I was secretly living out a condition of deviance.
>
> Susan Swan, "Desire and the Mythology of Femininity"

Lorna Crozier, born in 1948 in Swift Current, Saskatchewan, published her first book of poetry, Inside Is the Sky, in 1975. She has subsequently authored 11 books of poetry, most recently What The Living Won't Let Go in 1999. Her collection, Inventing the Hawk, won the Governor-General's Award for poetry in 1993.

As a Canadian poet, Crozier embraces a number of traditions and contradictions. She is a "prairie poet" who resists the limitations of that regional label; she is also a working-class feminist who has been criticized and praised for her ecstatic poems about the male body. Crozier's lyric poetry is greatly admired in critical circles, but her sexual poetics have been simultaneously applauded and problematised, though supporters such as critic Stephen Morrisey have suggested that "Crozier's chosen role in poetry" is "to

discuss sexuality in an open and humourous way" (85).

This thesis will concern itself with Crozier's "Penis Poems," a suite of twelve poems that takes a prolonged look at the penis, published in Crozier's 1988 collection, Angels of Flesh, Angels of Silence. In the "Penis Poems", which either address or intimately describe the penis, Crozier constructs her speaker as "a woman who likes her pleasure" and who explicitly articulates her erotic rationale. She inquires into the definition of masculinity in order to articulate how the female eye may engage the material male body in poetry. To engage the male body with the female eye is to seek out a radical viewing position, and to declare the "normative" female viewing position to be limited. Susan Bordo, among other feminist critics, suggests that the male genitalia have been "culturally cloaked" against female study (267). But although such "cultural cloaking" supports the notion that all scopic images are mediated by language and ideology, it is equally true that a viewing position is never entirely under the control of the ruling ideology. Crozier deliberately engages psychoanalytical theories of penis envy and castration anxiety in order to question the limitations that such theories have placed on the production of modern images of masculinity.

Perhaps because of the new ways of looking that they propose, the "Penis Poems" have garnered much casual praise and condemnation, but comparatively little close critical attention. The "Penis Poems" have become an almost unmentionable phallus in the body of the text, and in Crozier's larger body of work. Mary di Michele notes in her

1989 Books in Canada review of Angels of Flesh, Angels of Silence that the poems will "make a lot of male readers squirm or laugh. The more men laugh, the better this world will be" (32). But Deborah Bowen claims that Crozier's "ubiquitous interest in dismembered body parts (hands, feet, penises) is seldom able to carry more than a witty consciousness of its own surreal incongruities" (44). E.F. Shields complains that "the Penis Poems [. . .] lack the charm and imagination of Crozier's earlier "Sex Lives of Vegetables" and that "more passion, more emotional depth and intensity would be welcome" (183). These critics choose to read the "Penis Poems" as a poetic dare, a feminist peepshow.

The project of the "Penis Poems" is certainly not to charm, nor to depict the male body exclusively as "dis-membered" (surely Bowen was punning?). Crozier is very much concerned with the body's "surreal incongruities", particularly those that dominate ideas of normative heterosexuality, including the vulnerable penis as a symbol of mystic power. In her attempt to separate the body from myth, Crozier offers a look at the penis as an ordinary mystery of the corporeal human male. To respond to the penis solely with "passion" and "intensity" can only perpetuate the phallic myth of transcendency. The radical nature of Crozier's language and viewing position is emphasized by Nathalie Cook's comment in her review of Angels of Flesh, Angels of Silence:

> [The "Penis Poems"] shock us, not because they are explicit (they are that), but because we must realize that we are used to such direct language only when we speak about the female body. (Cook 39)

Crozier's "direct language" about the male body certainly has shocked any number of readers, male and female. In her 1990 essay "Speaking the Flesh," Crozier interprets the uproar that accompanied the publication and public performance of the "Penis Poems":

> I think that many of the negative responses to women's writing about sexuality [. . .] can be attributed to the shock of the new [. . .] to the startling, often upsetting exposure of hitherto unmentioned secrets of women's lives, sexual and otherwise. ("Speaking" 92)

In order to explore the impact of Crozier's "upsetting exposure" of men's bodies and women's desire, Chapter One will situate Crozier's work in an emerging tradition of Canadian women writing the male body, and establish a historical context for the development of Canadian feminist poetics.

Chapter Two will introduce the use of gaze theory as developed by feminist film and visual art criticism, and examine the theory's movement into poetic text. This chapter will examine how gaze theory enables us to explicate viewing positions as they appear in poetry, particularly Crozier's viewing positions from which she acknowledges and criticizes phallocentric structures of masculinity. Crozier satirizes phallocentricity without symbolically "castrating" the penis, and appropriates the desiring "male" gaze to appraise and ultimately accept the male body as neither master nor monster, but as a site of heterosexual erotic mutuality. I will discuss the ways in which Crozier's poems open

up Laura Mulvey's theory of scopophilia, and introduce the possibility of male pleasure in being the object of the gaze.

In Chapter Three, I will elaborate on the ways in which Crozier uses the "Penis Poems" to explore new viewing perspectives on the male body, and to situate the male body as a site of erotic mutuality in a heterosexual relationship. Close readings of the "Penis Poems" will be explicated by drawing upon Kaja Silverman's distinction between Lacan's gaze and look, and Jane Gallop's view of Lacan's separation of the penis and the phallus. I will examine Crozier's use of both a "governing gaze" to demystify the penis and an "accepting look" to eroticize the penis. A concluding chapter will discuss the ways in which Crozier's shift between the gaze and the accepting look presages fluctuations of violence and eroticism that signify the lived contradiction of heterosexual women's lives.

The taboo on regarding (and speaking of) the male body limits the expression of female desire. With the emergence of visual artists such as Robert Mapplethorpe and poets like Thom Gunn and Paul Monette, recent explorations of homo-erotic expression have challenged the always-masterful, never-vulnerable image of the male body, but cultural images of heterosexual male beauty are generally constructed to appear "untouchable" [1]. The erotically situated male, when produced by men for women's eyes, has traditionally been cold and macho, or heated and brutal, but rarely relaxed, vulnerable or open. (A notable exception can be found in the "Harlequin" romance novel, in which the macho hero becomes yielding at the heroine's touch. This trope

performs double duty as the reason for the style's popularity, and for its status as "non-literary" writing.) In his article "Masculinity as Spectacle", Steve Neale points out that any highly visible, erotically situated male body in Hollywood classic movies has been persistently feminized or homoeroticized, while more traditional "masculine" bodies remain cloaked, their "erotic elements... repressed and disavowed" (15). Disavowal of the male body as an erotic object limits the possibilities of heterosexual pleasure, especially when the male body is consistently displayed as "powerful and omnipotent to an extraordinary degree" (5). This refusal to make explicit an available heterosexual male eroticism represents the apex (or the nadir) of the equation of male vulnerability with castration. In striving for transcendence, the image only achieves distance; the male body becomes effectively "hidden" by a carefully calibrated set of viewing conditions. These hiding strategies seek to protect the male body from comparison with other bodies, as well as preserve that body from any intimations of homosexuality, which has traditionally been coded as specular and "feminized". But the protective strategy of "hiding" the male body begins to become a liability to the humanity of that body. Margaret Atwood has written that "[w]hat men are most afraid of is not lions, not snakes, not the dark, not women. Not any more. What men are most afraid of is the body of another man" (Goldstein 3).

Crozier's attention to the male body could be read as a feminist peepshow, were it not for the relationship she builds with the specular male body. The praise that she showers upon the body ("lithe and rare", "subliminal / and most persuasive", "the boy /

we couldn't say no to") indicates something added to lust, the love for a body that resists pure objectification. Jane Gallop discusses the body's ability to assert sexual subjectivity:

> [T]he criticism which interests me [. . .] is concerned with something we might call the erotics of engagement, a sexuality that is not in the object, however deeply hidden, but in the encounter. (Gallop 1988:138)

Like Gallop, Crozier develops her "erotics of engagement" to depend more upon encounter than object, but she refuses to gloss the male body as immaterial or transcendent. Her lyric aesthetic is anti-romantic; she challenges the courtly structures of wooing that stop men and women from renegotiating heterosexual relationships. Crozier works to reclaim the forbidden female look: to shine the light of her direct gaze on the penis and examine the Great Transcendence with an almost scientific curiosity. Her cry is less "The Emperor has no clothes!" than "The Emperor has a body!".

It should surprise no careful reader that as women write the male body, they change the terms under which female desire, and subsequently the female body, may be written. For a heterosexual female poet to write her male lover's body is to begin to write female desire, which remains, at the core, a profoundly feminist project. But such a project remains fraught with the difficulties inherent in the representation of a male body by a female artist who does not filter her gaze through a masculine aesthetic, as Sarah Kent explains:

> When a woman artist exhibits a male nude, she completely disrupts [. . .] traditional [artist-model] interactions. She will seem to be flaunting her immorality, while inviting the viewer to join in her intimacy with the model -- in our culture, an obscene idea. (Kent 60)

Crozier's project, while textual, appeals so directly to the eye and relies so profoundly on an imagined act of looking that analogies to scopic theory are unavoidable. By situating herself in the traditionally male viewing position and openly considering male sexuality, Crozier seems to invite judgement of her own sexual mores. In light of these cultural pressures that Kent suggests, Crozier performs a complex balancing act in the "Penis Poems," a carefully calibrated performance which examines the dynamics of personal and sexual power within an intimate relationship, as well as suggesting both a viewing and a reading position which demands "ecstatic attention" (Levertov 97).

Chapter Two will explore the application and transfer of gaze theory to works of literature, and to poetry in particular. Crozier's "Penis Poems" are relentlessly scopic, and her use of the "extreme close-up" in several of the "Penis Poems" makes gaze theory a compelling theoretical fit. In fact, Crozier presents her intimate look like a series of posed photographs. She focuses on the male body with a patience so deliberate that we might compare her diction to the steady gaze of the documentary camera, that device which bears witness to the everyday, the banal, the unremarkable. This "banal" documentary footage has often been constructed into filmic art that lauds the ordinary. So, too, we might note that Crozier's gaze is less directed at the "feature film" phallus

than focussed on the "documentary" penis.

In the chapter "Axiographics: Ethical Space in Documentary Film" from Representing Reality, Bill Nichols usefully addresses the types of gaze that the documentary camera may implement. Nichols discusses the possibility of an "interventional gaze", which "transform[s] the detachment of a gaze into the involvement of a look. Intervention is usually on behalf of someone more endangered than the cameraperson" (85). If we consider the male body "endangered" by cultural elision, in that the male body's power is falsified by insisting that the body is mysterious and limitless, then we may also consider how Crozier's poetic gaze, closing the distance to become involved as a look, "intervenes" to affirm the presence of a limited but loved body. In this equation, both the male and the female body are endangered by the limitations of normative heterosexuality, which makes Crozier's interventional gaze only half of the formula for redressing the heterosexual balance.

Nichols also designates a "humane gaze" for his camera, a gaze that holds the subject in compassion, rather than insisting upon a powerful voyeuristic gaze (86). Crozier certainly invests in such a humane gaze, which emerges in the later "Penis Poems" as an accepting and erotic look; she reveals the vulnerability of the penis while refuting the psychoanalytic investment in the trauma of symbolic castration. In poems like "Variations", "Osiris", and "Phallic", Crozier's humane and interventional gaze sustains her accepting look, and reveals the "cloaked" penis.

Jane Gallop insists, with some cause, that psychoanalytic criticism is a demand for concrete explanations of liminal human behaviours (particularly sexual behaviour), a form of criticism that may itself border upon the psychopathological:

> Because he cannot tolerate being moved without understanding why, Freud invents psychoanalysis. The psychoanalytic critic is she who cannot bear to be moved without knowing why, who cannot bear to be overwhelmed, and would counter the object's power with her understanding. (1988:139)

The "Penis Poems" feature a speaker who dares "to be moved" by male beauty, by the corporeality of the penis, and by a sexual enigma that "you can't put your finger on" ("Their Smell"). Crozier does not suggest a complete "understanding" of the penis, but she does propose to "counter the object's power", that is, patriarchal phallic power, by proposing a new aesthetic of the male body. This thesis will suggest that Crozier's interest lies not in producing utopian solutions to the tensions of heterosexuality, but rather in introducing doubt into what Adrienne Rich calls the "compulsory" nature of heterosexual roles (34). Crozier rejects the version of feminist theory that condemns heterosexual activity as politically untenable, but she takes seriously Rich's caveat that heterosexual feminists need "to examine their experience of heterosexuality critically and antagonistically, to critique the institution of which they are a part"(72).

Crozier's critique of heterosexuality includes a textual treatment of the male body that attempts to recover eroticism, and so reclaim female heterosexuality as desiring

choice rather than cultural obligation. Crozier works to define that space for erotic mutuality by "un-cloaking" the male body, and refusing coy ways of looking. Chapter Three therefore will explore the poetics of Crozier's "direct gaze" and the generous non-masterful metaphors for the penis that Crozier makes available from her variety of viewing positions. As we will see, Crozier aligns with feminist theorists like Lynne Segal to question the assumed certitudes of heterosexuality:

> [F]or all the psychic pull of dominant binaries of heterosexuality, its codings have never been secure. Because it has always been in desired sexual encounter [. . .] that the presumed polarities of gender can most easily be felt to falter and blur. (Segal 85)

And so, we will ask , how does the "smooth and boneless" penis of Crozier's "Facts" occupy the same sexual universe as Ducharme's murderous penis of her "Tales for Virgins"? How does the penis that sleeps in the cage of "Overture" dare to fly, "maybe enjoying flight / more than it should" in "Penis / Bird"? Chapter Three will consider how these images comment on the penis as a metaphor for masculinity, and as a fetish of female desire.

Part of the wit of the "Penis Poems" lives in the ways in which Crozier's relentless focus on the penis questions sexual objectification and phallic worship. Her appropriation of the "desiring male gaze" acts simultaneously as a reversal of the poses of power and a mockery of phallus-focussed culture. She adopts the usurping gaze in order

to mimic its pompous power, but Crozier ultimately offers the intimacy of the look in its stead. Her critique of psychoanalysis emphasizes the ironic amount of time and energy focused on a single part of the body, as though it were the whole body, or worse, as though the penis was the man's entire identity. To be sure, psychoanalytic theory, while patriarchal, does not treat the male body kindly; the male body remains perpetually stranded between traumatic lack and impossible transcendence, or in Lacanian terms, between the penis and the phallus. Jane Gallop explicates the difficulty, and the necessity, of searching for new ways of looking at the penis as separate from the phallus:

> [. . .] to distinguish phallus from penis is to separate infantile sexuality from adult sexuality [. . .] Yet it remains an open question whether there truly exists an adult sexuality, whether there is any masculinity that is beyond the phallic phase, that does not need to equate femininity with castration. (Gallop 1988:125)

Women poets who write the (male) lover's body are particularly involved in the search for masculinity beyond the phallic phase. Can the male body, as form and as text, ever float free of its psychoanalytic undertow? Crozier's project of writing the male lover's body is an attempt to free both male and female bodies from the tyranny of the phallus [2]. Crozier's "Penis Poems" surprise not only with their sexual content, but also with their unexpected lack of feminist rage. While they satirize phallic worship, the "Penis Poems" rarely express frustration or pain or envy. They introduce figurative perspectives that are purported by Freud and Lacan to be impossible, repugnant or

promiscuous, but these poems are love poems. This thesis will concern itself with Crozier's search for new ways to write about pleasure while acknowledging the apparent contradiction of heterosexual feminism, and show that the male body can bear the pressure of judgement and comparison, and still emerge as a loved object of desire. [3]

Notes

1. Richard Dyer explicates the "unavailable" male body in his article, "Don't Look Now: the Male Pin-Up". Dyer points out how visual images of erotically situated male bodies are often "hysterically phallicized" to emphasize unquestionable mastery, but many images appear physically tense and "strained" by their attempts to convey this impossible phallic mastery. In his article "Masculinity as Spectacle", Steve Neale notes the ways in which Hollywood cinema disavows any possible vulnerability of the heterosexual male and positions the male body as omnipotent and untouchable.

2. An incomplete list of female poets who write the male body would include Canadians Margaret Atwood, Gwendolyn MacEwen, Dorothy Livesay and Libby Scheier, Americans Sharon Olds, Marge Piercy, Denise Levertov and Erica Jong, as well as British poet Carol Ann Duffy. Emerging Canadian poets are producing texts that take the female gaze even further; Evelyn Lau has acquired literary infamy as a result of her refusal to treat the male body with kindness. Bernice Freisen's Sex, Death and Naked Men (1998) runs riot over Freudian theory and articulates disprized male and female bodies in all their difficult splendour.

3. In "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema", Laura Mulvey suggests that Hollywood creates and encourages images of the male body that are openly resistant to the gaze, and posits that one of the constructed conditions of masculinity in the late 20th-century is the inability to bear the pressure of the gaze. I will explore Mulvey's work at greater length in Chapter Two.

Chapter One: Crozier in Canadian Context

This chapter will provide a historical context for the development of Canadian feminist poetics, and examine Crozier's poetics in an emerging tradition of Canadian female poets who write the male body. To situate Crozier's poetry within the body of feminist writing developed in Canada throughout the 1970's and 1980's is to discuss her position in a flux of ideological and political thought. Her early poems are marked by a good deal of angry feminist fervour, adamantly opposing the limitations of gender roles, and employing Gothic imagery to convey the dark forces at work in difficult or failing relationships. Even poems from Crozier's mid-career retain some of this furious energy; the bitter humour of "Marriage: Getting Used To" in 1980's Humans and Other Beasts or the raunchy bite of the much-anthologized "This One's For You" from the same collection exemplify Crozier's direct criticism of heterosexual social mores. She discusses her poetry's movement away from unadulterated anger in an interview with Bruce Meyer and Brian O'Riordan, published in Poetry Canada Review in 1989, a few months after the publication of the "Penis Poems" in Angels of Flesh, Angels of Silence:

> I think I was an extremely, passionate, strident writer when I began. I had a bottle full of feelings just waiting for an outlet...They are very angry, very serious poems. I took myself too seriously then...I've become more and more interested in taking more than one look at something. (Meyer 28)

Canadian literary feminism has supported (and contended with) projects like Crozier's "Penis Poems", particularly as this suite of poems appeared in 1988 when

literary feminism was debating the merits of "writing the body", which meant, almost exclusively, writing the experience of the female body. Canadian female poets have been developing a feminist poetics of the body since the continental French feminists rose to prominence in literary and academic circles in the 1970's. Fuelled by the ideas of Hélène Cixous and Luce Irigaray, writing the corporeal experience of the female body became a way to emphasize textual and political difference. One branch of feminist poetics began to articulate itself as earthy, breast and womb-centred. This "womanist" writing was developed from the tenet that the body dictates the style of writing, and that experimentation with the structures of "man-made" language were needed to express the female experience [1]. In this light, Crozier's choice to write a suite of poems about the male body could easily be interpreted as counter-revolutionary. The danger of womanist poetics remains its problematic relationship to biological essentialism, the insistence on the difference between a man and a woman's body to the point of valorizing female experience solely because of the determining anatomy. More than one Canadian feminist writer has taken exception to this ironic development in female poetics, that a branch of feminist thought has led right back to old patriarchal insistence on woman as an uncontrollable, unfathomable, sometimes monstrous force of nature. [2]

Crozier's poetics are a far cry from maternal "womanist" poetics, not the least because of her focus on the male body. It would be inaccurate, however, to say that Crozier ignores the female experience; indeed, the "Penis Poems" concern themselves as much with female viewing positions as with the male body. Crozier's controversial role

in Canadian feminist poetics has been largely defined by critical reaction to her unequivocal decision to write the male body as both erotic and problematic.

Crozier situates herself as a liberal humanist feminist, and from this position, she does not please everyone. Her poems are too sexually explicit for conservative audiences, and too male-focused for a womanist audience. Her poetry makes a lot of people uncomfortable, not only because she dares to laugh at sex, but also because her laughter does not dissipate her written desire. In "A Secret Indulgence", an essay published in Matrix in 1995, Crozier asserts that she writes from within the lived contradiction of many heterosexual feminists: the ability "to hate sexism and love individual men" ("Secret" 64).

Crozier's rules of artistic engagement operate through an inquiry into heterosexual roles and the nature of power in intimate relationships. While she invests heavily in a utopic erotic mutuality, Crozier is also pragmatic enough to acknowledge the difficulties inherent in attaining such mutuality; in fact, "Tales for Virgins" and "Ode" present male bodies that refuse partnership and insist upon power. Crozier's "Penis Poems" question the value of gender roles, while keeping an eye on the spectrum of behaviours (from compassionate to violent) that exist as possibilities within an intimate relationship.

Within an emerging tradition of women poets who write the male body, Crozier's poems do not stand out as an anomaly, but rather as an outgrowth of a larger project of

women poets who write the lover's body. [3] Her admiration for the work of Margaret Atwood and Gwendolyn MacEwen suggests a framework for constructing a possible evolution of Canadian feminist poetics in writing the male body (Hillis 12). Another text of particular interest is a set of "penis poems" by poet Libby Scheier, published in 1987, one year before Crozier's Angels of Flesh, Angels of Silence.

Libby Scheier's Second Nature contains five poems about male genitalia, focusing upon the penis in familial gender roles; how does a mother regard her infant son's penis? How does a father, when asked, explain the role of a penis to his daughter? Scheier refuses to allow these questions to be shameful or traumatic, and invests her "penis poems" with a practical tone. She pronounces the penis "a bore", particularly when it is required to be a "container for the entire male body/ including the brain" (Scheier 29). Scheier declares that her infant son has "his penis in perspective", a part of polymorphous desire, a child's delight in his/her own body (28).

Crozier works towards writing a "penis in perspective", but she displays a strong resistance to maternal metaphor in the "Penis Poems" and demands that the penis be read in terms of adult sexuality. Her female speaker speaks a language of tenderness that does not suggest the maternal, nor does it equate masculine vulnerability with infantilization.

In an 1985 interview with Doris Hillis, Crozier refers to her own poems about the difficulties of heterosexual relationships as an offshoot of "Margaret Atwood's power

politics", using that book's title to connote the struggle to redefine a viable intimate relationship between a man and a woman (Hillis 14). In a matter of months after the Hillis interview, Crozier's The Garden Going On Without Us appeared with her controversial and acclaimed "Sex Lives of Vegetables" sequence.[4] Three years later, Crozier published the "Penis Poems" in Angels of Flesh, Angels of Silence.

Power Politics and Crozier's "Penis Poems" share a sense of ironic humour and a concern for the personal and public pressures upon a heterosexual woman's position in culture. Both poem sequences identify patriarchy, not men, as the enemy. To consider Atwood's text as a pre-text to Crozier's "Penis Poems", we must acknowledge that Power Politics remains an ground-breaking text for Canadian feminist poetry, because of its stark determination to dig beneath an "ordinary" heterosexual relationship and reveal the odd compulsions that dominate a heterosexual "romantic" relationship. Gothic imagery and bitter humour remain a vital element of Canadian women's poetry, as other writers position themselves to affirm or refute Atwood's view. Atwood proposes the heterosexual relationship as a tragi-comedy of inevitability, in which men and women are equally bound to role-playing, and neither can align mind and body enough to imagine mutuality. Power Politics has been criticized as a text hostile to men, but careful reading shows that Atwood's speaker (the "I") knows herself to be as complicit in the romantic cliche as the man, and even casts herself as the creator of the male "monster" (47).

Her biting humour notwithstanding, the speaker seems exhausted in these poems.

Atwood employs a diction that seems so worn by attempts at reason, so weakened by debate against fallacious (phallacious?) argument that her "I" has been reduced to reciting somnambulant descriptions of the relationship's dull hypocrisy, incredulous at her own participation, with only enough energy to resist through the medium of the poem.

> You take my hand and
> I'm suddenly in a bad movie,
> it goes on and on and
> why am I fascinated
>
> We waltz in slow motion
> through an air stale with aphorisms...
>
> (Power Politics 3)

Not until "There is Only One of Everything" in You Are Happy (1974) does Atwood articulate an open space for the self in relationship. This poem shows a man who overcomes his prescribed gender role and takes on a more liminal, less defined, but more human shape, vulnerable, capable of genuine joy:

> but the way you dance by yourself
> on the tile floor to a worn song, flat and mournful,
> so delighted, spoon waved in one hand, wisps of
> roughened hair
>
> sticking up from your head, it's your surprised

body, pleasure I like. (You Are Happy 92)

That "surprised body" is the image towards which all of Power Politics and You Are Happy have been building: the male body not as warrior or child or monster, but as a man delighted by his own dance in an ordinary kitchen on an ordinary evening. He is at once private and specular; the female speaker's pleasure comes from observing her lover's private expression of joy in his own dance, an epiphany that allows her to admit to desires of her own. This surprise of pleasure in the self is the very pleasure that must be in place before the male body can experience the pleasures of being the specular object.

Both Crozier and Atwood play off Freud's famous question, and Atwood's female speaker finally articulates "what she wants", as if her resistance to speaking her desire has been a resistance to role-fulfilment. Atwood ends this poem with the knowledge that this hard-won mutuality is limited, but valuable:

I can even say it,
though only once and it won't

last: I want this. I want
this. (You Are Happy 92)

In the final poem of You Are Happy, "The Book of Ancestors", Atwood articulates a mutuality that has been difficult to actualize. The female speaker notes the process of her lover's movement towards trust, and ultimately, suggests her own

movement towards reciprocity:

> you are intact, you turn
> towards me, your eyes opening, the eyes
> intricate and easily bruised, you open
>
> yourself to me gently, what
> they tried, we
> tried but could never do
> before . without blood, the killed
> heart . to take
> that risk, to offer life and remain
>
> alive, open yourself like this and become whole (96).

Seventeen years after Power Politics, Crozier's "Penis Poems" suggest that "to offer life and remain alive", the male body must "open [him]self and become whole". Significantly, neither Atwood nor Crozier defines the accepting look as maternal in nature, resisting the cultural insistence that male vulnerability equals infantilization.

In contrast to Atwood's "open" and "whole" male body, Gwendolyn MacEwen's T.E. Lawrence Poems explore a despairingly limited male body. These poems are striking for their attempts to define (and question) masculinity, comparing Lawrence's fastidious ethos of the body with the more traditional masculinities of the men who surround him. MacEwen creates her Lawrence as a man who embodies the extremities

of phallic contradictions, a body that desires despite its fear, even as he struggles to separate himself from all bodily needs, sex in particular:

> Imagine, I could never bear to be touched by anybody;
> I considered myself a sort of flamboyant monk, awfully
> intact, yet colourful.
> Inviolable is the word.
> But everything is shameful, you know; to have a body
> is a cruel joke.
> ("Deraa" 17-22)

MacEwen's Lawrence speaks these lines after he has been raped, but the whole poem sequence speaks of this terrible chagrin at the body's betrayal. Lawrence's rape is certainly a bodily violation, but it is also an enactment of the shame MacEwen's Lawrence assumes from the beginning of the text, the awful violence of his own self-loathing. But the end of "Deraa" proposes that the rape will yield an understanding of self that transcends humiliation, that Lawrence experiences a revelation about masculinity:

> They beat me until something, some
> primal slime spilled out of me, and fire
> shot to my brain.
> On a razor edge of reality,
> I knew I would come out of this, bleeding and broken,
> and singing. ("Deraa" 32-37)

Is the "primal slime" that escapes Lawrence's body vomit or semen or his viscous soul? Is the "fire" anger or lust or the will to survive? This imagery is at once sexual and abject; Lawrence seems to be both victim and willing partner. The poem's ending is strangely ambiguous, invoking both the ultra-masculine heroic male who survives impossible violence and the masochist who has his worst fears (and best hopes) confirmed by violence. Psychoanalytic theory would cast the rapists as the "striking bar" of the phallic ideal, and Lawrence himself as abject lack. However, MacEwen's Lawrence also seems bound to Aristotelian philosophy as he asserts that man is mind rather than body, that physical violation is an inconvenience but that the nobility of thought is inviolable. MacEwen writes Lawrence's body as the battleground for these lived contradictions of masculinity, the twentieth-century man, caught in the cross-fire between heroic stiff-upper-lip and cultural castration.

Small wonder then, that MacEwen writes of Lawrence's incompetence in battle, first as slapstick comedy, then as a wish to hide behind his brain to excuse the fumblings of his body, couched in terms of premature ejaculation:

> When the enemy became real, I got terribly excited
>   and shot my camel through the head
>   by accident, flew to the ground
> And lay there with her as the army leapt over us.
>
> Thinking, in lines as long as a camel's stride, of Kipling.

"The Virgin Warrior" 9-13

The image of Lawrence huddled beside his camel's large maternal body, in a parody of aprés-sex disillusionment, consoling himself with the great adventurer-poet's "long lines" is hilarious and pitiful. MacEwen names the contradictory image that has pressed heavily upon twentieth-century masculinity: the virgin warrior, he who seeks to embody both phallic mastery and physical purity. Steve Neale delineates this contradiction in his study of the cinema's control of the male figure in classic Hollywood film, in which countless knights, cowboys, hitmen, hired guns and masked avengers retain figurative purity while practising the power of the warrior. These men crave action through their passive "coolness", engage in sex without intimacy, and desire power without admitting to vulnerability (Neale 6). In Lawrence, MacEwen exposes the virgin warrior in all his contradictory glory, and emphasizes the impossibility of living in such a body. The "cruel joke"of the body seems to be the belief that the body is inviolable.

In the "Penis Poems", Crozier builds on MacEwen's exploration of the male body by refuting the myth of the virgin warrior, and writes a flesh-and-blood man where before only an idea stood. Aritha Van Herk points out that this virgin hero lives on as a staple in prairie fiction; in her article, "A Gentle Circumcision", she declares: "[t]his west is[. . .] a kingdom of male virgins who have never forgiven Eve for seducing them" (257). Her theory proves illuminating to the influence of a Canadian prairie tradition on Crozier's writing.[5] If prairie fiction has often featured a male "virgin", a man who struggles to keep himself separate from the bodily machinations of women in order to triumph over

the physical demands of the sweep of barren, unforgiving but ultimately female land, then surely this male virgin is the male body Crozier woos throughout the "Penis Poems". No wonder the penis is "as shy as a sparrow" ("Literary Allusions") or smells like "burnt stubble / when the smoke's so thick / it changes the light" ("Their Smell"). Crozier switches the expected genders of virginity: her speaker is no "visual virgin", blushing at the sight of the penis, but perhaps the penis is a "virgin" model, unaware of the power or terms of male beauty.

Prairie poetry traditionally positions the land as a central metaphor, and discussion of prairie poetics has primarily centred on a distinctly male "pioneer" poetics. Pamela Banting has been particularly critical of the exclusion of female poets from the prairie poetic tradition, and her point is well taken; a streak of prairie fundamentalism has trouble accommodating the differing aesthetics of women artists. [6] Feminist poets like Di Brandt and Daphne Marlatt insist on the intimate relationship of a woman's body to a prairie landscape. Poems with this maternal/erotic perspective rail against the view of the land as a difficult mistress, something to be conquered. [7] Crozier's aesthetic lies somewhere between these two polarities, and her work has been problematized, though admired, for her resistance to categorization. Her poetics repeatedly question the borders of sexual expression and gender role.

Crozier is aware of the dangers of writing from the feminine prairie; she has received hate mail that castigated her for her sexually explicit material ("Speaking" 94),

and she is aware that the manner in which she writes about sexual subjectivity has been construed as "morally suspect" by some readers (Meyer 28). Crozier is equally famous (or infamous) for her liberal use of humour and her frank depictions of sexuality. "Crozier may [. . .] be one of the funniest poets writing in Canada today", writes Ronald Hatch in his review of Angels of Flesh, Angels of Silence, adding that the "Penis Poems" "give a hilarious view of the penis with all its pretensions and naivete [. . .] combining the affection she has for men with a mordant wit" (38). But E.F. Shields warns:

> The "Penis Poems" will probably disturb a number of readers -- not because Crozier talks bluntly about sex, but because Crozier frequently *laughs* at sex. For people who still take Lady Chatterley's Lover seriously, laughter, especially from women, is the cardinal sin. (183)

Crozier has noted that some readers "find it almost offensive that someone is daring to try to be funny in poetry, which strikes me as very limited and naive, since most humour is very serious" (Carey 16). Her humour undermines phallic worship, but also suggests an alternative perspective on the male body. Crozier knows that "[h]umour can be radical and subversive; you can say things in humour that you can't say in other ways and get away with it" (Carey 16). She notes that male colleagues have complimented her on her feminist poems, saying that her humour makes her politics palatable (Hillis 13). This rather back-handed compliment underlines Crozier's "tomboy" acceptance into a type of prairie poets club, and she takes advantage of her position "on the fence" of this discourse to challenge writing tradition on the basis of class, gender and region.

Caroline Heath has suggested that the future of prairie writing will turn to "more internalization of the landscape", and that Crozier has been instrumental in moving towards this change, citing Crozier's first book, Inside is the Sky, as exemplary (Heath 194). In an 1989 interview for Poetry Canada Review, Crozier speaks of her intention to "introduce a content into poetry" that comes from a "Western, female, working-class" perspective (Meyer 3). She uses her liminal status to push the boundaries of prairie writing, which has included her project of reclaiming the female voice from a classic prairie novel, Sinclair Ross' As For Me and My House; Crozier's A Saving Grace, published in 1996, was subtitled "The Collected Poems of Mrs. Bentley". Crozier is not reticent about rewriting cultural myths or contesting traditions in prairie poetics:

> I use the images that surround me, and that includes the prairie, but the poems are about something else, like love or death or growing old...the outside is always filtered through my way of seeing things. I believe the landscape in my poems is more an internal landscape than an external one. (Meyer 28)

In her article "Let Us Revise Mythologies: the Poetry of Lorna Crozier", Susan Gingell discusses the ways in which Crozier's poetry "moves towards a closure that insists on the simultaneous and mutually dependent creation of female, male, and the field in which they have their meaning" (68). Crozier's quest to reclaim the male body as a site of erotic mutuality, that inner and outer geography, depends upon convincing the prairie "Male Virgin" of his erotic value, and asserting the female gaze as explorer in that "field" of meaning.

Notes

1. For example, Helene Cixous posited that women write with symbolic breast milk, and Luce Irigaray proposed that the female genitalia is auto-erotic and that creativity comes from this auto-erotic flow. These maternal, womanist poetics have been developed by a number of Canadian female writers, including Nicole Brossard, Daphne Marlatt, and Di Brandt, to choose three prominent, but by no means, exhaustive examples.

2. A valuable and extensive overview of the debate of Canadian feminist/womanist poetics and the political difficulties of "writing the female body" can be found in Language in Her Eye (eds. Libby Scheier, Sarah Sheard, Eleanor Wachtel), a collection of fifty essays by Canadian women writing about aesthetics and politics. Two Women Talking, an epistolary debate between poets Bronwen Wallace and Erin Moure, pinpoints several hot-button topics that spring from the application of French feminism to Canadian writing.

3. I have referred little to female poets who write the lesbian lover's body; certainly in terms of risk and the demand to be heard, poets like Adrienne Rich and Dionne Brand have made extremely significant contributions to writing the female body as beloved, and inspired heterosexual women to interrogate the possibilities of writing the male body.

4. American poet Erica Jong was perhaps the first female poet to turn a demanding gaze upon the penis. Jong's Fruits and Vegetables (1974) prefigures Crozier's "Sex Lives of Vegetables" series, though Crozier's series is more wittily developed. Crozier's vegetables are riotously sexual: peas in the pod are "clitoral" and carrots "fuck the earth". People still walk out of readings when Crozier reads from this sequence.

5. Robert Kroetsch, one of Van Herk's primary "virgin" novelists, acknowledges this tendency in his article "Fear of Women in Prairie Fiction" in The Lovely Treachery of Words.

6. In Body Inc., Banting criticizes Dennis Cooley's "Placing the Vernacular" of favouring male poetics as typical prairie vernacular (Banting 79). However, Cooley is the first to admit that Crozier challenges easy gender divisions, describing her as a poet "who hang[s] around both yards", a writer who challenges definitions of masculine and feminine poetics (Cooley 14).

7. Annette Kolodny discusses male pioneer literature in her text The Lay of the Land; her title communicates that idea of the land as a passive woman's body as succinctly as possible.

Chapter Two: Crozier's Looking Relations: the Visual and Verbal World

This chapter will examine the gendered politics of looking relations in the application of gaze theory to literary works in general, and to Crozier's project of reading the male body in particular. This chapter will also consider the impact of psychoanalytical theory on the dynamics of looking relations, and Crozier's challenge to discover new ways of looking that may support greater freedom of female sexual expression, and ultimately, encourage erotic mutuality.

In 1975, feminist film critic Laura Mulvey published her ground-breaking article "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" in the film journal Screen, and introduced the idea that the gendered politics of looking are neither natural nor avoidable. Classic Hollywood cinema typifies and promotes looking relations that eroticize the female figure. Mulvey asserts that this voyeuristic mediation of the camera promotes male visual pleasure above all else:

> In a world ordered by sexual imbalance, pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female[. . .] women are simultaneously looked at and displayed, with their appearance coded for strong visual and erotic impact so that they can be said to connote *to-be-looked-at-ness*. (19: italics Mulvey's)

Mulvey proposes that this imbalance of power may be countered by destroying the pleasure of the gaze through analysis (16). The "scopophilic" pleasure of which Mulvey

speaks, in which the body becomes a sexual fetish in the "hermetically sealed world" of the film, is distinctly voyeuristic; the character, the camera and the viewer exist in isolation from the exalted or demeaned woman-as-object (17).

Applying Mulvey's theories to Crozier's poetic use of the gaze, it becomes clear that the politics of looking are not limited to the eye of the camera or film viewer, but are equally applicable to the poet's (and the reader's) eye. Mulvey suggests that equality can only arise from destroying the pleasure of the gaze, but Crozier adopts these politics of looking to reconsider the pleasure of the female gaze, and to redress the erotic balance by reclaiming the "desiring gaze" for women. Crozier's "Penis Poems" suggest that visual pleasure need not be destroyed, but the terms by which such pleasure is accessed deserve to be examined and perhaps expanded. In a culture where male sexuality is presumed to be more visually based than female sexuality, we could say that, in Mulvey's terms, Crozier's female look is "daring to break with normal pleasurable expectations in order to conceive a new language of desire" (16).

To interpret Crozier through the theories of looking relations developed by feminist film and visual art critics is to note the migration of that theory into literary works, and to track the progression of a set of terms from a visual to a verbal mode. Laura Tanner explicates this migration in her study of the dynamics of the gaze in Sharon Olds' poetry [1]:

> The success of film criticism in denaturalizing the act of looking in the cinema -- i.e., exposing the way in which the viewer's gaze may be constructed to enforce hidden assumptions or authorize conclusions that appear "natural" -- has led in turn to the need for unveiling the way that the gaze is constructed in other forums and the need for defining the power dynamics that result from the construction. (Tanner 103)

Of course, poetry and visual art do not work within equivalent modes of representation, although poetry uses evocative language to encourage visualization. The link between verbal and visual looking may be particularly salient when art and poetry "look" at the same object, and the link between the visual and verbal "look" is further emphasized when the object on view is as culturally cloaked as the male body. Certainly female speech about the male body has been equally as forbidden as the female sight of the male body. Sarah Kent emphasizes that women artists who focus on the male body as an erotic site must discover new rules of artistic engagement, and her words seem equally applicable to visual and verbal art:

> The difficulty of the terrain is two-fold: first the lack of a tradition of erotic male nudes created for women from which to borrow or against which to react and, secondly, the absence of a body of knowledge or an art form which recognizes and describes female sexuality as a potent intimidating force, rather than merely as a response to masculine desire. (Kent 62-3)

Poetry, with its repeated lyric appeal to the visual, provides an eloquent bridge for

theories of looking relations. Crozier's poetic ability to "describe female sexuality as a potent intimidating force" is perhaps a matter of her chosen form; poetry has been characterized more than once as "verbal painting", so much so that rhetoric suggests a conflation of the two art forms; we might say a painting *comments* on the body, while metaphor *displays* or *illustrates* the body. Both art forms take some pride in their cross-sensory appeal; paintings often strive to suggest tactility and motion, poems often imply sight and rely upon sound, and both paintings and poems can invoke taste and smell.

The relative brevity and static quality of lyric poetry distinguishes it as a particularly apt form for delineating the dynamics of looking relations. A poem that is comprised largely of visual imagery, like Crozier's "Variations", is at once so brief and so densely packed with ideas that the reader must slow down to gain access to interpretation. Poetry parallels painting in its encouragement of the "long look"; the viewer or reader has the opportunity to devote an infinite amount of time to a single image, if she/he so desires. Mulvey criticizes the cinema's "hermetically sealed world which unwinds magically, indifferent to the presence of the audience, producing for them a sense of separation and playing on their voyeuristic fantasy" (17). Poetry can only be "unwound" by the reader's desire for interpretation; a dense poetic text demands concentration and repeated reading at the very least, and critical thought and questioning at a more sophisticated level. The best poetry asks as many questions as it answers, not unlike the ways in which a painting suggests action beyond the frame. In both painting and poetry, the use of the gaze is explicit and perhaps even acknowledged by form, but

the looking relations themselves are encoded in the art, and may be unravelled only with time and attention. Both poetry and painting may comment on the gaze precisely because the viewer/reader is firmly positioned as a linchpin within those looking relations.

Mulvey points out that the gaze has the power to limit the object's meaning; Crozier points out that the gaze's power may also open up the object to new perspectives, specifically re-casting the male body as loved (as opposed to feared or worshipped) object. Lyrical ways of looking in Crozier's "Penis Poems" propose a male body that is very different from the hidden voyeurs of Mulvey's theory. Mulvey asserts that "[t]he male figure cannot bear the burden of sexual objectification. Man is reluctant to gaze at his exhibitionist like" (20). Mulvey's statement was almost certainly true in 1975, but the amount of recent theoretical attention received by the male body qualifies such a statement today [2]. Crozier insists that the male body can not only bear the burden of the gaze, but can inspire visual pleasure and survive comparison, judgement and mutuality, without the cloak of phallic transcendence.

Mulvey writes of the ways in which Hollywood cinema serves male scopophilic pleasure at all costs, as a non-negotiable narcissistic end (18). As a reversal which opens up to include the possibility of mutual pleasure, the intimacy of Crozier's look does not sacrifice the male body in order to access that pleasure. The speaker of the "Penis Poems" rarely retreats to a "safe distance", and has little opportunity to establish a

"contradiction between libido and ego" of which Mulvey warns (Mulvey 18). Crozier's jouissance includes the object of the gaze; although Crozier codes the visually erotic aspects of the penis "to connote to-be-looked-at-ness", she resists any temptation to write the idiosyncratic, corporeal penis as "perfect product" (Mulvey 22). While Mulvey's fetishized actresses receive "heightened" worshipful status and her voyeurized actresses receive "lowered" debased status (21), Crozier's "Penis Poems" advocate what we could call an "eye-level" status for the male body; her diction, particularly in "Variations" and "Their Smell" consistently evokes proximity to the penis, not distance from it.

But such proximity to the penis is not welcomed by everyone. Feminist exploration of the male body, in verbal or visual art, has had to struggle to claim opportunities to gaze upon or depict the male body, and has done so largely without wide-spread public approbation. Sarah Kent writes of a women's art exhibition in England in 1985, at which male and some female art critics became bitterly critical of the depiction of men's bodies, particularly multiple representations of the penis. One critic claimed that the exhibition amounted to nothing more than reverse discrimination, a misguided feminist bid for power that objectified men. Kent wryly notes the tenor of the complaints:

> How could we justify reducing a man to a sex object? Were we not duplicating the oppressive stereotyping that we criticized men for applying to women? (Kent 16)

The ironic characterization of nude men as a social crime placed against the cultural characterization of nude women as a social right lends the response from the women's art collective a certain what-goes-around-comes-around satisfaction:

> . . . men are defined by considerably more than their sexuality. To isolate some aspects of their sexual behaviours does little to conceal their role as the leaders of society, the creators of culture. (Kent 16)

Art critic Griselda Pollock cites an infamous example of ineffective gender reversal that must give pause to any woman artist working with the male body. Linda Nochlin juxtaposed a photo of a naked woman holding a tray of apples at breast level bearing the caption "Achetez des Pommes", with a photo of a naked man holding a tray of bananas at thigh level. The first photo is situated firmly in an erotic tradition, while the second photo is more funny than erotic. Pollock points out that one of the difficulties of eroticizing a male body is the alternating gravity and hilarity with which a "phallic symbol" is regarded:

> . . . while there exists a long tradition of association between female breasts and genitals with fruit, which renders the sight of a breast nestling among a tray of apples and the implied saleability of both unsurprising, no such precedents exist for a similar juxtaposition of a penis and its fruity analogue, the banana [. . .] there is no comparable erotic imagery addressed to women [. . .] because of the particular signification of woman as body and as sexual. There is a basic asymmetry inscribed into the language of visual representation which such reversals serve to expose. (Pollock 143)

"Traditional" phallic imagery is as ineffective as the banana photo; when not rendered heroic, phallic imagery seems to degenerate into silliness. Crozier considers these contradictions of the male body with her use of the gaze and the look. The violence of the gaze and the acceptance of the look may both be considered interrogations of the male body, conditions of looking that place men in a position of vulnerability. Crozier's gaze insists on the representability of the male body, and eschews the myth of the male body as intrinsically masterful. Her gaze emphasizes male vulnerability, and her look eroticizes male beauty.

Homosexual male artists who depict the penis have enjoyed more success and approbation than female artists who choose the same subject, for despite the virulence of homophobia, it remains more culturally appropriate for a man to look at the male body than for a woman to do so. There is a fear that a woman who looks at a penis "may display a lack of reverence for an organ which she experiences as wilful and inconsistent -- making demands while not guaranteeing satisfaction" (Kent 59). It seems that only those who possess a penis are allowed an opinion about the penis, a rubric which has never applied to men's thoughts, opinions, judgements, comparisons of or complaints about women's bodies.

But even with Kent's caveat in mind, feminism has suspected for some time that simple gender reversal is overrated as a political device, and may even be regressive and

dangerous. When the only available images of men propose nothing but a gender reversal of viewing positions, the reversal is in danger of becoming a violent appropriation of male dignity, or a placebo to convince women of their political exigency. Linda LeMonchek warns that recent increased availability of the specular male body changes little about the balance of sexual power:

> The catcalls of women in clubs with male strip dancers and the voyeuristic gaze of the female viewer of pornography are no match for the objectifying gaze of a man, whose cultural ideology assumes that his sexuality, not hers, does the subordinating [. . .] such de facto equality under current patriarchal constraints would simply legitimize men's continued subordination of women, encourage women to dehumanize men and fool women into thinking we are successful. (LeMonchek 133)

But of course, Crozier does more than merely reverse the gender of the looker; she seeks to change the terms under which visual pleasure is pursued. Although Crozier codes the penis "to connote to-be-looked-at-ness", she resists "projecting fantasy" onto the male figure (Mulvey 19). In her poem "Overture", Crozier suggests that the male body need not be sacrificed to access pleasure, though the cultural cloaking of the male body must be thrown away to access visual pleasure, and eventual erotic mutuality.

Any foray into a discussion of visual pleasure must build upon (or work against) Lacan's formulation of the gaze as a fundamental process that first distinguishes self from other, and so introduces never-ending desire to the human psyche. Crozier's "Penis

Poems" repeatedly examine the juxtaposition of power (threat) and vulnerability (lack) located in the penis by psychoanalysis. Both Freud and Lacan situate the penis in a perpetual crisis, symbolically castrated when compared to the phallus, but masterfully powerful when compared to the "all-lacking" female body. How can a female poet speak the flesh under the pressure of keeping the phallus "veiled" and keeping the penis sublimated as the mythic ideal's "bastard offspring", forever disprized as lack (Lacan 288)? Crozier allows this pressure to generate the poems, rather than be silenced or threatened by what Lacan calls "the demon Shame" (288). She negotiates the terms of the female gaze in order to acknowledge, but not be limited to, these phallic personas. Kaja Silverman, in Male Subjectivity at the Margins, asserts that the dominant patriarchal fiction allows female attitudes of awe or envy towards the penis, with a bitter nod towards castrating anger as a possible female response. The pathology of the dominant fiction dictates that "the ideal female subject refuses to recognize male lack" (Silverman 46). But Crozier's pragmatic look at the penis not only recognizes male "lack", but redeems it as a reality, the acknowledgement of which could revolutionize the heterosexual relationship.

Elizabeth Grosz reads the Lacanian idea of the phallus as "a signifier within a signifying system [which] cannot thus be possessed or owned by anyone" (Grosz 1994:117). Further, Grosz asserts that Lacan claims "no one has a privileged or unique relation" to the phallus, and that the phallus only exists as a signifier "by virtue of the entire signifying chain and an intersubjective, multi-subjective, symbolically regulated

social order" (Grosz 1994:118). However, even as Lacan insists that the phallus is a signifier which cannot be owned by either gender, he simultaneously asserts that the penis defines sexual difference, inspires language, and sparks the desperate human search for satisfaction. By valorizing the penis, even as the "bastard offspring" of the transcendent phallus, Lacan designates the penis as the ever-desired object, and suggests a stronger relationship between penis and phallus than the first statement indicates. Jane Gallop suggests that the corporeal penis has acquired residual sublimity from its cultural equation with the phallus:

> . . . as long as the attribute of power is a phallus which can only have meaning by referring to and being confused with a penis, this confusion will support a structure in which it seems reasonable that men have power and women do not. (Gallop 1988:127)

Lacan suggests that the male body becomes "less male" when it becomes the object of a sexualized gaze (291). Of course, the male body's new specular status immediately re-negotiates the terms of that body's power; "less male", in Lacan's terms, may mean that the specular male body becomes less concerned with the impossible task of mimicking the transcendent phallus, or less invested in female passivity as a position of ultimate lack. Lynne Segal suggests that "[t]here have always been men who could consciously delight in being the object of a woman's (or a man's) desire; and who could see the penis merely as a penis" (Segal 87). Crozier offers the reader a look at the non-masterful male body. Her diction consistently evokes proximity to affirm the penis as penis, to restore it to a corporeal status that is neither inflated by women's "castrated"

state, nor intimidated by the mythic phallus. Transcendence, if it can be found at all, Crozier suggests, lies in the body as a site of erotic mutuality. In the "Penis Poems", mutual pleasure relies upon trust, that problematic vulnerability in which heterosexual women have always placed their hope.

In Reading Rembrandt: Beyond the Word-Image Opposition, Mieke Bal writes of the "reluctant object's power of refusal", the ways in which an object may resist the gaze (142). Crozier suggests that though the corporeal penis may be a reluctant object of the gaze, this reluctance is not due to the penis' lack of "to-be-looked-at-ness", but rather a result of the ways in which the phallus has maintained primacy over the penis, and the ways in which both visual and verbal language have been deficient in providing terms by which the male body may be referenced. But Elizabeth Grosz aptly states that "no part of the body is graphically unrepresentable. The point is that graphic representation necessarily transforms the parameters and terms of the body represented" (Grosz 1994:198). If the graphic unrepresentability of the male body is indeed a myth, how then to depict the penis? Crozier's choice of largely grotesque imagery to describe the penis may spring from a difficulty rooted in phallic language and traditional imagery. When Crozier writes the penis as "old man with [his] teeth in a glass by the bed", and a "common garden slug" sprouting "horns of light", she attempts to change the conditions by which the penis is considered erotic. She brings the usually-elided flaccid penis into the realm of desire, and formulates imagery which reclaims the penis as flesh, not transcendent myth.

Notes

1. Tanner's article on Sharon Olds' The Father, a book of poems Olds wrote about her father's death from cancer, asserts that sexuality is not the only dynamic at work in looking relations, and focuses on the "well" person's gaze upon the dying body. Tanner's insistence that fear of castration is a gloss on fear of death is particularly interesting given Crozier's exploration of a state of suspended animation in "Osiris" and of sex as violence in "Tales For Virgins" and "Ode".

2. The emerging body of theory about male sexuality written by men acknowledges a debt to feminist criticism; I recommend Calvin Thomas' Male Matters: Masculinity, Anxiety and the Male Body on the Line and Laurence Goldstein's The Male Body: Destinies, Features, Exposures as two texts of special interest.

Chapter Three: Reading the "Penis Poems": Governing Gaze, Accepting Look

> If women intend, like men, to speak of sexual pleasure publicly through the medium of the male nude, they must learn to do so without discomfort, embarrassment, guilt or a sense of disloyalty to their men, and to make images that speak without ambivalence, ambiguity or self-consciousness.
>
> Sarah Kent, Images of Men (62)

This chapter will examine the conditions by which Lorna Crozier undertakes a dual project within the "Penis Poems": to demystify the penis with her gaze, and to eroticize the penis with her accepting look. Additionally, this chapter will explore the ways in which Crozier's use of humour challenges reverential views of the penis and introduces new perspectives on the male body and on female heterosexuality.

In her review of Angels of Flesh, Angels of Silence, Mary di Michele applauds Crozier's "claim to be the eye of the world, not to stay defined as 'the other', as the second sex" (di Michele 32). As this "eye of the world", Crozier is determined to get a good look at the male body, and to offer such a view to the reader. Crozier's gaze demands much of the reader, as well as of the male body. Her prolonged, insistent gaze invites the reader to gaze along with the speaker, and in so doing, to discover the terms of the female gaze as it exists alongside an erotics of the male body. Feminist film critics like Lisa Hopkins and Miriam Hansen suggest that a female desiring gaze which "fetishizes" the male body is no mere "act of ogling", but rather, an attempt to establish

female heterosexuality as an active agency. In Hopkins' terms, the female gaze acknowledges "a silent collusion" of mutual erotic need between men and women, and emphasizes that heterosexuality is more than just a homosocial exchange of women (Hopkins 120).[1] Certainly Crozier's "eye of the world" occupies viewing positions that offer more than "silent collusion", but her "fetishization" is, like Hansen's and Hopkins', a bid to situate female sexual agency in erotic mutuality.

In her 1995 essay, "A Secret Indulgence", when Crozier writes about the necessity of separating sexism from individual men (64), she does so in full recognition that men and sexism have become automatically and (in Crozier's view) unfairly equated. Maintaining a distinction similar to Lacan's separation of penis and phallus, Crozier proposes to criticize the (sexist) phallus and eroticizes the (individual) penis. Crozier has written of the feminist drive behind her impulse to examine old sexual assumptions:

> We're going to open up the packages and surprise you. We're going to tell you some secrets and expose some lies. We're going to peel some vegetables and show you what's underneath the skin. ("Speaking" 92)

But "opening up the package" of the male body has been rigorously questioned as a sexist project. Does being "the eye of the world" mean taking on a "masculinized" perspective? In Women and Film: Both Sides of the Camera, E. Ann Kaplan wonders: "is the gaze necessarily male (i.e. for reasons inherent in the structure of language, the unconscious, symbolic systems, and thus all social structures?)" (24). How does the act

of looking change the public perception (and perhaps the authority) of the woman who eroticizes the male body?:

> . . . when [the man] is set up as sex object, the woman then takes on the 'masculine role' as bearer of the gaze and initiator of the action. She nearly always loses her feminine characteristics in so doing -- not those of attractiveness, rather of kindness, humaneness, motherliness. She is now cold, driving, ambitious, manipulating, just like the men whose position she has usurped. (Kaplan 29)

The female gaze upsets the fiction of the all-powerful male and the passive female, but can we identify as "male" *any* gaze that eroticizes and objectifies, a phallicization that depends less on the gender of the watcher than the power wielded by the look? Mieke Bal defines the traditional male gaze in literary and visual art as the "conflation of representation and object that comes with the eroticization of viewing" (142). Crozier does indeed use an aggressive "male" gaze in her most satirical poems, "Literary Allusions" and "Male Thrust", and to some extent, in "Overture" and "Poem for Sigmund", but she moves beyond simple gender reversal to offer the accepting look. Crozier's resistance to objectification is her attempt to rhapsodize the penis, in order to affirm mutual erotic need. To do so, Crozier must separate representation (phallus) from object (penis) and resist the conflation that depersonalizes eroticism. She must distinguish her satirical governing gaze from her accepting erotic look.

Kaja Silverman distinguishes carefully between the Lacanian gaze and the look

(or the "eye", as Lacan terms it). The gaze "is not coterminous with any individual viewer, or group of viewers"; the gaze bombards the object from all directions, whereas the look issues from a single perspective (Silverman 130). Silverman interprets Lacan's concept of the look and the gaze as "analogous in certain ways to that which links penis and phallus; the former can stand in for the latter, but can never approximate it" (130). However, that does not necessarily place the look in a position of lack, for it is in the look that the intimate relationship lives. Although the gaze seems to encompass the look, "the look might also be said to exceed the gaze -- to carry a libidinal supplement which relegates it, in turn, to a scopic subordination. The gaze [. . .] remains outside desire, the look stubbornly within" (Silverman 130).

As a sequence which develops terms in which to consider the male body as a specular object, the "Penis Poems" can be divided into three distinct components: 1. Governing Gaze / Subversive Look, 2. Accepting / Rhapsodic Look, and 3. the Look in Peril. I will explicate the movement of the "Penis Poems" from a satirical, political, sometimes angry gaze, to a governing gaze that is itself usurped by the "libidinal supplement" of the look, to use Kaja Silverman's term. As the accepting look gains prominence, the poems become rhapsodic and Crozier creates her "domestic grotesque" metaphors. The final two "Penis Poems", "Tales For Virgins" and "Ode", question the resiliency of the accepting look by reminding readers of the very real possibility of violence in heterosexual relationships, and so return to the "lived contradiction" of female heterosexuality.

In mediating the male body as somewhere between the gaze and the look, often within a single poem, Crozier grants the look, with its "libidinal supplement", increasing power over the sequence of the "Penis Poems". Even as she uses the gaze to mock phallic convention, her look redeems the male body as erotic, using poetic detail to separate the male body from the limits of phallic tradition. The demands made by her satirical and political use of the gaze make possible her accepting and eventually rhapsodic look at the male body. Over the course of the twelve "Penis Poems", the speaker's repeated appeal to the male body begins to manifest the speaker's increasing susceptibility to male beauty. Crozier's look, that libidinal supplement, begins to exceed the gaze, melting away the pushiness, the lack of tenderness that Kaplan suggests may live in the gaze.

The satire of Crozier's "governing gaze" is relieved by the way in which her accepting look surfaces in her political / feminist poems. These poems distinguish themselves by questioning the role of power in heterosexual relationships while considering the possibility of mutuality. In Freudian terms, these poems "circumvent" a psychic / social "obstacle", which Freud declares to be "woman's incapacity to tolerate undisguised sexuality" (Freud 144). Of course, Crozier does the converse; she exposes the male body beneath its cultural cloaking to gauge the *male* capacity (or incapacity) to tolerate undisguised *female* sexuality. This female appropriation of male rhetoric characterizes the subversive humour of Crozier's political/feminist poems, and demonstrates Freud's "sceptical" humour which targets "not a person or an institution but

the certainty of our knowledge itself, one of our speculative possessions" (Freud 161).

Crozier sets up "Overture", the first in the sequence of "Penis Poems", to parody the sexuality of the traditional literary muse. Literary convention dictates that the muse is unchangeably female, though Gwendolyn MacEwen (among other female poets) long maintained that she wrote for a male muse (Atwood 1970: 215). Crozier mock-elevates the male muse as a sleeping leopard, leaving the reader to wonder whether the penis is "caged" for our protection, or for its own. She begins with a salutation to the penis as recalcitrant muse, satirizing the tradition of muse as forever female, forever inspiration and never creator:

> O penis,
> apostrophe of lust,
> come out of the cage
> where you lie sleeping. "Overture" (1-4)

"Overture" announces an opening of libidinal negotiations, a formal proposal to the dominant fiction that keeps the penis hidden from female eyes, except at moments of power. Crozier hails the penis first as an "apostrophe of lust", using the Aristotelian indicator of persons not present, so that the hidden penis symbolizes its own absence; it is not lust itself, but the "apostrophe" to female lust, the desired object that is rarely in (cultural) evidence. But "apostrophe" may also be read as a punctuation symbol suggested by the shape of the penis. Is this the penis as possessive, suggesting ownership in intercourse? Or does the apostrophe indicate a contraction of words and of bodies, a

temporary melding of bodies in sexual intercourse? The penis punctuates lust; it does not define, embody or dictate desire. It represents only a component of desire, just as it represents only a component of the male body. This penis does not inspire worshipful silence or obedience; instead, it is rhapsodized as "lithe and rare", a "proud rooster who struts his stuff"; the object is visually divine, literally the "word made flesh". Crozier's ironic parody of literary tradition cannot be ignored, but on one level, "Overture" is a poem that begins with the female speaker's insistent and desiring call to male beauty, an utterance that Freud would call "wooing speech", were the speaker male.

Crozier parodies the many love poems written by men to women, poems which rely upon the force of the gaze to create the woman as objectified beauty and to maintain the writer-as-subject. Crozier deliberately invokes the same paradigm here, calling out to male beauty, inviting it into her gaze. At the same time, she achieves a level of parody by writing phallic images under ridiculous representation:

> . . . when you raise your head,
> the birds tremble in the trees,
> are struck
>   like wooden matches,
> flames falling around you
> feather by feather.
>
> "Overture" (7-12)

How does the look emerge to usurp the powerful gaze? Mieke Bal suggests that

the reluctant object's power of refusal can open the gaze up to the possibility of the look (144). Moved by the "shyness" of the hidden muse, Crozier shifts the speaker's poetic diction from declamatory to enticingly lyrical. The accepting look steadily exceeds the gaze and takes over the narrative voice. Though Lacan suggests that women's desire can only be manifested as response, Crozier is adamant in her position as watcher, as the author of the desiring look (and indeed, the author of the male body), affirming both her male lover's beauty and her own sexual subjectivity. Crozier's "come out of the cage where you lie sleeping" is as much a declaration of a desiring self as it is an exhortation to uncloak the male body. By the third stanza of "Overture", Crozier writes the speaker's desire as both incited by the sight of the male body, and very much of her own making. By the third stanza, "Overture" not only mocks male literary and viewing tradition, but also bespeaks a sensual wish for intimacy:

> I want to wear it in my hair
> I want to put it to my lips
> and with tongue and tissue
> play you
> your favourite song. (17-21)

Crozier's characterization of the male body as musical instrument acts as both a reversal and a rhapsodic wish for reciprocity. The penis becomes both the subject for whom the song is played, and the object upon which the song is played. "Tissue" suggests a home-made "comb-and-tissue" instrument, but also indicates human tissue, the

"carnelian and brilliant" comb of the penis as "cock of the walk", making the penis' "favourite song" undeniably erotic.

The final stanza of "Overture" repeats the classical invocation, but with the difference allowed by the look:

> O prick of delight,
> O word made flesh,
> I turn out all the lights
> so I can hear you. (22-25)

The "apostrophe of lust" is now addressed as "prick of delight". Desire is now concomitant with joy. The reluctant muse, no longer Bal's "conflation of representation and object", becomes the "word made flesh". The Biblical allusion to Christ as Saviour may be equally a sly appeal to the penis' ego, and an expression of the speaker's joy at the success of her own "wooing speech". Where sight has been limited and speech forbidden, now there is the possibility for both. In her final appeal, the poet creates a safe space for the shy creature, and removes the threat of the gaze in order to listen to the muse: "I turn out the lights / so I can hear you" (lines 24-25). Crozier writes to renegotiate the female relationship to the Law of Language: to hear words made flesh, the love song made female.

Crozier concludes early in "Overture" that the fun of effecting a sexual reversal

becomes hollow unless one also searches for a new way of looking. She begins by reversing the traditional male gaze, but finds that her wish for erotic mutuality is stronger than her lust for power, and her demanding gaze is replaced by an accepting look. By the poem's end, the speaker accepts the vulnerability of the penis without devaluing its corporeal reality, and accommodates the penis to reveal pleasure that relies on intimacy rather than on power.

As "Overture" demonstrates, Crozier situates the male body as a site of curious inquiry. "[A]s mysterious as Woman must be for men, so too must men be for women", writes Elizabeth Grosz in Volatile Bodies (192), adding paradoxically that "what remains unanalyzed, what men can have no distance on, is the mystery, the enigma, the unspoken of the male body" (198). While Crozier's "Penis Poems" were not written specifically to refute or support Lacanian ideas, they explore sites of linguistic and cultural conflict that explicate Lacan's "enigma" of the heterosexual body (Lacan 287). Without a doubt, Lacan and Freud would regard a project like the "Penis Poems" as an extended expression of penis envy, with a woman perpetually frustrated by her attempts to see the phallus. However, Crozier's attempt to write the male body may be read as hopeful, even from a psychoanalytical viewpoint. Crozier gazes at the male body in order to reconsider the terms under which a female body may write her own sexuality.

In "Poem For Sigmund", Crozier continues her parodic project, mocking the literary convention of dedicating poems to major influences. Indeed, Freud's theory of

penis envy has definitely exerted an influence on this poem, and Crozier loses no time in undoing the assumption of envy in the very first line: "It's a funny thing". The "funny" penis has long been specifically a province of male humour, but Crozier invites the knowing laughter of women. In her study on the history of women's humour, Nancy Walker declares that "whenever men control women's political, economic and personal lives, humour that makes men a target must be shared in secret" (66). But this humour is far from secret; Crozier makes her humour public, and her indiscretion is her strength. An almost palpable relief underscores the female laughter in "Poem For Sigmund", relief that a particularly female perspective has been taken on a male myth. Such indiscreet writing is not disrespect for the male body, but a radical attempt to suggest that different realities live parallel to patriarchal reality.

Crozier reverses Freud's view of women as the "exposed" subject of a sexual joke, someone whose exposure within the joke adds savour to the wit (Freud 143). The man is the sexually exposed "other" in "Poem For Sigmund":

> It's a funny thing,
> a Brontosaurus with a long neck
> and pea-sized brain, only room
> for one thought and that's
> not extinction. It's lucky
> its mouth is vertical
> and not the other way or we'd see it
> smiling like a Cheshire cat.

(Hard to get in the mood
with that grin on your mind.)
No wonder I feel fond of it,
its simple trust of me
as my hands slide down your belly,
the way it jumps up
like a drawing in a child's pop-up book,
expecting me to say "Hi!
Surprised to see you,"
expecting tenderness
from these envious woman's hands.

"Poem For Sigmund", whole text

Crozier writes the penis as a "Brontosaurus", an exotic though foolish creature that seeks to avoid extinction through procreation alone (and, we may note, was unsuccessful). Her subsequent image of the penis' fading Cheshire Cat smile echoes the motif of disappearance introduced by the brontosaurus image. These metaphors of benign absence are hardly signs of the bloody and fearful castration of the Oedipal trauma. Neither is the speaker's "fond"-ness the terrified desire that the Freudian penis purports to inspire. Crozier insists on her affection for the male body even as she further short-circuits phallic worship by writing the penis next as "a drawing in a child's pop-up book" (6). A less threatening or more endearing metaphor would be hard to find. Crozier cannily repeats "expecting" twice in the final five lines of the poem (17 and 20), conjuring up cultural expectations, the way men expect women to express both envy and surprise at the sight of the penis. This combination would be a difficult trick indeed;

how can a woman envy that which she must maintain her perpetual "surprise" at seeing? In "Osiris", Crozier will propose the woman as creator of the penis, but the speaker of "Poem for Sigmund" seems merely amused by this expectation of surprise.

Crozier's final line raises questions about the fragile framework of heterosexuality according to psychoanalytical theory; would envy instantly surface if not kept at bay by tenderness? The vulnerability of the penis in the woman's hands speaks volumes about the Freudian need to explain sexuality. Rigid control and stringent expectations are necessary to ensure the penis' safety in the unpredictable hands of someone who does not own a penis (and so has not presumably "read the manual"). The speaker constructs herself as a woman who points out possible lack in both her partner and herself; what would be the consequences should he lack "manliness", should she lack "tenderness"?

Crozier's wry introduction of penis envy suggests that Freud, as the recipient of the poem, would naturally consider any discussion of the penis by a woman to be a manifestation of penis envy. Hélène Cixous, however, dismisses penis envy out of hand; she advises that woman allow men to believe "that we are this hole edged with penis envy [. . .] so we will assure them (we the motherly mistresses of their little pocket signifiers) that they are something" (89). Cixous suggests that penis envy is, in fact, a male experience. Crozier, too, gives women's "penis envy" short shrift, and focuses instead upon undoing Lacan's "knot" of castration anxiety (Lacan 281).

Kaja Silverman notes the "the ideal female subject" is a woman who "refuses to recognize lack", despite the possibility that her own body is supposedly the ultimate sign of that lack (46). Crozier's "Literary Allusions" ridicules this phallic convention and overtly parodies the gaze as an instrument of power. Both "Literary Allusions" and "Male Thrust" use satirical strategies which Freud would call "tendentious" humour, comedy that functions as "an exposure of the sexually different person to whom it is directed" (Freud 141). But Freud is adamant in his defense of tendentious jokes, claiming that they "open sources of pleasure that have become inaccessible" (147), and attend a vital part of a healthy psyche as "a rebellion against ...authority, a liberation from its pressure" (149). According to Freud, this type of humour "provide[s] a means of undoing the renunciation and retrieving what was lost" (145). In the case of these poems, Crozier retrieves the female sight of the male body, and seeks to liberate women and men from phallocratic authority. It is no coincidence that both of these poems address the works of male novelists, since Crozier displays a "desire for the masculine body that does not respect the Father's Law" (Gallop 1982:79), especially the law that protects against a recognition of "lack".

"Literary Allusions" features the female sight of the male body as it has come to support the dynamics of heterosexual power. Crozier satirizes the male body's position in high literary erotica, as represented by D.H. Lawrence's Lady Chatterley's Lover, a book, E.F. Shields warns us, that people still take very seriously as an erotic classic (Shields 183). To this end, Crozier works against lyric tradition and employs some very flat,

almost prosaic language to undo Lawrence's depiction of the sight of the penis as a quasi-religious revelation:

> D. H. Lawrence described it as
> "thick and arching," (the woman's
> eyes were reverent). He called it
> "lordly" and "the king of glory".
> It rose from a "little cloud of
> vivid red-gold hair."
>
> ("Literary Allusions" 1-6)

Crozier uses "Literary Allusions" to mock the carefully constructed language of penis worship, and rejects the possibility that erotic mutuality could result from such unbalanced looking relations. She allows the politicized gaze to run the poem, with little or no intervention from the accepting rhapsodic look. Crozier makes satirical hay of Lawrence's phallo-honorific diction, quoting "glory", "lordly" and "reverent" out of context to emphasize the ridiculousness of seeing the penis as deity. To support this idealized penis, Lawrence writes Lady Chatterley as a woman full of awe at the sight of the male organ. She reveres the penis as mystery and source of sublime pleasure, but Crozier openly mocks Lady Chatterley's coy phallus worship: "A bit terrifying, but lovely. And he comes / to *me*!" (9-10).

What Crozier seems to propose here is not merely mockery, but a reciprocity that refuses the double bind of "feminine" coyness and protective phallic worship. To refuse

these ways of looking at the penis challenges long-held codes of masculinity. Miriam Hansen agrees that a male body placed on conscious erotic display may "rescue female spectatorship from its 'locus of impossibility'", if the woman is allowed a gaze of her own (586). Hansen proposes that a male body who is offered (or offers himself) as both subject and object of the gaze attains an "erotic appeal [. . .] of reciprocity and ambivalence, rather than of mastery and objectification" (590). Like Hansen, Crozier proposes that erotic mutuality may be generated by a male body that refuses to hide, and a female desiring look that neither invades nor engages in coy refusal.

But rescuing female spectatorship from its "locus of impossibility" also means taking seriously the results of such spectatorship, particularly in the production of visual or literary art. In her classic feminist text, Thinking About Women, Mary Ellmann notes that certain male critics will treat female texts like female bodies. Crozier parodies this particular patriarchal tendency in "Male Thrust", taking as her epigraph Anthony Burgess' comment that he "can take no pleasure from serious reading...that lacks a strong male thrust". Crozier writes the poem itself as marauding penis, and handily proves that a woman can not only construct an aggressive "male" text, but she can also use humour to flout the authority of the same structure:

> This poem bends its knees
> and moves its groin.
> It does the Dirty Dog
> at parties. It pushes

> against cloth, against
> the page. It pokes
> between the lines.
>
> "Male Thrust" (1-7)

In "Male Thrust", the penis as poem is a creature without conscience or a sense of responsibility. The penis / poem runs riot, assaulting the librarian, other books, the page, and ultimately, the reader. But Crozier, too, is "push[ing] against the page" and "pok[ing] between the lines" to find space for her words. While this poem refers initially to the penis, it also refers to the ethos of machismo, and ironically, to defiant feminist writing practices.

"This poem won't stop", writes Crozier (line 27), and indeed it does not. Crozier chooses her targets well, for the poem as penis ejaculates over some spectacularly macho prose: Burgess' own Clockwork Orange with its orgiastic violence; Norman Mailer's tougher-than-thou war novel The Naked and the Dead; and Henry Miller's trilogy of sexual escapade, Nexus, Sexus, and Plexus. In "Male Thrust", does the poem as penis ejaculate as a benediction, baptizing these works, or is the ejaculation a bid for power, spraying sperm over these "malest" of texts in order to assert its phallic mastery? Is this Lacan's transcendental phallus, the signifier without a signified, the phallus that turns monstrous in embodiment?

The final lines of Crozier's poem suggest a chilling version of erotic isolation,

counteracting the heated action of the poem with intimations of masturbatory pleasure and a "love" that is nothing more than egoism:

> Even when you close the book
> you can hear it
> making obscene sounds
> smacking its lips,
> completely in love
> with itself.
>
> "Male Thrust" (28-33)

This creature bears little resemblance to the shy muse of "Overture", and it is significant that Crozier situates "Male Thrust" outside of the "Penis Poems" suite, for its critical bite does not align with Crozier's ultimately accepting look. This poem speaks of a world outside relationship, a phallo-literary world where satire is a very public force. "Literary Allusions" and "Male Thrust" operate as satires of a narrow definition of masculinity: ironic, defiant and hyper-aware of the Word of the (literary) Father. These poems are parodies of sexually iconic texts that undo their own "maleness" by insisting upon it. In "Don't Look Now: The Male Pin-Up", a study of the male image in advertising and cinema, Richard Dyer characterizes the "strong male thrust" of which Burgess writes as "a strain":

> . . . the real trap at the heart of these instabilities is that it is precisely *straining* that is held to be the great good, what makes a man a man. Whether head held

> high reaching up for impossible transcendence or penis jerking up in a hopeless assertion of phallic mastery, men and women alike are asked to value the very things that make masculinity such an unsatisfactory definition of being human (276: italics Dyer's).

The "strained" male body to which Dyer refers is caught between the need to offset the penis' vulnerability to castration while asserting the mastery of the phallus. Lacan sets up castration anxiety as a parallel to penis envy; the male fear of loss is echoed and confirmed by the female ache to recoup her own phallic loss (Lacan 281). Crozier challenges the function of castration anxiety within the phallic economy, considering it a psychic threat to the male body and consequently, a limit on women's expression of desire. "Penis / Bird" suggests that lack may haunt the male body as a choice rather than a psychic imperative. "Osiris" proposes that woman's penis-less status is not a liability, but an opportunity to create the penis. Both poems suggest that the impulse to castrate is male-initiated (a willing self-castration in "Penis / Bird", a father-figure as castrator in "Osiris"). The "Penis Poems", then, do not refute castration anxiety, but they do find room for an acceptance of "lack".

These poems assert that heterosexual relations can take place in a symbolic economy that contains room for compassionate acknowledgement of vulnerability. "Osiris", in particular, suggests a lack that is soluble through relationship. Looking acceptingly at male lack, Crozier suggests sexual concomitance, not the exhibition of the gaze. If "classic male subjectivity rests upon the denial of castration" (Silverman 44),

Crozier writes of a female subjectivity which refutes that denial while offering acceptance of corporeal vulnerability to the male object of the gaze.

Lacan explains the conditions under which the paternal threat of castration is accommodated in the male psyche as "[t]he boy's willingness to give up his most powerful desire (for the mother) to accept the Law" (Grosz 1990:116). Crozier's poems wonder about this law, and the necessity of complicity with such a threat. At what level could the "the boy's willingness" to "accept the Law" be considered a form of self-castration? There is a degree of selflessness in giving up his most powerful desire, and submitting his (psychic) body to (symbolic) castration. In "Penis / Bird", the boy wills separation from his penis in order to satisfy his own desire, and the desire of his lover; he accepts the untenable terms of desire in order to satisfy desire, both the girl's and his own. Though the boy's desire in this poem is not for the body of the mother, the girl seems equally forbidden as "she sleeps [. . .] / surrounded by brothers and sisters / her parents a hair's breath away" (3-6). In order to obtain erotic mutuality, he changes the rules of the body with the intensity of his desire:

> The boy's penis grows wings,
> it flies through the smoke hole
> and straight to the girl
> as if her lap were full
> of bread crumbs and berries.
>
> "Penis/Bird" (7-11)

In "Penis/Bird", anxiety does not appear until the poem's last two lines: "the boy anxiously / watching the sky" (30-31). Will the penis return to him? Will the girl desire only the body-less penis now that she has discovered it? Has the satisfaction been worth the loss? The "castration" has been consensual, a way to obey desire while circumventing cultural and physical parameters. The winged penis, perhaps relishing its flight of freedom, hovers between characterizations; is it a faithful servant or a betraying best friend? It performed its assigned task, "sang so sweetly / and nested between her thighs" (18-19), but that very task frees the penis / bird, and worries the boy. Could this poem act as Crozier's comment on symbolic castration, the mind / body split which encourages the cultural cloaking of the male body? Does the penis as "narcissistic organ" abandon the man? We remember that Helene Cixous has suggested that "to fly / steal (voler) is woman's gesture, to steal language, to make it fly" (96), and we might wonder then: does the penis' flight "feminize" the organ, making it yet another inaccessible piece of flesh as the boy passes through the sexual and cultural rites of manhood?

Male passivity remains a difficult (though possible) position in patriarchy; the vulnerability of the penis is at once abundantly evident and strictly taboo to mention. Crozier's Native boy and Osiris are both in a state of suspended animation until the penis returns, or is returned to them. In "Penis / Bird", Crozier grants the disembodied penis an agency that extends beyond the boy's bounded body. The penis / bird traverses boundaries that the boy cannot; it "flies straight through the smoke hole" (a yonic metaphor), undetected by the girl's family, and the girl welcomes the bird first into her lap, and then

into her body. Where the boy may have invaded, the penis/bird is welcomed, even desired. No wonder the bird "enjoys its freedom"; no wonder the boy watches the sky "anxiously". [2]

Crozier gets mileage from the old joke about genitals having minds of their own, and mocks the idea that the maintenance of sexual difference is a defense against male lack (Silverman 46). The boy's ability to detach his genitals as a messenger of his desire valourizes sexual difference, but does not protect him from lack. Crozier urges the characters in "Penis/Bird" to grow through the insistent independence of the "tattered crow / [. . .] maybe enjoying flight more than it should ." The poem expands sexual consciousness through the trope of castration, suggesting a new understanding of anxiety in the grip of desire.

Nancy Walker asserts that in women's subversive comedy, an "author's direct address to the reader" establishes "an inclusion of the reader in the concerns of the writer, assuming shared values and problems" (68). In "What Women Talk About", the poem's orality suggests a discussion among women, not only a discussion the poet is having with herself, but the beginning of a conversation with her readers, and eventually, a discussion that readers may choose to continue. Alicia Ostriker notes that this direct address is also characteristic of women's erotic poetry, "a breakdown of boundaries" that is intent upon "challenging and transforming the nature of the poem-audience transaction" (169). Crozier refuses to isolate herself as the only woman who has observed the male body.

She invites the female reader into a conversation begun with casual boldness: "Sure, I'm a woman who likes her pleasure". Male readers are also invited to "overhear" this female conversation, and learn what women do (or significantly, do not) talk about. [3] In "What Women Talk About," Crozier uses this "direct address" to underline the ironic take on the title. Of course, "women" can and do talk about anything they please, which is not always about men and their penises:

> . . . I never understood why the world
> turns on it, why life or death
> depends on its size. None of my women friends
> talks about that,
> whether they've bagged a big one
> like a poacher in the forest.
>
> "What Women Talk About" 2-7.

The "conversation" of this poem is predicated upon a tone of practicality and politics that has long been a tenet of grass-roots feminism, as the speaker and her friends discuss whether their male lovers will "scrub a toilet / or cook a meal" (10-11).
The speaker's incredulity at the penis' exalted importance seems to refute Lacan's idea of the body as a place where the phallus rules, an arena in which a woman "finds the signifier of her own desire in the body of him to whom she addresses her demand for love" (Lacan 290). Crozier sets out to determine the direction and duration of this desire through her reconfiguration of the gaze. In the last lines of "What Women Talk About", Crozier mocks psychoanalytical assumptions of limited female desire, and asserts that a

woman's desire is directed, not merely responsive:

> 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?"
> That got me thinking for a long time.
>
> "What Women Talk About" 11-15

"That got me thinking for a long time" conflates mind and body without sacrificing specific corporeal terms. Crozier includes "cogito" as an integral step towards erotic mutuality, and proposes that a true "signifier of her own desire" differs from Lacan's phallic ideal, or even penis as phallic substitute. In placing sexual politics on a par with sexual intercourse, Crozier suggests that "getting us thinking" is a project of desire.

In her 1995 essay, "A Secret Indulgence", Crozier discusses her intent to unite feminism and heterosexuality "by writing poems that celebrate the female and deflate phallocentrism [. . . and] express a love for the male body" that is undeniably pleasure-based. In such a light, Crozier insists that the "Penis Poems" do not constitute "a contradiction in tone or intent" ("Secret" 63). Indeed, in <u>The Daughter's Seduction</u>, Jane Gallop similarly asserts that a new understanding of feminine heterosexuality may lie in investigating the pleasures of body and thought implied by such a "contradiction":

> Jouissance [. . .] without analysis leads to mystification, "mythic fusion," God the One, the Phallus. But to enjoy <u>while</u> seeking why is vigilantly to keep the double

discourse, to resist mystification, religion, phallicization (Gallop 1982:126).

Crozier's examination of female heterosexual pleasure in the "Penis Poems" seems to be exactly the "jouissance" with analysis of which Gallops speaks. The dual focus of Gallop's "jouissance" *with* "analysis" suggests the strength of Crozier's poetic agenda: to appeal to both body and mind, desire and thought, the personal and the political.

Crozier's use of the direct and curious gaze suggests not only the possible converse of John Berger's hypothesis, (that men appear and women act), but also that men appear <u>when</u> women act (Berger 46). A woman writer who turns the "female gaze" upon a man pushes against the cultural pressure that requires her to not look, or to pretend to not look, for fear of appearing promiscuous or aggressive. E. Ann Kaplan does not suggest lightly that the female gazer stands to lose her "humaneness" (29). But Kaja Silverman wonders if feminist emphasis on appropriating the gaze has done less to redress a balance of power than to distract from the psychic power of our ultra-specular culture:

> We have at times assumed that dominant cinema's scopic regime could be overturned by "giving" woman the gaze, rather than by exposing the impossibility of anyone ever owning that visual agency, or of him or herself escaping specularity. (152)

Michel Foucault, in his illuminating consideration of the observing eye, asserts

that the all-seeing panopticon does not represent a single usurping authority, but rather a "disciplinary modality of power" which links struggles for power together, and "assures an infinitesimal distribution of [. . .] power relations" and so diverts society from questioning the nature of power (206-7). Silverman's caveat that the gaze is "inescapable" reminds us that the cultural and psychic structures which exist to keep the male body hidden are neither incidental nor "natural". Such hiding strategies appear to be a specific, even desperate project to keep the gaze away from the male body, or to allow the male body to be viewed only under very controlled conditions, and ultimately, to divert attention from the questions of power in "normative" heterosexual relations.

Crozier makes a determined bid to disrupt those controlled conditions with her revealing look at the penis. Acceptance seems prompted by both compassion and Bal's "power of refusal" (142), and as the poems progress, Crozier's affirming look becomes increasingly rhapsodic. The rhapsodic look moves beyond the acknowledgement of "lack" to eroticize the penis. We may read Crozier's look, a "libidinal supplement" in Silverman's terms, with what Jane Gallop calls "jouissance with analysis" in order to bring the terms of female desire to light. Within the "Penis Poems," Crozier refuses to engage masterful or violent phallic metaphor, but searches to articulate a love for the male body along with an acknowledgement of its vulnerability.

Crozier is careful to choose metaphors that eroticize but do not romanticize the penis; in doing so, she creates an aesthetic of domestic grotesqueries. These metaphors

undermine the heroic phallus, and sometimes shock with both their explicitness and their mundane language. The images with which Crozier constructs her metaphors suggest a gaze so close that the penis easily becomes a "common garden slug", in the same way that an extreme close-up will obscure obvious features and magnify particularities and idiosyncrasies. Crozier's practice truly resembles Levertov's "ecstatic attention", the poetic gaze that merits an elongated and accepting gaze as the bedrock of poetic language (Levertov 97).

Undeniably, one of Crozier's poetic strategies is to detail the penis that has so often seemed distanced from visual pleasure. She tropes the penis as an object that inspires pleasure, including a pleasure in the self. Crozier personifies the male anxiety about the desirability of the penis with the shy muse / penis of "Overture", which emerges only when the poet sings of its "lithe and rare" beauty, of its "carnelian and brilliant" comb. Even the John Thomas of "Literary Allusions" needs Lady Chatterley's assurance of its beauty: "'But he's lovely *really*' Lady Chatterley said, / although she was startled and afraid" (7-8: italics Crozier's). This anxiety about desirability continues to separate the penis from potential visual pleasure. Fiona Giles notes that "[o]utside pornography, the penis is rarely rhapsodized about, philosophized upon, or made a subject of love...within pornography, it is as often a weapon for punishment or revenge as it is a slave, provider, or tool for pleasure" (xvii). In patriarchy, the power of the penis resides in action, not in appearance. For Crozier, visual pleasure is a vital component of eroticism, but an exclusive equation of pleasure with power suggests, rather repugnantly,

that heterosexual satisfaction is dictated solely by relationships of differential power, making mutuality a liberal humanist fantasy or a dream of arrested development.

But with the "Penis Poems", Crozier asks, whose pleasure are we examining? What kind of power? Just as Sarah Kent asserts that "men are more than their bodies", so Crozier suggests that women are more than envious empty vessels, and that penises are both more lovable, and less "startling" than phallic mythology would claim them to be. Crozier uses her rhapsodic look to dispel the cultural myth that women's bodies are more "beautiful" than men's bodies, and therefore, more "naturally" specular. When she introduces poetic formulations like the garden of penile shapes in "Phallic" and the pleasure-seeking enumeration in "Their Smell", Crozier suggests strongly that male beauty is in the eye (or nose) of the female beholder, and that men may consider themselves to be objects of beauty in female terms.

Crozier's choice of "feminine" imagery to describe the penis is highly disruptive to traditional images of masculinity. What kind of man will admit to a penis that is "shy as a sparrow" ("Literary Allusions"), or is "an amaryllis bud / just before it opens" ("Phallic")? Crozier suggests a heterosexuality in which the penis does not rule, but rather flops crazily like a "headless rooster / at the chopping block" or is as querulous as an "old man with your teeth / in a glass by the side of your bed" ("Variations").

The move into the rhapsodic poems pivots upon the profound acceptance of lack

that Crozier writes into "Osiris", offering mutuality as a remedy to anxiety. In "Osiris", Crozier explores a mode of ritual male passivity similar to that seen in "Penis / Bird". She rewrites the Egyptian creation myth in which Osiris is torn to pieces, his body parts scattered by his jealous older brother Typhon who, in psychoanalytic terms, represents a father figure. Osiris is dis-membered, (surely Crozier's intentional pun on castration), although he also seems to embody Lacan's "primordial splitting" of the psyche to which "the unconscious bears perpetual witness" (Mitchell and Rose 5). However, it is Osiris' sister/lover Isis who bears witness in Crozier's poem. Isis pieces Osiris back together "like a broken cup" (7), but cannot find his penis. Through this mysterious absence, Osiris' missing organ would seem to become the transcendental phallus, the absent, constantly desired object.

But Isis moulds another penis out of clay, and Crozier chooses powerful symbology for her penile replacement options: a rose, with its vaginal folds, an echo of Isis' own body; a slippery fish; a fantastic and spiky six-pointed star; a sleepy, though wise owl; or a crescent moon, a pun on the waxing and waning of the penis.

Another image, "a second pair of eyes", challenges the power of the gaze and the fear of castration, as though a single pair was insufficient, as though to emphasize the importance of the gaze. Crozier's final suggestion is a gift disguised as lack, an absence that recalls a presence: "to carve with a paring knife / another heart." While castration is called vividly to mind by the knife and the action of carving, the castration has already

occurred; "another heart" proposes implies that love will provide compensation for any "lack", actual or perceived.

Isis' act of creation both echoes Christian typology and defies Christian patriarchy. Crozier's Isis stands in for God, moulding Osiris as Adam. Crozier writes Isis as "a trinity of / mother / sister / lover" (lines 1-2), a female Holy Trinity. Isis' creation of the penis acts as a compassionate refiguration of the phallic mother, she who creates life from her body (in the poem, with her spittle, her hands and her voice). In "Osiris", Crozier writes an explicit acceptance of "lack"; Isis notes the loss of the phallus (i.e. Osiris' "original" penis), and creates a second penis to compensate for the "lack", but her consideration of various shapes for the penis shows that she herself does not invest in the given terms of such "lack".

In Lacanian terms, and in Crozier's poems, the female lover is the other through whom the penis is mediated, without whom the penis has no place in the symbolic order. In "Osiris", the female lover physically re-creates the penis; in "Overture", the female speaker "creates" the penis by luring the muse from the safety of its cage. The act of hiding in the cage finds a corporeal correlative in the retraction of the testicles, but the female artist's "wooing speech" functions as a call for the penis to, literally, "come out of itself"in order to receive admiration. In classical tradition, when a male artist woos the muse, he mediates a divine being onto the page or canvas in human female terms. So, Crozier's female artist figure woos the penis through the idea of the phallus as muse,

and re-creates a sublime entity (phallus) as a corporeal sexual organ (penis).

Lacan suggests that the heterosexual relationship is fraught with anxiety and fears of lack; for both partners in a sexual relationship, "it is not enough to be subjects of need, or objects of love, but that they must stand for the cause of desire" (Lacan 287). This belief that each partner must be the source of desire seems based in a myth of romantic love, and Lacan himself points out that such unrealistic demands only create an insoluble "enigma" in the relationship, and frustration within the self (Lacan 287). Lacan claims that "the unconscious castration complex has the function of a knot" (281), and Crozier seems to regard fear of castration as a knot that impedes the possibilities of heterosexual mutuality. Crozier positions her accepting look to undo the knot of self-centred desire, and move beyond the gaze that sees the Other ultimately as an affirmation of self. The "Penis Poems" explore lacunae of sexual imagery: in "Variations", the penis as "common garden slug" leaves a silver trail like "the moon's ghostly tracks across a field of snow" or, most prosaically, like semen; in "Facts", Crozier emphasizes that "facts/don't tell us everything"; and in "Their Smell", the corporeal senses remember that that which "our bodies know / but can't put words to" is often the "most persuasive". For Crozier, the "enigma" of the relationship is no threat, but rather a cycle for establishing erotic mutuality.

"Feminism is, after all, a revolution" writes Crozier; "it has changed the oldest of stories, revised what many thought were untouchable texts" ("Speaking" 93). It should

not be surprising that Crozier approaches "Osiris" as an originary moment of forgiveness after primal violence, in which Osiris defied the Law and paid the price with his body. In "Onions," from her controversial "Sex Lives of Vegetables" series, Crozier speculates that if the snake tempted Eve with an onion instead of an apple, "how different paradise" would be. In "Osiris", Crozier asks the reader to consider, not necessarily fancifully, how different the world and language would be had Isis chosen to fashion a rose instead of a penis.

The female gaze has been interpreted as castrating, as an indelible marker of lack. Lacan goes so far as to set up a hierarchy of power in relationship to lack: the phallus is the ultimate signifier without a corresponding signified, the transcendental desired object, the ultimate power (Lacan 286). Men are "castrated" by comparison to the phallus, and live as embodiments of lack. Woman are doubly "castrated", having neither the phallus nor a "bastard offspring" penis. As a result, men are more powerful than women.

But Jane Gallop destabilizes this Lacanian position by pointing out the shift of positions that emphasizes similarity between genders over difference:

> The man is "castrated" by not being total, just as a woman is "castrated" by not being a man [. . .] It is not that men and women are simply unequal, but they occupy the same position in different harmonic ratios, at different moments. The effect is a staggering of position. (1982:22)

Crozier's poems, too, argue for sexual difference at the same time as they argue for equality, a "staggering of position" that defies fundamentalist sex roles and threatens traditional metaphors of masculinity. In "Osiris", Crozier asserts that the female look, far from being "castrating", is affirming that the male body is enough, the penis is sufficient unto the day.

Crozier's movement towards a domestic grotesque, begun with Isis' rolling the clay for Osiris' new penis between her palms "like cookie dough", begins a conflation of traditional sexual imagery that will eventually emerge as "monstrous". In her article on women in horror films, "When the Woman Looks", Linda Williams suggests that as the woman and the monster exchange looks, an acknowledgement of affinity passes between them, a mutual recognition that, within the patriarchal order, both woman and monster are perceived as "biological freak[s] with impossible and threatening appetites that suggest a frightening potency precisely where the normal male would perceive a lack" (87). In addition, Williams uncovers a male identification with the monster, wherein the man sees his own body as ugly and abject, assuming that his potential lack and vulnerability must seem monstrous to the woman who dares to look. The man becomes the monster who needs the acceptance of the look even as he rails against the violation of the gaze. For Williams, the monstrous body becomes a site both for male abjection (86) and for female "identification and sympathy" (87).

The "monstrous" body, and the ways in which the male and female seem united in that body, suggests that the distance between male lack and female acceptance is rocky, but not impassable, territory. Like Williams, Crozier suggests that an insistent but compassionate look at a "monstrous" body may reveal an ordinary body "beneath" the monster. The "brontosaurus with the long neck" becomes as benign as "a dràwing in a child's pop-up book" ("Poem for Sigmund"); the transcendent "king of glory" may be "shy as a sparrow in the hand" ("Literary Allusions"). Whose bodies are these? Crozier links brutal male-monster imagery to delicate, vulnerable beauty, forms of beauty that have been traditionally construed as female. The double-gendered body becomes common ground for the male and the female, then, monstrous when viewed through the patriarchal order, but actually a site of acceptance of "lack", when viewed in appreciation of its beauty.

"Fear of Snakes," the first poem in Angels of Flesh, Angels of Silence, is worth examining for its image of a sexually monstrous body that becomes a loved body. Crozier begins with the female fear of snakes, often interpreted by popular psychoanalysis as a fear of the phallus. But in "Fear of Snakes", the female look accepts the snake's power and vulnerability, its ability to "separate itself / from its shadow". The female speaker is pursued by boys who

> . . . 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

"Fear of Snakes" 7-10 (italics Crozier's)

This scene describes a classic Freudian nightmare; the protagonist is chased through the back alleys of her subconscious in order to escape a symbolic rape, as the snake is brandished like a primitive torch by a primal horde of young men. The "runnel" of the spine is such a close rhyme with the "tunnel" of the body, the vagina, that the thought of the snake crawling down her back indirectly suggests penetrative sex. Even her tormentor's last name, "Moen", mimics a sound of sexual ecstasy (or pain). Larry Moen himself, the predator with the "huge snake", is a figure of dangerous sexuality to the girl, "an older boy" who "touched the inside of my legs on the swing".

The scene is set for a terrifying awakening from corporeal and psychic innocence, but Crozier turns the trauma into an epiphany through the girl's accepting look; when she sees beauty in the snake, her fear dissolves. When the mighty Larry nails the snake to a telephone pole (two more phallic symbols!), the girl identifies strongly with the snake:

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.

"Fear of Snakes" (16-22)

The girl finds compassion for the snake's pain at the moment when it is transformed from aggressor into victim. The snake, upon receiving her accepting look, opens its mouth to reveal both a penile "red tongue," like an echo of its own body, and a yonic "terrible dark O", perhaps an echo of the female body, perhaps a corporeal reminder of that "darkness at the heart of things" to which Crozier refers in line 4. Crozier presents a monstrous violated body with both male and female sexual characteristics, and proposes this body as a defiance of patriarchy. Not surprisingly, the boys are left "standing there with their stupid hands / dangling from their wrists", impotent without the snake. After all the noise of this poem, the yelling and running and pounding, the poem ends with the snake's mouth as an abyss of silence, "a terrible dark O / no one could hear." Is Crozier referring to the silencing of women's words, or a more general silencing of the "monstrous" non-phallic male body? Or both?

Crozier's scrunity discloses both the penis' power and its vulnerability, its erect activity and flaccid passivity, its potential as both object of worship and as domestic grotesque. John Updike writes "for sheer nakedness, there is nothing like a hopeful phallus; its aggressive shape is indivisible from its tender-skinned vulnerability" (Goldstein 10). While Updike's conflation of power and vulnerability is a point well-taken, he elides the non-tumescent penis, and Crozier does not. She proposes that for sheer nakedness, there is nothing like a flaccid penis, "small and harmless / as a plum"

("Facts"). Her gaze allows the sight of the un-heroic penis, the incidental penis; Crozier features this flaccid flesh as equally deserving of the lover's compassionate look, and of poetic (and even public) acknowledgement.

The next three "Penis Poems", "Variations", "Facts", and "Phallic", may be dealt with as a unit of a kind, for following "Osiris", the accepting look remains the primary mediator of the textual relationship. Crozier's look assumes an "extreme close-up" that enhances reader curiosity even as it pushes against the limits of discomfort. Her imagery turns now to the macabre, describing the penis in terms of a bodily decay that has signified female fecundity and mortality for centuries. Her look encourages a tone that is more ecstatic than worshipful, and if we read Crozier with an eye to her conflation of the physical and the spiritual, this ecstasy offers a spirituality of the body that is differs from the singular demands of phallic mysticism. In Crozier's poetry, the body as temple is still a body with lack, a tired or aging body, but no less an ecstatic object for all that. In poetic diction that would no doubt give Gerard Manley Hopkins heart failure, Crozier views the penis with a type of *haecceitas*, a "thisness" of the body that affirms her accepting look.

Crozier has not abandoned irony, even though she has opted for the embrace of the accepting look. She retains her criticism of the phallic tradition that surfaces and recedes throughout each of these three poems, and comments upon the politics that threaten the acceptance of her point of view. In "Variations", Crozier makes hilarious

use of line breaks to emphasize the challenge of her grotesquerie, and to find parallels for the body's limiting oddities in the natural world:

> Old man with your teeth
> in a glass by the bed,
> you're your own crutch
> to lean on.
> You were born bald
> and you've stayed that way,
> no toupee will do.
>
> Headless rooster
> at the chopping block,
> you flap about
> without beak or brain,
> banging
> into everything,
> bruising the air,
> not knowing
> when it's time to stop.
>
> Common garden slug,
> ugly and beautiful,
> your antennae
> little horns of light,
> on my breasts and belly
> you draw a luminous
> silver trail
> like the moon's

ghostly tracks
across a field of snow.

"Variations", whole text

Crozier's look relies on extreme proximity in "Variations", as it will again in "Their Smell". Her "extreme close-up" look is a poignant reminder of vulnerability to the gaze, but ultimately for the gazer (and the reader as implied gazer) as well. Crozier does employ erotic humour in this poem, promoting visual comparisons in her metaphors for the corporeal penis. At first glance, the up-close metaphors of "Variations" seem not only non-masterful, but non-rhapsodic as well.

But each of these metaphors contains hidden light. The "old man" is not pitiful, but stubbornly self-sufficient; he is his "own crutch to lean on" and "no toupee will do" to cover his baldness. While the "headless rooster" and "the chopping block" definitely reawaken the castration imagery explored in earlier poems, this penis is active, not abject. "[W]ithout beak or brain" suggests that the penis is neither weapon nor intellect, and Crozier's choice to set the word "banging" on a line by itself emphasizes her colloquial pun on sexual activity, as well as the debatable sexual insatiability of the penis. But this penis is only "bruising the air", not the flesh, and its "not knowing" is no indictment, but rather to be expected of a "headless", brainless being. Even the "common garden slug" wears "horns of light" and leaves a trail like "the moon's ghostly tracks" across the woman's naked body. Further, the penis has become "luminous", once again the "prick of delight" from "Overture". For Crozier, these grotesques are enigmatic <u>and</u>

ecstatic.

Mary di Michele's critical assessment of Crozier's erotic poems presents a particular problem for our understanding of the "rhapsodic" poems. If she was right to suggest that "the more men laugh [at these poems], the better the world will be", what perspective is Crozier asking men to take on their own body image? Crozier asks men to acknowledge that the phallic economy places strictures upon men as well as women, and to free themselves enough from a belief in phallic transcendency, to laugh when a woman points out the ridiculousness of patriarchal rules. Though Crozier is emphatically feminist in wishing to free women from the silence imposed on them by patriarchy, we would do well to remember that Crozier's mutuality is also humanist, in that she wishes to free men, also, from their own, different, silence imposed by the Law of Language.

We might remind ourselves, too, that laughter from men may also signal inclusion, "being in on the joke". Crozier's open mockery of psycho-sexual "truth" spurs much of the humour, as Crozier voices alternative feminine "truths" that have gone unexpressed. Ostriker points out that this type of humour, tinged heavily with irony, has become a staple device in women's erotic poetry. This irony is not cruelly "resigned" or modernist irony, but rather a "cheerful and vulgar" irony designed to motivate thought and change (Ostriker 168). So informed, Crozier's poems articulate the lived dichotomy of heterosexual feminism, and open up the possibility of erotic humour:

> Humour, like shame and wisdom, is a product of understanding. It can be said that humour is also a product of knowledge, sexual and otherwise. Getting it depends on knowing what It is. (Barreca 1991:62)

"Facts" marks Crozier's foray into the "scientific" penis, as she compares the human penis to the sex organs of animals. The animal organs are arresting in their threat and size: the cat's penis "has a bone and barbs" and "tears her inside/when he pulls out"; "the drone explodes" and "wedges" in the queen bee "like shrapnel"; the violence that could be done by the (sperm?) whale with a "six feet long" penis and "half a ton" testicles is left to the reader's imagination. By contrast, the human penis seems "small and harmless as a plum". In an interesting inversion of the "natural", Crozier writes the animals as alarming enactments of the old human phallic order. Since rough sex figures here as "animal sex", the flaccid imagery with which Crozier describes the human penis would seem to indicate a certain "boneless" calm, civilization rather than lack. But the poem's final stanzas begin to doubt the reliability of appearances, particularly comparisons:

> On the surface it seems less
> dangerous,
>   less dramatic,
> in fact,
> almost boring. But facts
> don't tell us everything.
>
> So much depends

on setting, on intent,
the strange and delicate
anatomy of love.

"Facts" 24-33

Crozier sets the penis as "boring" against "the most interesting thing" in "What Women Talk About," bringing into question notions about the significance of the organ. But Crozier's look redeems the lack of drama in the human body and assures the reader that the body is only prosaic "on the surface", that "the strange and delicate anatomy of love" lies beneath. Crozier will return to this undefinable human relation, walking a fine line between refuting the patriarchal view and placing her speaker in "romantic thraldom" (Ostriker 165). "So much depends" carries an echo of the first line of William Carlos Williams' "The Red Wheelbarrow", and Crozier may be attempting an echo of Williams' exploration of the way in which a liminal object can act as a linchpin to a new consciousness.

"Phallic" echoes the metaphors of Crozier's "Sex Lives of Vegetables", but its heady fecundity is very welcome to this series. Crozier begins to "root" the penis in the earth, and lure it away from standard phallic rigidity, images of wood or stone. Female genitalia have long been associated with garden imagery, but Crozier's terms assert that a man's body is as aesthetically pleasing and as "natural" as a woman's body. Crozier affirms the doubtful "tenderness" of "Poem For Sigmund" with her images of penis as "young red rhubarb shoots / poking through / the soil". These lines are especially

interesting as Crozier includes words that are traditionally, even violently, masculine: "shoot", "poke" and even the "barb" of "rhubarb". Yet in context of the male body as garden, these words soften to a hopeful image of new growth. By softening these usually hard and even violent words, Crozier demonstrates that even traditionally phallic language can be transformed through specific and thoughtful use. She de-phallicizes asparagus by writing of it "lightly steamed", and even giving us the penis as flower: "An amaryllis bud / just before it opens". Though each image is phallic in shape, Crozier de-phallicizes each in turn:

> green thumb
> alter-egos,
> how you tend them,
> how you coax them
> with your gardener's hands
> to make them grow.
>
> "Phallic" (11-16)

These "green thumb / alter-egos" are tended by a unspecified "you", someone with "gardener's hands" rather than "envious" hands. The "you" could certainly be read as self-reflexive, referring to the speaker of the poem, or to women in general, gardeners who "coax" their men's bodies. But with the possible exception of "Literary Allusions", Crozier uses "you" in this suite of poems in the second person, to refer to the penis itself, or the male persona. Is this coaxing "you" also male? Does Crozier dare to suggest that the growth of a young boy's body deserves the attentive care that is so lavished on a

garden or a young woman?

Throughout the "Penis Poems", Crozier flouts not only the idea of visual fidelity to the lover's penis, but the even odder but equally persistent idea of perpetual visual virginity, in which a woman must maintain the fiction of surprise each time she sees a penis, as part of the myth of the awe-ful worship of the penis. The cultural myth of the "visual virgin", the woman who has only ever seen one penis in her life is a construction meant to allay fears of comparison. In "Their Smell", Crozier brings such fears to the surface, confident that the male body can bear the pressure of such comparison.

A poem like "Their Smell" is not for the faint of heart, with its earthy, culinary, chemical fermentations of odour and body:

> Some smell like root cellars,
> potatoes and crab-apples
> devouring themselves,
> turning soft and brown inside. Some
> of morel mushrooms in a paper bag,
> the smell of damp earth
> under a mound of damp leaves,
> rosemary, marigolds, dead roses.
>
> Some smell like geranium leaves,
> like burnt stubble
> when the smoke's so thick

it changes the light. Others,
the hands of a Chinese cook,
a bale of hay covered with snow,
old-fashioned hair oil. Some
of rancid butter or a fridge
when it goes crazy,
growing its blue, green and black
gardens of mould. Some smell
like anchovies, others balsam poplar,
high-bush cranberries, dusty feathers,
a mouse's nest
in a pocket of an old coat bought at a rummage sale.

"Their Smell" (1-23)

This zestful hyperbole is truly "ecstatic attention", to use Denise Levertov's terms, as Crozier does not take the easy way out by reducing smell to a concept; these penises never smell merely of sex or skin or sweat. Crozier chooses the homelier images of the kitchen and the backyard garden. These images embody both decay and transformation, within which a living entity ages and begins a metamorphosis into another form: butter is turning rancid; crab-apples are "devouring themselves"; the mound of damp leaves is rotting into garden mulch. Even the old mouse's nest in the rummage-sale coat suggests a recycling, a kind of re-birth in death. What is especially transformed, or perhaps transfigured here, is the reader's expectations of the male body. Crozier nudges the reader towards new ways of perceiving the male body, new parameters for speaking the flesh that involve neither heroic valorization nor caustic devaluation. The oddity of these

images aligns with their accuracy; the poet risks ridiculousness by working within a sublimated aesthetic, and her reward is a poem that pleases as it shocks, and shocks as it pleases.

Intimacy is the aim of Crozier's close and steady gaze, a movement that stands in opposition to what Elizabeth Grosz, in interpreting Lacan, posits as a function of distance in vision. The act of seeing can be accomplished from a safe distance, and need not necessarily involve or entangle the looker in the horror or seduction of what is beheld. Only vision, Grosz argues, can produce the "castrated woman"; the use of any other of the human senses would prove presence rather then absence (Grosz 1990:38-39). Jane Gallop points out that psychoanalysis privileges sight as the primary sensory organ to connote difference, and she questions Freud's "depreciation of olfactory sexual stimuli" and location of discontent "at the intersection of sexual difference and the difference between the senses of smell and sight..." (Gallop 1982:26). But Crozier situates her look so physically close to the male body that she invokes the <u>smell</u> of the penis, an olfactory intimacy that challenges the stability of the gaze:

> what our bodies know
> but can't put words to,
> subliminal,
> and most persuasive.
>
> "Their Smell" (29-32)

Crozier's insistence on the olfactory's role in the erotic draws an important "distinction between a more immediate, primitive olfactory sexuality and a mediated, sublimated visual sexuality..." (Gallop 1982:27). The surprise of Crozier's olfactory grotesqueries creates similes that evoke maleness in a way that neither exalts nor humiliates. Crozier alludes to the gap in our understanding of the body by suggesting "a smell/ you can't put your finger on", a lacuna in the realm of scent and touch, that is "most persuasive". Crozier's particularity eschews pure, odourless perfection. This look carries within it the sense that intimacy can only grow out of the gaze's project of demystification. Typically, in Crozier' poems, the gaze initially exceeds the look, in order that the look may eventually exceed the gaze. This look "re-privatises" the public narrative of the gaze as a love lyric, though of course the lyric is publicized once more as a literary and performative poem.

Ultimately, the triumph of the "Penis Poems" does not come in Crozier's usurping gaze, but in her accepting look. Perhaps Crozier's look would be less disturbing were she to adopt a more pornographic gaze, for her tenderness towards the penis is, in a way, as disturbing (or enlightening) as is her criticism of phallocentrism. This disturbance of the old ways of looking is not to be taken lightly; the "rhapsodic" look proposes the kind of subversive new perspective that Regina Barreca identifies:

> Women's comedy is marginal, liminal, concerned with and defined by its very exclusion from convention, by its aspects of refusal and its alliance with subversive female symbols. The difference of women is viewed as a risk to culture. So it should be. (Barreca 1988:15)

But the danger of being funny, of daring to laugh at male myths of the body is not lost on Crozier, who notes that resistance to her humour is not frivolous, but "comes from real fear and real anger" ("Speaking" 96). In "Tales For Virgins" and "Ode", Crozier addresses some of that fear and anger by invoking the dark underbelly of heterosexual relationships. In these poems, the male body becomes unstable beneath the speaker's look, and mutuality is threatened by potential violence. Crozier seems to be indicating here that the romantic partnership must find a way to live in a bleak world, in which the threat comes from within the relationship, from bodies haunted by fear and anger. In these last two poems, Crozier seems mesmerized by the perverse elasticity of intimate relationships, relationships that encompass love and violence as insoluble dichotomies.

In "Tales For Virgins", where Crozier situates bodily peril in penetrative sex,. her ironic humour is usurped by dread. In the first stanza, the deflowered virgin wears a towel "like a diaper", while blood fills her shoes and she thinks of her mother. Crozier parallels this image with a grotesque parody of obsession with penis size:

> Then there's Ducharme
> from the Coast,
> hanged for murder,
> a penis so big
> he rammed it right through a woman
> and killed her
> though he said he didn't mean to,

all he wanted, Your Honour,
was a little love.

"Tales For Virgins" (15-23)

The grotesque is less domestic here than it typically is in Crozier's work, and significantly less benevolent. Ducharme's name suggests, chillingly, that he is charmed, as in "under a spell", or alternatively, Prince Charming gone horribly wrong. He is "hanged" for murder, though his emphatic penis size suggests that Crozier is making a colloquial pun on "hung". The word which reports his sexual behaviour, "rammed," suggests rape, as well as an echo of the animal penises of "Facts", but Ducharme's intent remains questionable. Does "he didn't mean to" refer to the penetration or the homicide? Crozier's syntax equates sex and death throughout this poem, suggesting that the difference between the two is negligible in this poetic context. "[A]ll he wanted, Your Honour" comes perilously close to "all he wanted was your honour". The loss of virginity signifies death, physical or spiritual, even the living death of "folding diapers in front of game shows". Back-seat gropings, during which a girl "got sick of being / an expert of flying elbows / and crossed knees," become life-and-death struggles that feature sexual activity as a kind of female suicide. Haunted by this constant struggle, the girl seems just "sick of being".

In the next stanza, Crozier's line break suggests that sex means the acquisition of a terrible knowledge: "we knew / we didn't want to be". Sex signifies an inevitable force to these virgins; these are cautionary tales, though they offer no assuring or final wisdom.

Here, the look seems to act as a rite of passage for the virgins, an awareness that is, ironically, gained just prior to the "social sacrifice" of intercourse. To own the look is to give up the "valentine- / shaped boxes with their dusty ribbons, / their plastic roses" – the perpetual adolescence of romantic thraldom. To become adult women, Crozier's virgins bank on the power of their accepting look, even though they know it imperils them:

> . . . we waited for the boy
> we couldn't say no to,
> though he might hang in the morning,
> though we might walk
> across our mothers' spotless floors
> in bloody shoes.
>
> "Tales For Virgins" (60-65)

The virgins in this poem are made complicit by their own look; they look forward to sex not as a mere flirtation with disaster, but as an inevitable, socially-sanctioned slaughter. The only course left to the virgins seems to be to wait "for the boy / we couldn't say no to", despite the fatal consequences. This is Rich's "heterosexual imperative" in small-town microcosm, where the penis is not "a mouse's nest in a pocket," but a rural fertility god to whom virgins are sacrificed.

Placed after the domestic joy of the ecstatic poems, "Tales For Virgins" serves as a stark reminder of the world outside the intimate erotic haven, a world in which a new perspective on power and vulnerability in heterosexuality would be treated with great

suspicion. And yet, Crozier writes of this semi-autobiographical world, so reminiscent of Swift Current in her youth, to take the temperature of prairie fundamentalism, and to suggest that a way out of these rigidly gendered roles may be found. For one thing, the speaker of "Tales For Virgins" is not as naive as initially supposed. The girl with the pom-poms is aware enough to smell "sex / stale and sweet in the sticky air"; she suspects the social construction of gender roles even as she sees a "sacrifice" in her future. She is the wise virgin, contrasted to the foolish virgins who "hang around the Voyageur Cafe" and never think of options. The cheerleader grows up into the woman whom Germaine Greer "got thinking for a long time". Her difference does not yet make her intelligent enough to assume Barreca's "risk to culture", but it may soon do so:

> . . . [w]omen's comedy is "dangerous" because it refuses to accept the givens and because it refuses to stop at the point where comedy loses its integrative function. This comedy by women is about de-centring, dis-locating and de-stabilizing the world . . .(Barreca 1988:15)

In "Ode", Crozier re-focuses on the smaller world of the couple, but now the once-protected erotic haven has been invaded by the doubts and violence of the unsafe world that Crozier introduced in "Tales For Virgins". "Ode" therefore refuses to provide a unifying ending to the "Penis Poems". As in "Tales For Virgins", the female speaker struggles to situate a female body within the threatening boundaries of the poem. Crozier is no longer viewing the penis in isolation. If the penis has been a type of "patron" to these poems, providing the speaker with access to her subject, this "ode" laments the loss

of access to the disarmed male body. Crozier even begins each section of "Ode" by dedicating it "to you", i.e. the penis:

> To you who are mysterious
> and familiar (1-2)
>
> To you who love the dark (13)
>
> To you who travel by touch (16)
>
> To you who can make yourself
> invisible. For years . . . (28)

This repeated dedication seems like appeasement as the penis grows more unavailable over the course of the poem. "Ode" offers images of the penis as increasingly uncontrollable, a pet gone feral, an "invisible" devouring entity who waits "for the child, the solitary woman". This sense of uncertain threat is disturbing; Crozier seems to designate the penis as attacker, but the mention of a child is arresting. If this is a reference to a man's wish for a child, it is the only reference to fatherhood made throughout the "Penis Poems", and considering that Crozier positions psychoanalytic theory as the Father who denies Pleasure, perhaps it is no coincidence that Crozier's only image of fatherhood in the "Penis Poems" suggests a figure that is potentially violent.

The danger that lurks beneath this poem initially seems like a warning: "never /

trust an animal / who has tasted blood". But Crozier undermines her words with her line breaks, and duplicitously implies the opposite:

> I know you could turn on me
> at any moment. Never
>
> trust an animal
> who has tasted blood.
>
> "Ode" (9-12)

By spatially aligning "at any moment" with "never", and allowing the stanza break between "never" and "trust an animal" to distance the negation of "never", Crozier implies that trusting a man and never trusting him are equally good ideas.
But there are more liminal possibilities to this blood. Is it blood drawn in violence? Does the blood refer back to the "virgins" of the previous poem? Does it refer to intercourse during menstruation? The ways in which Crozier suggests horrific imagery (violence) at the same time as very domestic imagery (menstruation) constructs the confusing ambivalence of "Ode".

The final stanza questions the love and terror that seems so disquietingly bound up in heterosexual intimacy. When the man breaks into her house, the speaker sees him "cast the long shadow / of a man" in her bedroom. This image places the female speaker in the dark with the light source behind the male figure, and so reverses the mise-en-scene of "Overture", where the speaker coaxes the muse/penis from its cage. In

"Overture", the dark is intimate ("I turn out all the lights / so I can hear you"); in "Ode", the dark is menacing but somehow muted by anticipation. That "long shadow of a man" is so ambivalent, so charged with both violence and erotic intent, that Crozier seems to end her sequence of poems by questioning the psychopathology of heterosexual attraction.

Deborah Keahey suggests that Crozier's willingness to explore these difficult lived contradictions is "characteristic of Crozier's refusal, for the most part, to idealize or oversimplify" (80). If the "Penis Poems," in general, speak to the creation of an erotic haven within an intimate relationship, "Ode" reminds the reader that every utopia, even a sexual utopia, works with the fear of dystopia. The subjectivity which Crozier assumes at the start of the "Penis Poems" seems to be under question in "Ode", despite the speaker's "wooing speech" at the poem's beginning. Keahey wonders if "the price of subjectivity is complication, a realization and acceptance of the turbulence beneath the constructed calm of surface" (80). Crozier's female subject, the viewer, the speaker, even the reader is crowded by this recognizable contradiction, this all-too-familiar patriarchal body, this "mongrel / born from one who is tame". We might ask then: is the tamed body the body of the mother? Or is it the domesticated penis of the rhapsodic poems?

In these final two poems, having gazed the penis out of transcendence and into an accommodating look, Crozier confronts the puzzling paradox of female heterosexuality, a disquieting mix of love for and fear of the male body. The penis becomes the Gothic

hero/villain, an entity whose "love" is as frightening as his anger, whose desire might kill a woman. Crozier insists that he is both "the animal / I long for, / [and] the animal I fear." At times, the fear is paralysing to the point of threat. The foolish women of these poems are disturbingly passive, mesmerized by their fate; the wiser women are still oddly quiescent. But their confusion is understandable in the twilight world of sexuality proposed in these last "Penis Poems". "[T]he boy we couldn't say no to" may be Ducharme who "doesn't mean to" kill with his desire, or he could be the Native boy of "Penis/Bird" who brings the girl such delight, he of the detachable, adventurous penis. Crozier suggests that the penis, the man, the heterosexual encounter itself, "has many faces under your dark hood", and to be intimate is to know all of these faces. Like Linda Williams' monster, this is a body that women fear and pity and desire, but perhaps most importantly, this is a body that women recognize:

> You batter down the gate,
> break the lock,
> smash the windows
>
> In my bedroom doorway
> you cast the long shadow
> of a man.
>
> "Ode" (36-41)

Is this rape or consensual sex? Crozier is not telling; she lets the reader wriggle on the hook of uncertain interpretation. But the line break splits the shadow from the

man, just as the snake can "separate itself / from its shadow" in "Fear of Snakes", just as Lacan separates the phallus from the penis, the menacing representation from the corporeal (and perhaps loved) body. If the price of subjectivity is complication, as Keahey suggests, then the price of intimacy is the willingness to wait for the face of the lover to appear from behind the dark hood.

The imperilled look, even under the pressure of violence, remains compassionate enough to find room for the monster of the contradiction. Crozier offers no excuses in "Ode", but neither does she condemn this violent body, the untenable alter ego of the "cloaked" penis. The conflation of both lover and stranger makes this body monstrous, compromises the speaker/viewer. Held in place by her love and fear, she makes no move to escape. The male body, both lover and persecutor, casts a long shadow in her bedroom doorway, and she finds him both "mysterious" and "familiar". Will she return to "Overture" and "turn out all the lights so [she] can hear [him]"?

The male body, then, is a site of contradiction throughout the "Penis Poems"; in "Tales For Virgins" and "Ode", the emergence of the female body as a site of contradiction suggests that even encoded modes of cultural heterosexuality cannot elide these uncontrollable bodies when they meet in love and fear.

Notes

1. Lisa Hopkins' "Mr. Darcy's Body: Privileging the Female Gaze" discusses the ways in which the 1995 television adaptation of Jane Austen's Pride and Prejudice was explicit in "fetishizing and framing Darcy and offering him up to the female gaze" (Hopkins 112). The male desiring look encourages the female audience to look back in to confirm "that [erotic] need that we need most to believe" (120). Miriam Hansen's "Pleasure, Ambivalence, Identification: Valentino and Female Spectatorship" discusses how Rudolph Valentino's body was consistently positioned as both subject and object of the gaze in his films.

2. Crozier considers "Penis/Bird" to be a re-write of the myth of Leda and Zeus, an idea she has also pursued in her poems "The Swan Girl" and "Forms of Innocence" (Meyer 28). Her love for Yeats' "Leda and the Swan", combined with her concern over the issue of rape, led Crozier to re-write the myth as consensual sex, and significantly, to place the boy in more bodily peril than the protected girl.

3. Dionne Brand discusses "overhearing" in her National Film Board release Listening For Something (1996), a filmed conversation between herself and Adrienne Rich. Brand asserts that she writes for black readers, but that white readers could benefit from "overhearing" the subject matter of her poems.

Conclusion: Regarding the Male Body

> [W]ithin feminism, heterosexual desire has only been theorized negatively [. . . so that] women's attraction to men [supposedly] reinforces phallocentrism and women's sense of their own inferiority. In such models there is little place for pleasure, which then becomes perverse, rebellious, insubordinate to political reason. (Gallop 1988:108)

In the "Penis Poems", Lorna Crozier does not wish to destroy the pleasure of the gaze but rather to discover access to different kinds of pleasure: the woman's pleasure in the sight of a man's body, a man's pleasure in being the specular object. Crozier's look cannot claim "passionate detachment", in Mulvey's terms (26). The look Crozier favours is not impersonal; it invests in pleasure as a thinking proposition, and in thought as a pleasurable proposition. In the "Penis Poems", pleasure is not destroyed but rather re-thought to include the looker, the lover, and on another level, the reader.

Further, Crozier's "desiring look" is no stolen glance or surreptitious glimpse; her sustained look often implies that male bodies have invited the female gaze. The bodies at which the speaker "looks" seem confident that any perceived "lack" is ultimately soluble through relationship. Hélène Cixous notes that male passivity is a little-explored but interesting cultural position that could lead to erotic mutuality:

> As for passivity, in excess it is partly bound up with death. But there is a nonclosure that is not submission but confidence and comprehension; that is not an opportunity for destruction but for a wonderful expansion. (86)

After writing the "Penis Poems", Crozier continued to turn her rhapsodic eye on other types of erotic "expansion". In a 1995 issue of Quarry, Crozier published "Thirteen Small Poems for Your Penis", a poem cycle that has not been included in her subsequent poetry collections. Feminist magazines told Crozier that they admired her "Penis Poems" for their critique of the male body, but a poem like "Thirteen Small Poems for Your Penis" did not fit their literary agenda, for it openly praised the penis without irony ("Secret" 64). Stanza 11, in particular, introduces Crozier's concern with the aging body, and she re-writes the penis as a spiritual entity that is, once again, decidedly non-masterful but that retains a residual power:

> nameless
> i draw you
> in blood and ochre
> again and again
> on the walls of my cave
> . . . .
> the old lame god
> who moves in from the marshes
> in folds of skin
>
> in spite of age
> he dances
> on his one good foot
>
> "Thirteen Small Poems For Your Penis", stanza 11

The poet as cave artist draws the "nameless" penis, the "old lame god" who no longer retains the power of signification. But the memory of his exalted status remains with the speaker, and with the lame god himself, who dances despite his age and infirmity. This dance strongly resembles the dance of male jouissance in Atwood's "There is Only One of Everything": a dance of self-recognition, not of prowess, now with the additional savour of wisdom. This old lame god seems crone-like, jubilant in old age, revelling in the body's memory. Crozier has begun to concern herself with the sexuality of the aging body, working with images of transformative decay so familiar from the "Penis Poems." Is aging transformation or trauma?

Crozier's textual pursuit of the name of desire brings together "three terms assumed to be in contradiction -- radical feminist heterosexuality" ("Secret" 63). Crozier reserves the right to be contradictory, to tease, to write of castration and ecstasy and anger; Crozier's "Penis Poems" speak in a Bawdy/Body Voice, particularly in performance, where she dares to make public what has been private. She notes that the vexation with which her bawdy poems are sometimes greeted reflects that old desire for women to be discreet about the male body:

> I don't think they [people at a public reading] expect a woman to be saying "dirty words" out loud, in front of an audience. They're annoyed because it's not taking male sexuality as seriously as it's been taken in other texts in the past; it's poking fun at male pride and male bravado...there are objections to any kind of poetry that tries to prick holes in the false comforts we've surrounded our society with. (Carey 16)

Even as Crozier "pokes fun" (or perhaps because she dares to do so), her techniques fit quite neatly into Freud's categories, particularly considering that Freud's "joke-work" assumes a male joke-teller. However, sufficient proof of the soundness of Freud's theory of humour may reside in its curious applicability in these circumstances which surely Freud could not have imagined: a woman writing humourous poems about the penis, in order that other women (and men) may read the poems not solely for the sake of titillation, but also to revalue the heterosexual male body as an erotic site.

In positioning the male body as specularly erotic, Crozier raises the unsettling issue of the value of a male body. If the penis is culturally equated with the phallus, and the phallus with transcendence, does a man value his own body primarily for his sexual organ, or more saliently for this set of poems, do men assume that women (those "poachers in the forest") value them primarily for their (arguably enviable) sexual organs? I would speculate that changing the terms of pleasure that may be found in gazing, or in being the object of the gaze, requires valuing a man's body as significantly more than a bearer of a tumescent penis.

Crozier has written that "along with poems of rage, sadness and sometimes redemption, there must be room in our literature for a woman's bawdy appreciation of the male" ("Secret" 64). The governing gaze grants Crozier political agency, and the accepting look grants her erotic agency, but she does not disguise the untenable paradox

of love and fear in the final two "Penis Poems". The penis can be both frightening in a sexual assault and endearing in a lover. If an ode can be defined as a serious treatment of a personal conundrum that is also a larger human problem (Abrams 137), then Crozier's "Ode" is dedicated to the lived contradiction of heterosexual women's lives. That inquiry finds further expression in "A Secret Indulgence", where Crozier quotes Muriel Rukeyser's poem "Kathe Kollwitz": "What would happen if one woman told the truth about her life? / The world would split open".

For Crozier, the lived contradiction of female heterosexuality is, in a sense, untenable; it "splits open" her text; it proposes no solutions. The contradiction of love and fear problematises honesty and wit and the accepting look; it justifies fear and cloaking and coyness. These impossible poems, the monstrous uncontrollable bodies, the cloaked penis, the contradiction of women's lives -- all these lacunae live in that long shadow that "Ode" casts over the "Penis Poems". The poems teem with Lacanian enigmas of desire that Crozier coaxes into view with her accepting look: the "compulsory heterosexuality" in "Tales for Virgins"; the "smell / you can't put your finger on" of "Their Smell"; the "strange and delicate anatomy of love"; the "ghostly tracks" over the woman's body in "Variations"; the "tattered crow with feathers missing"; the expected "tenderness from envious hands"; the muse that will only speak in the dark. This Gothic trace in the "Penis Poems" is a map that leads forwards to the long shadow and backwards to the "caged" muse of "Overture". Crozier searches to articulate the contradictions of heterosexuality, to put a name to "what our bodies know/but can't put

words to".

In Thinking Through the Body, Jane Gallop asserts that poetry's place in language and culture is too important to be based solely and entirely upon a poetics of (possibly narrow) experience. Poetry of cultural value must define an aesthetic that engages the body in analytical thought, in order to reach beyond the limits of personal experience and the compound of that which Gallop terms "traditional ideological construction":

> . . . a poetics of experience is no poetics at all if we understand poetry to be that effect which finds a loophole in the law of the symbolic [. . .] if we would create a new body, one no longer paralysed by the alternative phallic and castrated, but a different body, our best hope, our most efficacious politics would be a practice [. . .] which we might call poetics of the body. (Gallop 1988:99)

Working in such a direction, Crozier follows the trail of her own speaking symptoms to find Gallop's "loophole in the law of the symbolic", to express female heterosexual desire for the male body. Her "documentary" gaze, and her use of the domestic grotesque, do more than catalogue the banal penis. They intervene within the symbolic order to offer a viewing position that reconfigures the concepts "phallic" and "castrated". Just as the accepting look can exceed the governing gaze, so too can the male body exceed its reputation as cruel or debased master to become a partner in erotic reciprocity. In Crozier's poetics, pleasure becomes a function of body and mind; this is truly the body politic, the thinking person's sexual union, jouissance plus analysis.

In "Speaking the Flesh", Crozier sums up her own poetics of the body: "Find the words. Speak the flesh. Kiss and *tell* with anger, grace, humour and sometimes, love" ("Speaking" 94: italics Crozier's). In the "Penis Poems", Crozier reminds us that the flesh is always complex, mercurial, defying definition, resisting categorization, embracing contradiction. That is why Susan Gingell attests that Crozier's poems are "written at the intersection of various and often contradictory discourses" (68). As a response to Adrienne Rich's challenge to heterosexual women to question the system of which they are a part, Crozier turns these very private bodies into very public narratives, making this alternative heterosexuality both contradictory and urgently imperative.

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