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Liz Lochhead: Sexual Politics in Modern Scottish Poetry

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I, Emine Çevik declare that this thesis and the work presented in it are my own and have been generated by me as the result of my own original research. I confirm that where I have consulted and quoted from the published work of others, this is always clearly attributed. I have acknowledged all sources of help in bibliography.

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INTRODUCTION

Interpreting Women from a Woman's Perspective

Woman must write her self: must write about women and bring women to writing, from which they have been driven away as violently as from their bodies—for the same reasons, by the same law, with the same fatal goal. Woman must put herself into the text—as into the world and into history—by her own movement.

—Hélène Cixous, “The Laugh of the Medusa”

Scottish literature has been largely dominated by men, especially in poetry. Women writers and poets have been subject to the ruthless process of marginalization and silencing. They have been repeatedly denied access to the public arena and the right to promote their interests. Only until recently women's voices had been either misinterpreted or ignored. What makes their position even more problematic is that neither male Scottish nor international feminist critics have sufficiently acknowledged the work and status of Scottish women writers—a tendency leading to double marginalization.¹

In the context of male-dominated Scottish literature, it is then hardly possible to estimate the amount of injustice and psychological damage done to women as a result of the phallogentric tradition of writing. By phallogentric I refer to the psychoanalytic term that is often used in feminist theory to describe the realm of men in general. I apply this suggestive label to the traditionally masculine landscape of Scottish poetry that has historically distorted the image of women. From the seventeenth-century icon Robert Burns to the architect of the Scottish Renaissance Hugh MacDiarmid, Scotland's imagination was shaped exclusively by male-driven fantasies. However, in the 1970s the established paradigm of male-centered literature changed dramatically. For the first time in history, women writers decided to stop living in the shadows. Gradually, they started to question and challenge patriarchal values that had been taken for granted. In fact, they not only rose up against the system of patriarchal oppression but, more importantly, also began to define their selves from their own perspectives as women. Such a radical overhaul did not occur

1. See Matt McGuire, *Contemporary Scottish Literature* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000), 66 – 67.

overnight. Neither was it a collective achievement of an organized women's movement of any sort. On the contrary, it has been an ongoing process of deconstruction of patriarchal systems of representation.

Women's reshaping of Scottish literature now involves more and more writers. However, it is the poet and playwright Liz Lochhead who is generally seen as the one responsible for introducing a gendered perspective into the traditionally male territory of literature in Scotland. Since her first collection *Memo for Spring* (1972), she has shown a lasting commitment to writing about women from a female point of view, and she has inspired a growing number of writers to follow her example. I do not mean to exaggerate her importance by any chance. She was far from being the first female poet. There are records of known Scottish women writing poetry that date back from the nineteenth century. They are often associated with the feminine tradition of border balladry and domesticity.

What makes Lochhead a remarkable writer is her iconoclastic approach to the standards of depicting women and their experience. She does not follow the traditional pattern of writing that was typical for the earlier women poets. Instead, Lochhead uses various devices to undermine the stereotypical image of feminine behavior. Despite her achievement in this area, she could hardly compete with the canonical male Scottish writers even in the early 2000s. In *Writing Scotland* (2004), MacDougall claims that she is "one of our most important writers, whose work has attracted a large and admiring public."² Unfortunately, he does not find her important enough to describe her work on more than one page. In comparison, writers that are considered classic, such as Lewis Grassie Gibbon, are given four times more space. I see it as an example of the persistent history of writing identified by Cixous as "self-admiring, self-stimulating, self-congratulatory phallogentrism."³ It certainly shows the inequality between male and female writers, and it also justifies the theory of double marginalization.

Nonetheless, Lochhead's unorthodox and often controversial usage of language and poetic tropes have eventually earned her popular and critical acclaim. Her poetry has been recognized as a force to reckon with even by certain Scottish

2. Carl MacDougall, *Writing Scotland: How Scotland's Writers Shaped the Nation*, (Edinburgh: Polygon, 2004), 177.

3. Hélène Cixous. "The Laugh of the Medusa," in *Feminisms: An Anthology of Literary theory and Criticism*, eds. Robyn R. Warhol, and Diane Price Herndl (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1991), 337.

patriarchal institutions. In 2005 the City Council awarded her the title Poet Laureate of Glasgow and in 2011 she became Scots Makar, or the national poet of Scotland. These awards have serious implications for a feminist understanding of Lochhead's work. They can be either seen as evidence of her institutionalization in a patriarchal society or her success in forcing the society to reconsider its perception of women. It is my honest hope that I will prove the latter to be the case.

My thesis statement is that while patriarchy uses various ideological and institutional power structures to oppress women, Lochhead's poetry subverts the traditional paradigm of sexual politics to present it as an ideal vehicle for women's liberation. Although the statement seems contradictory, it in fact reveals an insightful point. We must consider the benefits of reverse psychology here. If women become aware of the key principles of the system of patriarchal oppression, they can use them to their advantage. Therefore, I intend to look for subversive patterns that Lochhead employs to expose male dominance and power in her poems.

I explore this topic based on my understanding of Kate Millet's *Sexual Politics* (1969). This ground-breaking study of women's subordination in a patriarchal society gave women a powerful weapon to understand and fight male supremacy. I apply her detailed analysis of patriarchal structures and belief systems in my thesis to find out how Lochhead challenges the status quo.

There have been two major critical works on Lochhead, only one of them addresses politics of gender in greater detail. *Liz Lochhead's Voices* (1993) offers a few interesting views on Lochhead's poetry in the context of feminism. On the other hand, *The Edinburgh Companion to Liz Lochhead* (2013) barely includes any examples of an explicitly feminist reading of Lochhead's poems.

I approach her poetry from a woman's perspective because women's experience of patriarchy certainly differs from that of men's. First of all, the female historically belongs to the oppressed class in a patriarchal society. Her experience of a subject gives her the right and perspective to provide authentic accounts of the patriarchal system of exploitation. Secondly, interpreting women by women is a strategy that can potentially counterbalance the historical silencing they have suffered from male critics.

Additionally, my thesis also reflects some ideas developed by Simone de Beauvoir in her epochal work *The Second Sex* (1949). In particular, I have adopted her criticism of patriarchal tendencies to reduce women to simple objects for men.

Furthermore, I subscribe to Beauvoir's view of woman as a social and cultural construct designed and promoted by male power structures to subjugate women. Throughout my thesis I follow Beauvoir's view of patriarchal ideology as a system that sentences women to obey the politics of separate spheres. I attempt to show how Lochhead's poems address the issue of immanence that patriarchy typically associates with women.

My research has been also guided by certain aspects of French feminist theory. I certainly share Nina Baym's concerns about the negative impact of psychoanalytic theory on feminist criticism, especially its prescriptive nature.⁴ Although I am aware of its risks, I believe that French feminist theory has also positively contributed to the interpretation of women's texts and understanding of female subjectivity. In other words, my methodology can be summed up as principled eclecticism. I am a follower of what Baym calls pluralism⁵ that largely relies on classic empiricism. However, I do not stop there. I combine several branches of feminist literary theory because the term pluralism logically points to a *variety*.

I analyze Lochhead's poetry in four main areas. In the first part of my thesis I look at how Lochhead addresses the traditional perceptions of women in society. It focuses on the recurrent theme of mirrors throughout her poems and describes their functions. It also explores patriarchal mechanisms of ideological control. I concentrate on Lochhead's use of stereotypes to show how patriarchy establishes consent through the distribution of sex roles. There is also an emphasis on the objectification of the female body because the practice of reducing women to mere objects of male fantasies represents one of the defining features of sexual politics.

The following part deals with Lochhead's presentation of patriarchy's fundamental institutions. Here I examine the character of the patriarchal family and its important role in the process of socialization. Women's oppression starts in early childhood. They are indoctrinated with their parents' beliefs and values that reflect patriarchal ideology. That is why I pay special attention to the role of father and his relationship with the daughter because it influences her development as a woman. As far as patriarchal conditioning is concerned, school and marriage represent another two essential types of institutions that are responsible for women's subordination.

4. See Nina Baym. "The Madwoman and Her Languages: Why I Don't Do Feminist Literary Theory," in *Feminisms: An Anthology of Literary theory and Criticism*, eds. Robyn R. Warhol, and Diane Price Herndl (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1991), 155 and 166.

5. Baym, 155.

Lochhead's depiction of these essential instruments of male control shows her fascination with subverting mechanisms of sexual politics.

Sexuality and its (mis)representations are the focal points of my thesis' third part. Lochhead includes descriptions of physical desires. Some of them may be classified as graphic. What interests me in this topic is her use of traditional attributes of male and female sexuality as manifestations of patriarchy's misogynistic attitudes. My primary concern here is to point out the pathological nature of virility and the effects of constructed female submissiveness.

The last part investigates issues related to female subjectivity. Women's perspectives and notions of self have been historically mutilated to suit patriarchal interests. The culturally constructed nature of their self-awareness partly explains why they have difficulty to relate to their oppression. Lochhead suggests rewriting the traditional phallogentric narratives that have (de)formed woman's authenticity. Such a creative way of self-discovery challenges the concept of history and turns it into herstory. Additionally, my goal here is to account for a collectively shared sense of womanhood and solidarity. My thesis therefore closes with the implications of Lochhead's views on the concept of sisterhood.

PART I

IMAGES OF WOMEN

Chapter 1

Mirrors and Reflections

Mirrors are common symbols in literature. They are most typically associated with aesthetics because they reflect the physical qualities of what culture and tradition define as beauty and ugliness. People also think that mirrors can expose the deceptive nature of appearances and delusions. They are supposed to have the power of revealing the true nature of things. In other words, they can be instrumental in self-criticism because they display the faults that our ego refuses to see or admit. However, they can be also used to twist the reality and manipulate our cognitive processes. If the mirror is flawed, it reflects a deformed image of the original object. Instead of giving us the true picture, it can magnify weaknesses and flaws.

Lochhead's use of mirrors shows her awareness of their key role in imagining women in a patriarchal society. As early as her first collection *Memo for Spring*, mirrors appear to be potent symbols of sexist oppression. "Morning After" offers a classic example of male-constructed concept of gender. It opens with a woman and man who are reading newspapers "Held like screens before us."⁶ The newspapers represent their separation of the sexes. The speaker introduces the classic patriarchal division of gender roles. She describes herself and the man using typically masculine tropes for highlighting gender differences between the sexes:

Me, the Mirror
reflecting only on your closed profile.
You, the Observer
encompassing larger, other issues.⁷

The speaker uses two British newspapers as a metaphor for contrasting masculine and feminine attributes. By *masculine* and *feminine* I refer to the cultural and social constructs as opposed to *male* and *female* that represent the biological distinctions between the sexes.⁸ The *Mirror* is clearly a tabloid newspaper that provides less serious articles and gossips that target lower-class mass readership. On

6. Liz Lochhead, *Dreaming Frankenstein & Collected Poems 1967 – 1984* (1984; repr., Edinburgh: Polygon, 2003), 161.

7. Lochhead, *Dreaming Frankenstein*, 161.

8. See Toril Moi, "Feminist, Female, Feminine," in *Feminisms*, eds. Sandra Kemp, and Judith Squires (Oxford: OUP, 1997), 247.

the other hand, the *Observer* is widely seen as a quality newspaper that addresses current problems more seriously in greater detail. It is also more likely to appeal to educated readers who hold higher status in society. Nicholson draws a logical conclusion based on these facts when he interprets the poem in terms of class differences.⁹ The economic aspect certainly adds to the silencing of women's voices. However, Nicholson's observation must be seen in the context of sexual politics. First of all, the *Mirror* represents ignorance that patriarchy attributes to women. The direct link between the tabloid and the female speaker is a reference to the prevailing phallogocentric view of intellectually inferior women. In comparison, the fourth line associates men with knowledge. The *Observer* is portrayed as a source of complex information that far exceeds woman's intellectual capacity. Only men seem to possess enough intelligence to understand and benefit from it. The contrast between women's ignorance and men's intelligence is stereotype imposed by social and cultural norms of our patriarchal society. Their purpose is to obtain consent and justify male control over women.

Additionally, the speaker appears to be a mirror in which the male beholds himself. I want to emphasize the connection between the speaker's assumed inferiority represented by the tabloid and her function as a mirror. Inferiority is a vitally important condition of her subjugation. In her seminal work *A Room of One's Own* (1929) Virginia Woolf explains the reason for associating women with inferiority:

[I]f they were not inferior, they would cease to enlarge. That serves to explain in part the necessity that women so often are to men. And it serves to explain how restless they are under her criticism; . . . For if she begins to tell the truth, the figure in the looking-glass shrinks; his fitness for life is diminished. . . . The looking-glass vision is of supreme importance because it charges the vitality; it stimulates the nervous system. Take it away and man may die, like the drug fiend deprived of his cocaine.¹⁰

The poem perfectly captures Woolf's accurate observation. The speaker's inferiority signified by the tabloid association is an indispensable accessory of male superiority. She reflects and magnifies the man's brilliance. She recharges his ego

9. See Colin Nicholson, "Towards a Scottish Theatrocracy: Edwin Morgan and Liz Lochhead," in *The Edinburgh Companion to Contemporary Scottish Literature*, ed. Berthold Schoene (Edinburgh: EUP, 2007), 165.

10. Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own* (Adelaide: eBooks@Adelaide, The University of Adelaide, 2015), under "Two," <https://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/w/woolf/virginia/w91r/chapter2.html> (accessed July 25, 2015).

relations.¹² That may be true to some certain extent but Whyte's reading of Lochhead's poetry avoids the epistemological perspective. It does not take into consideration the aspect of using the stereotypical modes of representation as a means of undermining phallographic ideology. I assert that she uses knowledge developed by patriarchal structures to expose their injustices and attack them. As far as using male-centered discourse by women is concerned, Cixous goes as far as to claim that

If woman has always functioned "within" the discourse of man, a signifier that has always referred back to the opposite signifier which annihilates its specific energy and diminishes or stifles its very different sounds, it is time for her to dislocate this "within," to explode it, turn it around, and seize it; to make it hers, containing it, taking it in her own mouth, biting that tongue with her very own teeth to invent for herself a language to get inside of. And you'll see with what ease she will spring forth from that "within"—the "within" where once she so drowsily crouched—to overflow at the lips she will cover the foam.¹³

No matter how romantic her phrasing sounds, Cixous raises some interesting questions about using language and meaning constructed by patriarchy against it. In the light of Cixous' hypothesis, "Morning After" can be easily interpreted as Lochhead's attempt to deconstruct the male-governed logos from within. In other words, she employs the traditional woman-mirror image to erode patriarchal systems of (mis)representation of women. This strategy may contribute to empowering women as long as they are ready to question the essential ideological principles of their subjugation.

Lochhead's use of mirrors is not limited to the criticism of their association with women's inferiority. They also perform their normal function of reflecting the objects in front of them. There is no metaphoric language involved because they simply mirror the reality of a patriarchal society. They have the power to remind women of the truth from which they have been blinded by centuries of institutional and ideological oppression. The truth is that large numbers of men still consider women disposable pleasures rather than equal partners. This power paradigm governs sexual politics and Lochhead uses mirrors to show women the tragedy of it.

Her third collection of poems *The Grimm Sisters* (1981) stresses the inequalities between men and women more emphatically than her previous works. "The Hickie" gives an exceptionally apt description of male power over women. It dramatizes the concerns of a woman who is being sexually exploited by a married

12. See Christopher Whyte, *Modern Scottish Poetry* (Edinburgh: EUP, 2004), 188.

13. Cixous, 343.

man. Even though she is victimized by the man, she accepts the blame for his infidelity:

I mouth
sorry in the mirror when I see
the mark I must have made just now
loving you.”¹⁴

I want to highlight the role of the mirror. The female speaker begins to comprehend the gravity of the situation only after she sees their reflection in the mirror. She is obviously attached to the man, and the love bite represents his physical and emotional possession of her. Despite the speaker’s awareness of the implications of adultery (“Easy to say it’s all right/ adultery”¹⁵), she fails to interpret the reflection as a proof of her subjugation. On the other hand, the man is pleased with his triumphant image:

In my misted mirror
you trace two toothprints
on the skin of your shoulder and sure
you’re almost quick enough
to smile out bright and clear for me
as if it was OK.¹⁶

The fact that the mirror is misted implies two things. First, it is a result of air condensation caused by their having sex. Second, metaphorically speaking it shows that the reflection is obscured and cannot be trusted. Both implications are important here. The man has used the speaker to satisfy his carnal desires and he dismisses the physical evidence of her affection. The last two lines prove his lack of compassion. It also demonstrates the speaker’s negative attitude toward such malevolent exploitation. Unfortunately, the mirror is misted and therefore it does not offer her an accurate reading of the situation.

The poem’s criticism of male control over women’s bodies reaches a climax in the bathroom where they “finish washing love away.”¹⁷ Love is reduced to a physical contact that stimulates man’s egoism. It is he who smiles whereas the speaker is left alone. The mirror gives the reader an opportunity to see the reality of sexist oppression. The female speaker cannot see it because the mirror’s reflection is not

14. Lochhead, *Dreaming Frankenstein*, 105.

15. Lochhead, *Dreaming Frankenstein*, 105.

16. Lochhead, *Dreaming Frankenstein*, 105.

17. Lochhead, *Dreaming Frankenstein*, 105.

clear. However, I interpret the speaker's poignant image as a sacrifice that can raise women's consciousness of their exploitation.

Lochhead also addresses the aesthetic aspect of mirror symbolism that I referred to at the beginning of this chapter. Mirrors have often been seen as symbols of vanity and narcissism. In her second most recent collection *The Colour of Black and White* (2003), she re-explores the functions of the mirror in the context of patriarchal standards of femininity. "Lady of Shalott" presents a young girl who is addicted to her reflection in a mirror:

She paints her nails scarlet,
she moons in the mirror.
Ingenuer or harlot?
The mirror is misted,
every mirror image twisted.
Like real life – but larger.¹⁸

The speaker deploys brutal criticism of women's compliance with the cultural character of gender. The girl has internalized the feminine attributes imposed by a patriarchal value system. She is trapped in the reductive system of phallogocentric representation. She willingly conforms to the prescribed stereotypical roles of madonna or the whore in order to please men. I want to draw a comparison between this and the previous poem's presentations of mirrors. The mirrors in both poems are misted which underlines their deceptive character. What is different is the explicit reference to the connection between the mirror and the reality in "Lady of Shalott." Lochhead criticizes the mirror's function as a vehicle for chauvinistic propaganda that contributes to the brainwashing of women. It is patriarchy's powerful tool to maintain its upper hand in sexual politics. Lochhead exposes its key role in the process of (mis)representing women in Western imagination.

18. Liz Lochhead, *The Colour of Black & White* (2003; repr., Edinburgh: Polygon, 2005), 119.

Chapter 2

Sex(ist) Roles

I have established that patriarchy uses sexual politics to maintain its hold over women. To preserve the continuity of male supremacy, its power structures designed sex roles to separate men from women. These roles define how the sexes should behave and act. Women are traditionally expected to fulfil the role of domestic servants and child keepers whereas men are free to do as they please.¹⁹ The roles often reflect the manufactured concept of different temperaments. Women's passivity is generally contrasted with men's activity. Lochhead attacks these stereotypes in her poetry to empower women by twisting the traditional paradigm of sex roles. In "Poppies" she challenges the attribute of female passivity by introducing a confident woman who refuses to honor Remembrance Day:

My father said she'd be fined
at best, jailed maybe, the lady
whose high heels shattered the silence.
...
My mother tutted, oh that it was terrible,
as over our air
those sharp heeltaps struck steel, rang clear²⁰

The woman is depicted as a troublemaker. She breaks the rules and challenges the status quo. Instead of conforming to her traditional role, she marches in front of the shocked crowd of people. The speaker, who may symbolize women's potential for change, apparently admires her courage. In contrast, the father represents male supremacy whose value system is being questioned. His first thoughts are of aggression toward the woman. She dares to resist the patriarchal code of conduct and therefore she must be punished. In comparison to the mother, who embodies the feminine attribute of passivity, she is active. Her agility threatens the silence imposed by patriarchy. I claim that the poem reads as a metaphorical effort to stop the historical silencing of women. History is of great importance here because the woman's bold action questions the institutional tradition of commemorating fallen soldiers. Therefore she undermines the aggressive patriarchal policy of war too. Her

26. 19. See Kate Millet, *Sexual Politics* (1969; repr., Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000),

20. Lochhead, *Dreaming Frankenstein*, 118.

gesture of resistance becomes even more powerful as some of the attending soldiers try to maintain silence:

how grown soldiers buttoned in their uniforms
keeled over, fell like flies
trying to keep up the silence.²¹

She poses a threat to the patriarchal system by challenging the traditional sex roles. In fact, the soldiers can hardly stop her from disturbing the silence. Lochhead depicts them as helpless onlookers whose symbols of power—uniforms—turn them into ridiculous clowns as they lose balance. Despite the brief comic relief, the poem shows that patriarchy can be overcome. Women must break the culturally defined rules of conduct and become active agents of their liberation.

In *True Confessions & New Cliches* (1985) Lochhead adds a more dramatic quality to her criticism of sex roles. The collection includes a large number of pieces that have been written for public performance. Lochhead's approach to the topic is also more sarcastic than in her other works. One of the parody pieces, "Sometimes It's Hard to be a Woman," speaks about the unequal division of sex roles in a very cynical way. The female speaker describes the unhappy experience of being a housewife:

Sometimes it's hard to be a woman
Stuck in wi' the weans without your Man —
Though he gets pished on payday
Never mind hen, every Friday
He'll bring you hame a Babycham
If he tends to thump ye
Before he tries to hump ye²²

Lochhead uses several stereotypes to highlight the details of male power over women. The speaker refers to the patriarchal prototype of woman. She is sentenced to a life of domesticity and childbearing. She fulfills her traditional role by looking after the children and being an obedient wife. In contrast, the man enjoys his freedom outside the house. The third line implies his breadwinner's role that is synonymous with being an economically active individual. On the other hand, the woman remains a passive receiver of the man's attention. The fifth line has a mocking quality that may have the power to rouse women to action by its appeal. The last three lines dramatize the issue of domestic violence. In the context of culturally constructed

21. Lochhead, *Dreaming Frankenstein*, 118.

22. Liz Lochhead, *True Confessions & New Cliches* (1985; repr., Edinburgh: Polygon, 1993), 65.

gender, the stereotypical image of male temperament justifies his role as the aggressor while the woman's docility automatically results in her victimization. Despite Lochhead's cynicism, I assert that the poem delineates the injustice caused by the self-oriented distribution of sex roles in a patriarchal society.

In *Bagpipe Muzak* (1991) Lochhead continues to develop her critical perspective on the way sexual politics operates with respect to the basic patriarchal policies that I have described above. In "The Complete Alternative History of the World, Part One" Lochhead obliges the reader with another instance of sex roles stereotypes. Using the Genesis creation narrative as a background, she traces the origins of male superiority to the relationship between Adam and Eve:

And soon she was worn to a frazzle
Waiting on His Nibs
Ironing his figleaves
Barbecuing his ribs
While home came the hunter
With the Bacon for the table
She was stuck raising Cain
And breastfeeding Abel.
Him: The Big Breid-winner
Her: A Machine for breedin'
Barescud and pregnant?
Some Garden of Eden!
The sort of sexist division of labour
That went out with the Ark –²³

The whole scene reads like a list of the most typical activities that the patriarchal sex roles assign to men and women. Eve, who possesses the feminine qualities of passivity and domesticity, slaves away in the home. Adam, who epitomizes the masculine attributes of efficacy and force, provides food and shelter. She is responsible for cooking and doing the chores while he pursues a life of ambition and interest. Lochhead's apt description of women's historical confinement to the domestic sphere reflects what Josephine Donovan identifies as a structural condition of women's shared universal experience.²⁴ This perhaps explains why Lochhead draws on the biblical narrative. I believe that she presents it as a source of women's oppression because the Bible provides a fundamental ideological paradigm

23. Liz Lochhead, *Bagpipe Muzak* (London: Penguin Books, 1991), 13.

24. See Josephine Donovan, "Toward A Women's Poetics," *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature* 3, no. 1/2 (Spring – Autumn 1984): 102, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/463827> (accessed July 3, 2015).

for Western culture and society. Its explicitly patriarchal character has adversely affected women's lot. Therefore, Lochhead criticizes its role in shaping sexual politics. It is not enough that the woman should spend her entire life doing domestic work that is repetitive. She is being reduced to a facility of reproduction. Lochhead achieves her goal in criticizing the patriarchal division of sex roles in the context of the Western Christian tradition. Woman can never be free unless she starts to question these sociological and cultural aspects of her enslavement.

The theme of sexist division also occurs in "1953," a poem that primarily depicts the post-war period. It describes a human effort to transform a patch of raw land into a cultivated garden:

All the Dads, like you, that spring
had put the effort in.
Stepped on it with brand new spades
to slice and turn clay-heavy wet yellow earth
...
You set paths straight
with slabs it took two men to lift.²⁵

It may read like a pastoral poem, especially with respect to the rural setting. However, since the entire scene is dominated by men, I want to stress two points that are related sexual politics. First, the third and fourth lines resonate with sexually suggestive symbols of force and aggression. Second, it clearly focuses on hard physical work that is done exclusively by men. Speaking of the first point, I am inclined to interpret the whole scene as a metaphor for the violation of the female body. The men use spades, which are phallic-shaped tools, to "slice and turn" the "wet yellow earth." This scene is particularly suggestive of rape because the men are penetrating a piece of land that is *wet*. Consequently, the seemingly casual description of garden work can be read as a piece of implicit criticism of male aggression.

Concerning my second point, the speaker expresses deep admiration for male manual labor. The capitalized d in "Dads" highlights the hierarchic relationship between the child—most probably a female—and the men. The last two lines give evidence of how physically demanding the job is because it requires male physical strength. There are no women around to be seen which indicates a clear division of sex roles. In fact, the second half of the poem gives more evidence of the gap between men's public and women's private spheres:

25. Lochhead, *The Colour of Black & White*, 40.

And behind whitened windows
the Mums were stippling walls
or treadling Singers as they
ran rivers of curtain material
through the eye of a needle and out again,
...
This was in rooms
that had emptiness, possibilities,²⁶

There is a striking contrast between the opening scene of manual work done by men and women's domestic labor. Laura Severin correctly points out the significance of colors that clearly associate men with black dirt and women with white cleanliness.²⁷ Unfortunately, she does not go on to explain its implications. She does not draw any gender-related conclusions either. I believe that the color contrast reinforces the poem's focus on the sexist division of labor. Women's subjugation is represented by typical symbols of femininity—home decorating, sewing machines, and needlework, respectively.

Claiming that access to better technologies can make housework more pleasant, Cynthia Cockburn and Ruža Fürst-Dilić argue that women do not hate domestic work per se but because it is not shared equally by both sexes.²⁸ Although I agree that a fair division of labor can make a difference in women's lives, better technology will not help them achieve liberation. The women in the poem have access to a sewing machine and it does not make them equal to the men. The last two lines actually indicate that they are isolated and lonely, and their potential is wasted. I also want to emphasize that the men are located outside whereas the women are confined to their homes, which implies a power-structured relationship. Even though this poem contains misogynistic overtones, I assume that Lohead uses them to give an authentic account of women's lot in the 1950s. They are stereotypes that can help us understand the historical perspective of women's oppression.

26. Lohead, *The Colour of Black & White*, 40.

27. See Laura Severin, "The Colour of Black and White and Scottish Identity," in *The Edinburgh Companion to Contemporary Scottish Literature*, ed. Berthold Schoene (Edinburgh: EUP, 2007), 39.

28. Cynthia Cockburn and Ruža Fürst-Dilić, "Looking for the Gender/Technology Relation," in *Feminisms*, eds. Sandra Kemp, and Judith Squires (Oxford: OUP, 1997), 515.

Chapter 3

Objectification of the Female Body

The female body has always been the focus of man's sexual fantasies. Over the centuries woman has been conditioned to accommodate the male gaze. In order to satisfy man's sexual instinct, patriarchy has developed culturally acceptable standards of beauty. This value system has become an important part of patriarchal ideology. Based on man's self-interested aesthetic assumptions, patriarchy has established norms such as sexiness to please male carnal desires. Regardless of its chauvinistic nature, man's obsession with the female body results in reducing women to mere objects of his pleasure. Lochhead's poetry attacks the patriarchal tendency to exploit women's physical appearance. The aptly titled poem "Object" epitomizes Lochhead's struggle against the objectification of the female body. The female speaker addresses her partner while posing in his photographic studio:

I, love,
am capable of being looked at
from many different angles. This
is your problem.²⁹

This powerful statement establishes the contrast between her dignified self-awareness and the man's narrow-minded attitude. The third line implies the variety of ways people can look at her physical appearance. "Angles" can also be read metaphorically as ways of understanding her personality. Therefore, she stresses the diversity and complexity that are synonymous with women. She is aware of the man's limited understanding of her. Instead of appreciating and learning about her complexity, he deliberately chooses to reduce her to an object:

You pick your point of view
and stick to it, not veering much –
this
being the only way to make any sense of me
as a formal object. Still
I do not relish it, being
stated so – my edges defined
elsewhere than I'd imagined them³⁰

29. Lochhead, *Dreaming Frankenstein*, 190.

30. Lochhead, *Dreaming Frankenstein*, 190.

The speaker expresses her concerns about the man's efforts to reconfigure her visual appearance in order to suit his needs. She feels intimidated by his fixed gaze because it is offensive. In fact, she voices women's universal experience of being subject to men's lust. The photographer represents the patriarchal binary thought that prevents seeing women in their complexity. She is being redefined according to the man's taste because his frame of reference is far too limited. It is a telling comment on the inadequacy of male cognition and imagination. Luce Irigaray states that "the predominance of the visual, and of the discrimination and individualization of form," which is typical of men's ability to process sexual stimulus, "is particularly foreign to female eroticism. Woman takes pleasure more from touching than from looking, and her entry into a dominant scopic economy signifies, again, her consignment to passivity: she is to be the beautiful object of contemplation."³¹ The photographer exemplifies the difference between men and women observed by Irigaray. The fourth line explicitly says that his visual contact with the speaker is the only way he can acknowledge her. However, the male gaze inevitably leads to her dehumanization:

I am limited. In whose likeness
do you reassemble me?
It's a fixed attitude you
force me into.
...
But you, love,
set me down in black and white exactly.
I am at once
reduced and made more of.³²

The speaker shows the validity of Irigaray's concerns about the negative effects of reducing woman to an object of visual experience. She certainly becomes a passive victim while the photographer remains in charge of the entire scene. He literally "forces" her into docile passivity. By reducing her to an object, he commits an act of aggression because he denies her individuality. As a result, she is imprisoned in the state of immanence. She is condemned to do uncreative and repetitious duties, including posing for the male gaze. In contrast, the man embodies the notion of transcendence which is demonstrated by his freedom and creativity—he is a photographer after all. The last three lines describe the progress he has achieved in

31. Luce Irigaray, "This Sex Which Is Not One," in *Feminisms: An Anthology of Literary theory and Criticism*, eds. Robyn R. Warhol, and Diane Price Herndl (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1991), 351.

32. Lochhead, *Dreaming Frankenstein*, 190.

depersonalizing the speaker. Following the patriarchal pattern of binary oppositions, he can only think of the female in terms of two extremes. In order to make her fit in his limited world, he has deformed her. As a result of the objectification of her body, she has been deprived of her unique self.

Lochhead re-explores the topic of the objectification and visualization of the female body in *True Confessions & New Cliches*. One of the collection's raps—a type of rhymed poetry written for performance—criticizes sexually charged advertising strategies. Its lascivious title “Page Three Dollies” signals the sarcastic tone that runs through the entire rap. Drawing on the chauvinistic tradition of pin-up girls, it gives voice to the objectified women in the photos:

We're the Page Three Dollies
And you think that we're Exploited?
Well who is screwing who?
Frankly darling I'm delighted
If Mr Commuter's Pulse Goes Up
And his eyelid flickers.
At the photo of me with my thumbs hooked in my knickers.³³

The poem presents a creative protest against the industrial exploitation of women's bodies. First of all, it subverts the whole concept of sexually graphic commercials. Instead of being voiceless objects of the male gaze, the women are allowed to talk back. Secondly, the speaker represents one of the women whose bodies are commercially objectified. Speaking on behalf of the voiceless, she takes pleasure in showing how pathetic this advertising discourse is. The second line denies their role as submissive victims. She is well aware of the pattern of sexual politics. Moreover, we are given to understand that the objectified women are intentionally deformed and reconfigured just like the woman in the previous poem:

Though they sometimes fudge our edges
And airbrush our pimples
Tape up our tits and round out our dimples
They touch up our pubes
And whittle down our waists
Till they imagine we appeal to your ideal tastes³⁴

The speaker lists the strategies used by the industry to alter women's appearances. Although these alterations of the female body are merely of visual

33. Lochhead, *True Confessions*, 40.

34. Lochhead, *True Confessions*, 40.

nature, they have serious ramifications. They in fact represent a brutal attack on women because they help to create and maintain the sort of sexist division in society that keeps the power in the hands of men. Let alone the fact that woman is used as a means to achieve profit, this commercial misogyny promotes the stereotypical view of passive women. Concerning these self-serving assumptions and images of women, Millet argues that

Under patriarchy the female did not herself develop the symbols by which she is described. As both the primitive and civilized worlds are male worlds, the ideas which shaped culture in regards to the female were also of male design. The image of women as we know it is an image created by men and fashioned to suit their needs.³⁵

Some of the symbols Millet is referring to are mentioned by the speaker in the poem. They range from smooth skin to unnaturally slim waists. The tragedy of this reduction of women to objects is that culture and tradition have encouraged them to internalize these values. The speaker herself acknowledges the fact that patriarchy thinks of women as tokens rather than human beings.

Additionally, she stresses the double standard that men apply to the objectification of women: “As long as it isn’t your wife/ as long as it’s not your daughter.”³⁶ Lochhead points out the moral ambiguity of patriarchal society. Women that are directly related to men, such as members of their families, are judged differently. This attitude implies a relationship that is based on the notion of ownership, not equality. I want to highlight the underlying hypocrisy of patriarchal morality. Women who are owned by men are expected to be chaste and therefore excluded from the process of objectification. On the other hand, it is culturally and socially acceptable for these men—husbands and fathers—to take pleasure from objectifying women who are not in their possession.

Lochhead condemns this patriarchal culture of hypocrisy and double standard again in *Bagpipe Muzak*. “Almost Miss Scotland” criticizes the objectification of the female body against the backdrop of a beauty pageant. One of its contestants describes the basic principles of assessing the physical beauty of women from a male perspective:

An the likes of them were Acting God,
Being real Men,

35. Millet, 46.

36. Lochhead, *True Confessions*, 40.

Scoring us on a scale of one to ten –
They'd compare and contrast, and then at last
They'd deign to pronounce
And reverse-order-announce it.³⁷

The contestant participates in a spectacle governed by the phallogocentric desire to look at and feed on women's physicality. The fellow-contestants are objects of the male judges' lecherous eyes. The men feel authorized by patriarchal ideology to appraise the women based on their self-centered sexual preferences. The men take an active part in the process whereas the female competitors are passive objects of the male gaze. Laura Mulvey explains the logic behind this sexist policy:

In a world ordered by sexual imbalance, pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female. The determining male gaze projects its fantasy onto the female figure, which is styled accordingly. In their traditional exhibitionist role women are simultaneously looked at and displayed, with their appearance coded for strong visual and erotic impact so they can be said to connote *to-be-looked-at-ness*. . . . An active/passive heterosexual division of labour has similarly controlled narrative structure. According to the principles of the ruling ideology and the psychical structures that back it up, the male figure cannot bear the burden of sexual objectification.³⁸

Here it might be added that the contestant's female perspective also provides a critical view of the inequality described by Mulvey. She objects to her passive exhibitionist role and criticizes the male privilege: "How would thae guys like to be a prize – / A cake everybody wanted a slice of – ." ³⁹ This gives evidence that the contestant becomes conscious of the negative impact of the heterosexual division of labor. She challenges what Mulvey defines as *to-be-looked-at-ness* by pointing out male chauvinistic hypocrisy. I strongly believe that Lochhead uses the speaker as a vehicle for her gender politics. As important as the insight into sexual politics is Lochhead's strategy of twisting the inherent paradigm of imagining women. All the examples of her poetry I have discussed in this chapter inspire women to speak out and question male power.

37. Lochhead, *Bagpipe Muzak*, 4-5.

38. Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," in *Feminisms: An Anthology of Literary theory and Criticism*, eds. Robyn R. Warhol, and Diane Price Herndl (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1991), 436 – 437.

39. Lochhead, *Bagpipe Muzak*, 5.

PART II

INSTITUTIONS OF PATRIARCHAL CONTROL

Chapter 4

Family

The family is one of the most important institutions of patriarchy. Concerning its functions, Millet goes as far as to claim that the family is the corner stone of the patriarchal state because it acts as a link between the individuals and the larger society.⁴⁰ It makes sense especially if we look at the similarities between the patriarchal family and the state. Both institutions are headed by a leader-figure that is typically male. They are both based on a clearly hierarchic principle that strictly defines and separates the ruling from the ruled classes. Their members interact according to a complex system of power-structured patterns of behavior. Consequently, the family plays a vitally important role in the process of socialization.

Lochhead's poetry often addresses the family because she recognizes its key role in the historical subjugation of women. "The Father" exemplifies her criticism of the patriarchal family. It draws on the classic narrative of the Sleeping Beauty tale by the Brothers Grimm. Instead of following the heroine, the narrator focuses on her father's attitude toward his daughter, the princess. He wants to make sure that she avoids sharp objects in order to defer the curse:

then compounding it all
by over-protectiveness and suppression
(banning
spinning wheels indeed
when the sensible thing would have been
to familiarize her from the cradle
and explain their power to hurt her).⁴¹

In the conventional order of this genre of fairy tale narrative, the heroine acts as a puppet in the hands of men. Lochhead subverts this narrative paradigm to show its underlying misogyny. The narrator ridicules male power and phallogocentric epistemology represented by the father. Instead of sharing knowledge with the daughter and providing access to information, he keeps her in ignorance of the world and its perils. I assert that this patriarchal attitude contributes to the silencing of women and the poem demonstrates the key role of the family in this process.

40. See Millet, 33.

41. Lochhead, *Dreaming Frankenstein*, 80.

Children begin internalizing the values of the patriarchal society in their early childhood. Parents, who are products of the patriarchal system, provide role models. If the dominant family figure—the father—silences the daughter, she learns and accepts this pattern of behavior without any objection. Initially, it is the father who exercises control over his daughter. Beauvoir explains that “[t]he relative rank, the hierarchy, of the sexes is first brought to her attention in family life; little by little she realizes that if the father’s authority is not that which is most often felt in daily affairs, it is actually supreme.”⁴² This power-based relationship functions as a model of the larger society. Once this pattern has been established and the daughter has internalized the sexist division of roles, she is ready to pass as a successfully socialized citizen of the patriarchal state. Therefore, the narrator shows how the family acts as a basic unit of a patriarchal society.

Speaking of family relationships, Millet draws comparisons with historical systems of government and concludes that the patriarchal family has essentially a feudal character even in modern democracies.⁴³ There is certainly a structural similarity between the father as head of the family and the ruler as head of the state. Unlike democracy, feudalism is based on a relationship of dependence between the master and vassal. “The Father” reflects this aspect both literally and metaphorically:

But when she comes,
the beautiful daughter,
leading her lover by the sleeve, laughing –
‘Come and meet my daddy, the King,
he’s absolutely a hundred years behind the times
but such a dear.’⁴⁴

Without question the most telling statement in this scene is how the woman changes her masters. Originally, she is a property of her first feudal lord—her father the King. The feudal character remains intact as the princess is transferred to another man. In the traditional narrative this new man also represents royalty.

Feudalism grants ownership and requires loyalty. Both these conditions are present in the poem. After the princess changes her owners, she comes back to pay homage to the King along with her new master. However, Lochhead inserts subversive signs in the narrative. The third line suggests that it is the princess who is

42. Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, trans. Jonathan Cape (London: David Campbell Publishers, 1993), 301.

43. See Millet, 33.

44. Lochhead, *Dreaming Frankenstein*, 80.

in charge of her suitor because she is leading him to meet her father. Moreover, her voice ridicules her father's traditional attitude. In fact, the last two lines criticize the old-fashioned concept of the patriarchal family and the role of the father as its head.

Lochhead's iconoclastic deconstruction of the traditional narrative of the patriarchal family also targets Greek mythology. In "The Ariadne Version" she explores the nuclear family from the perspective of the daughter. In the following sketch I will attempt to give more evidence of the feudal character of the patriarchal family and its socializing function. Unlike the Greek classic, the poem offers a rite-de-passage view of king Minos' daughter:

It had burst inside her recently
like a bull in a china shop.
She was grown up.
She had to get the hell out, somehow.
But talking to them was
bashing your head against a brick wall,
when it came to unravelling anything
they just weren't interested.⁴⁵

The narrator dramatizes Ariadne's unnoticed transition to female maturity. This is a particularly vulnerable period in woman's life that is often interpreted as a movement from innocence to experience. However, her selfish parents ignore this milestone in their daughter's development. The patriarchal family's authorities do not offer her any consolation nor understanding. She is silenced because

Big daddy would just do his Kingpin bit,
lay down the law.
And her moonstreaked mother had gone blonde again,
mincing around in that rawhide trouser suit,
all silicone and facelift – must be off again
after some big bronzed stud in the palace guard.⁴⁶

The narrator's description of Ariadne's family is indicative of the feudal relationship between its members. Her father is an actual king. Minos' control over his subjects, women in particular, is demonstrated by the fact that he has legislative powers—he is the lawgiver. Although the family seems to be firmly rooted in the patriarchal system, it is dysfunctional. At least this is how Lochhead depicts it. Ariadne's mother is a slave to patriarchal standards of beauty and maintains an adulterous relationship. The king ignores it because if he criticized her "she'd only

45. Lochhead, *Dreaming Frankenstein*, 111.

46. Lochhead, *Dreaming Frankenstein*, 111 – 112.

have dredged the past again/ and hurled at him every nymph he'd ever/ given the palmgrove treatment."⁴⁷ Despite the humorous tone, which is along with the use of clichés (“a bull in a china shop”) one of Lochhead’s principal devices of criticism, the poem is an eloquent testimony to the highly overrated concept of the nuclear family. At the end, Ariadne experiences the devastating effects of the process of patriarchal socialization:

Ariadne decided
she'd be off like a shot with the first man
...
doll-up to the nines go ultra
feminine (one hundred percent).⁴⁸

The narrator describes the corrosion of Ariadne’s character as a result of her dysfunctional family. Although she initially despises her role models, she eventually turns into a caricature of her father and mother. Lochhead uses the Greek classic to show how daughters adopt the dominant pattern of sexual politics from their parents. This process has definitely a detrimental effect on women because they become men’s chattels rather than equal partners.

Lochhead revisits the issue of the patriarchal family and its power-structured character again in “Girl’s Song.” The poem seems to be based on the Grimms’ tale of the Little Red Riding Hood. Unlike the traditional narrative, Lochhead gives voice to a girl who describes her growing up in a patriarchal family environment:

My father
would warn of the danger. Eggs all
in one basket. Pride hurtling for its fall.
One swallow does not make a summer,
he'd have me remember.⁴⁹

The female speaker’s early memories of her childhood present a view of a father figure that is similar to “The Father.” I assert that the girl’s father’s overprotective attitude is a proof of the essentially feudal character of their relationship. He regards himself as her master who wants to protect his only asset. This is indicative of a relationship based on the concept of ownership. What is more noteworthy are his attempts to patronize the speaker. He acts as a typical representative of male supremacy, especially if we look at the second and third lines.

47. Lochhead, *Dreaming Frankenstein*, 112.

48. Lochhead, *Dreaming Frankenstein*, 112.

49. Lochhead, *Dreaming Frankenstein*, 116.

Eggs symbolize woman's sexual self-awareness. She has them under control which builds her confidence. Instead of encouraging her to explore and learn about herself, the father misinterprets her confidence as pride. In the third line Lochhead underlines his pathetic self-centeredness by using a cliché. Even though the girl achieves independence from the oppressive father, he questions her self-reliance in a letter. Its content proves the inherently sexist character of the patriarchal family:

How am I for money? Am I sure I've enough?
Father forgive. Though it's hard to read you sign *with love*.⁵⁰

The father's letter illustrates his obsession with male power. He cannot accept the fact that his daughter has left the environment of the patriarchal family. In other words, the feudal lord is shocked to see his vassal leave without permission. He considers it a treason. The last line shows the speaker's true feelings toward her father. She is offended by the implications of his letter. Although she is now independent, he questions her economic security. In fact, he implicitly asserts his superiority. Beauvoir accounts for the logic behind the omnipotent character of the father:

He supports the family, and he is the responsible head of the family. As a rule his work takes him outside and it is through him that the family communicates with the rest of the world: he incarnates the immense, difficult, a marvelous world of adventure; he personifies transcendence, he is God.⁵¹

Beauvoir's analysis of the distribution of authority in the patriarchal family explains why the father in "Girl's Song" wonders about his daughter's financial situation. He refuses to accept that he no longer fulfils the traditional roles of breadwinner and head of the family. He has been programmed by patriarchal culture and society to see himself as the center of the universe. His daughter's independence poses a major challenge to his supreme authority. He no longer represents power nor is he associated with divinity. Consequently, if he acknowledges his daughter's freedom, he will accept his mortality. I believe that Lochhead's poem demonstrates how women can erode the system of patriarchal oppression by challenging the traditional concept of the patriarchal family. If they question the authority of the father, they will attack the fundamental pillar of male supremacy.

50. Lochhead, *Dreaming Frankenstein*, 116.

51. Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, 301 – 302.

Chapter 5

School

School is a vital component in any system of dominance. It channels the dominant ideology and helps maintain social control. Along with the family, it represents a fundamental institution of patriarchy. Its main function is to make the individual's transition from the family to the larger society easier. It provides the individual with a larger frame of reference. It also forces the individual to conform to the established value system. If we think of the family as a mechanism that plants the seeds of patriarchal control, school provides the appropriate environment for nurturing its development and acceptance. In most traditional educational institutions in western democracies teachers typically represent agents of state indoctrination and control. Their job is to reproduce and spread phallogocentric knowledge based on binary oppositions. They also ensure children's compliance with the sexist division of social roles. In this chapter I will demonstrate Lochhead's understanding of these facts and her criticism of patriarchal education.

In her collection *Dreaming Frankenstein* (1984) Lochhead offers dismal views of educational institutions and teachers. "In the Dreamschool" presents a particularly dreadful image of a school. The ironic title is immediately followed by the lines that describe its oppressive character:

you are never the teacher.
The history lesson
goes on forever.

Yammering the always
wrong answer to the hardest question
you stand up in nothing but
a washed-in vest.⁵²

The speaker, who is most probably a female student, gives a telling comment on the hierarchic structure of school. The first line indicates that students do not have a say because the teachers control them. This typically patriarchal environment resembles the feudal character of the family. The teacher takes on the role of a master and the students become his vassals who are dependent on him. The second and third

52. Lochhead, *Dreaming Frankenstein*, 62.

lines are important in two respects. First, the history lesson may represent the tedious nature of state education that mistakes the memorization and repetition of boring facts for genuine knowledge. Second, which I think is far more relevant, it is a metaphor for the historical oppression of women. It dramatizes the process of socialization that conditions women to submission and obedience. The fact that it “goes on forever” implies the continuity of woman’s subjugation. Finally, the last four lines can be interpreted as the school’s suppression of women’s capacity for critical thinking. The students are silenced because they can never get the answers right. They feel powerless while the teacher is inhibiting their intellectual curiosity.

Speaking of the teacher, he is portrayed as a ruthless tyrant. Not only is his attitude chauvinistic, but he embodies a patriarchal archetype of aggression:

and his teeth are green.
An offered apple will only tempt the snake
curled under his chalkstripe jacket. Loch-
gelly, forked tongue, tawse.⁵³

These four lines contradict the liberal assumption that school is a gateway to progress in society. In fact, Lochhead depicts the school environment as a torture chamber where young girls are brutalized by agents of patriarchal control. The teacher resembles a monster whose physical appearance is repulsive. What is more significant is the powerful symbol of school violence—the tawse. It is a leather strap that was widely used in the past as an instrument of corporal punishment in British schools. Originally manufactured in Lochgelly, Scotland, teachers would use it to whip students’ extended palms. The second line offers an example of school misdemeanor that was likely to result in punishment.

However, it is also charged with symbolism. The apple may be interpreted as the biblical symbol of knowledge that Eve supposedly handed over to Adam and brought about their expulsion from the Garden of Eden. The snake is clearly a phallic symbol that also plays a key role in the biblical narrative of the Fall. Metaphorically speaking, if the female student dares speak her mind, the teacher dismisses that as a sign of misbehavior. After all, male supremacy does rarely tolerate any challenge to its policies.

53. Lochhead, *Dreaming Frankenstein*, 62.

In comparison to the foregoing description of a school, “The Teachers” explores a slightly different aspect of sexual politics. It opens with a familiarly disapproving tone:

they taught
that what you wrote in ink
carried more weight than what you wrote in pencil
and could not be rubbed out.⁵⁴

These four lines epitomize the prescriptive methods of patriarchal teaching. Following the logic of the binary thought, teachers draw a line between what is the legitimate form of expression and what is unacceptable in a patriarchal society. The ink stands for what is allowed and expected of woman whereas the pencil implies a degree of uncertainty. More importantly, it underlines the irreversibility and universality of woman’s condition. From the earliest stage they are taught that the power-structured relations which has govern sexual politics for centuries cannot be redefined. The last two lines give a strong impression of this concept of the patriarchal tradition—what was once established as the law cannot be amended. This tradition is uncritically upheld by the teachers who themselves were raised according to the patriarchal value system. What follows in the poem is a series of character sketches that highlight the teachers’ follies:

Miss Ferguson deplored the Chinese custom
of footbinding but extolled the ingenuity
of terracing the paddyfields.
...
Miss Prentice said the Empire had enlightened people
and been a two way thing.
...
The leather tawse was coiled around the sweetie tin
in her desk beside the box of coloured blackboard chalk
Miss Ferguson never used.⁵⁵

Although the teachers are female, they are not any less intimidating than the male teacher in the previous poem. They typify value judgements of patriarchal culture and society. They are no different to any male agent of social control.

Miss Ferguson appears to be conscious of women’s oppression in Eastern cultures. However, her sentimental interest in agriculture-related issues devalues her condemnation of women’s physical abuse in the East. On the other hand, Miss

54. Lochhead, *Dreaming Frankenstein*, 62.
55. Lochhead, *Dreaming Frankenstein*, 63.

Prentice is a staunch advocate of imperialism as the ruling ideology of Britain. She honestly believes in a political system of exploitation that is no different to patriarchy. She misses the point that what imperialism does to the colonized people, patriarchy does to women. Nevertheless, the symbol of power and dominance—the tawse—remains associated with the teachers. In particular, the last three lines shatter any illusion that Miss Ferguson is concerned about feminism. The speaker portrays her as a rigid authority with the power to use the whip. She personifies the hatred of one woman toward another—the ultimate effect of male supremacy. The narrator then concludes her nightmarish picture of a school with a description of a typically female school subject:

If your four-needed knitting got no
further than the heel you couldn't turn
then she'd keep you at your helio sewing
till its wobbling cross-stich was specked with rusty blood.⁵⁶

Lochhead refers to the connection between the traditional school curriculum and women's training as domestic servants. Using such a vividly horrifying scene, she aims to criticize the image of feminine personality created by patriarchal culture and society. Of course, such an educational program is nowadays obsolete in western democracies. Nonetheless, it has contributed to the confinement of women to the domestic/private sphere. Besides, women are still associated with domestic activities that imply passivity. The passage does not only depict the victimization and silencing of women by women but also the state of immanence that I have referred to earlier. Needlework is a classic example of a domestic activity that implies repetitiveness. Consequently, the girls are taught to embrace their psychological, and for that matter even physical, imprisonment that is contrasted with men's freedom.

I want to emphasize the historical importance of this educational framework of domesticity. Even though it has been long abandoned in practice, it has become part of our patriarchal culture and society. It is used to justify women's inferiority. Nancy Armstrong gives empirical evidence about its institutional character. She researched conduct books and works of instruction for women that date back from the eighteenth century onward. She concludes that this brainwashing literature argued that woman

had to lack the competitive desires and worldly ambitions that consequently belonged—as if by some natural principle—to the male. For such man, her

56. Lochhead, *Dreaming Frankenstein*, 63.

desirability hinged upon an education in frugal domestic practices. She was supposed to complement his role as an earner and producer with hers as a wise spender and tasteful consumer.⁵⁷

Armstrong's conclusive remarks about the true intentions of patriarchal education for women underline the relevance of Lochhead's poetry. Her analysis shows a clear distinction between women and men in the pattern of the Western patriarchal thought. She demonstrates that women have been conditioned to comply with the sexist division of labor. They have been assigned the attributes of passivity and docility whereas men have been encouraged to pursue success and ambition. Concerning the category of sex roles, she reaffirms my previous interpretation of Lochhead's poems. Woman is typically seen as an immanent receiver of man's attention while man is perceived as a transcendent doer.

This ideological paradigm of patriarchal education comes into view again in *True Confessions & New Cliches*. I want to conclude this chapter with a woman's view of the negative impact of school on her life in "Feminine Advice":

But I had a lot to learn when I went to school —
like how women weren't
mechanically minded as a rule.
Headmaster, careers mistress, in subtle alliance
to remind us we were rotten at Maths and Science.
Oh, I really shocked her
when I told her, 'Miss,
I want to be a doctor' —
She asked me had I thought it out? A woman could do worse
than be a nurse.
And "in fact, with dedication, any bright girl can
be the driving force behind a really Top Man"⁵⁸

The speaker clearly identifies school as a patriarchal institution of control whose authorities—men and women—do not acknowledge woman's individuality. She highlights its prescriptive character. The teachers encourage the female students to complement and reflect man's superiority. With these observations in mind, I argue that Lochhead is an acute observer of sexual politics and her iconoclastic criticism of school is an inspiring act of feminist protest.

57. Nancy Armstrong, "The Rise of the Domestic Woman," in *Feminisms: An Anthology of Literary theory and Criticism*, eds. Robyn R. Warhol, and Diane Price Herndl (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1991), 894.

58. Lochhead, *True Confessions*, 42.

Chapter 6

Marriage

Marriage is an institution that has been often interpreted as a positive contribution to the progress of women's rights and history. In many cultures marriage grants women a certain legal and social status. It is an official recognition of the intimate relationship between man and woman. However, these facts do not necessarily lead to a conclusion that marriage benefits woman. Marriage is a patriarchal institution in the first place, and it primarily serves the interests of men. In modern patriarchal societies women's legal rights related to marriage, such as divorce or inheritance, have been addressed and improved only relatively recently. Marriage represents a legal bond between the sexes but it does not mean they are equal partners. Women had been conditioned to feel inferior to men long before marriage became fully institutionalized in its current form. In fact, marriage incorporates and further develops cultural and social patterns of sexual politics that have deferred women's ultimate liberation.

The Western concept of marriage as we know it is essentially a barter system that has its own power structure. This structure stems from the traditional sexist division of labor and assignment of sex roles. Millet emphasizes the fact that it "involves an exchange of the female's domestic service and (sexual) consortium for financial support."⁵⁹ This relationship is not based on equality but dependency. It renders woman to be nothing more than man's chattel. Lochhead's poems often speak about women's disenchantment with marriage. "The New-married Miner" in *The Colour of Black and White* epitomizes men's typical expectations of marriage. The male speaker urges his wife to serve him after his hard day's work in the mines:

Heat my bath scalding
...
Squeeze the hot soapy flannel
at the nape of my neck
and scribble long white chalkmarks down my back.
Put the dark fire to the poker
till the hot flames burst in flower.
Stretch out the towel and I'll stand up.
Hold and fold me
rub and scrub me as hard as you can

59. Millet, 35.

till in your white warm arms I'll end up
a pink and naked man, my love⁶⁰

This passage illustrates the traditional view of marriage as an exchange of services for material gains. It contrasts the active husband with his passive wife. He makes productive contributions to the economy as a miner whereas she is condemned to repetitive domestic labor. The working-class character of his job also implies the stereotype of biologically defined division of labor. In comparison, the wife remains at home waiting to serve the breadwinner as soon as he returns from work. The male speaker controls the narrative. It is he who orders the wife to treat him as though she was his servant. I presume that Lochhead's decision to opt for a male voice was motivated by her intention to show the fundamental difference between man's and woman's perspective. Moreover, the last line should not be mistaken for a sign of mutual affection. The miner addresses his wife as "love" but there is no reason to believe he is genuinely interested in her feelings. The husband's attitude captures the notion of what Beauvoir defines as "conjugal love," which leads to

repressions and lies. And first of all it prevents the couple from really knowing each other. Daily intimacy creates neither understanding nor sympathy. The husband respects his wife too much to take an interest in the phenomena of her psychic life: that would be to recognize in her a secret autonomy that could prove disturbing, dangerous; does she really find pleasure in the marriage bed? Does she truly love her husband? Is she actually happy to obey him? He prefers not to ask; to him, these questions even seem shocking.⁶¹

Despite the obvious intimacy implied in the poem, there is no information indicating the miner's understanding of his wife. His primary concern is to have a bath and he sees his wife as a means to achieve it. The last thing he is wondering about is her psychology or feelings. His selfishness prevents him from asking the questions suggested by Beauvoir. In other words, Lochhead chooses the male speaker to accentuate the chattel status of married women. The wife in the poem is silenced and repressed because the patriarchal institution of marriage privileges men.

A married woman is therefore left with domestic service as the only way of making use of her potential. In "Wedding March" Lochhead explores the tedious life of wives:

We'll try. It still is early days.

60. Lochhead, *The Colour of Black & White*, 12 – 13.

61. Beauvoir, 497.

I'll try and mend my sluttish ways.
We'll give our kitchen a new look –
a lick of paint, a spice rack, and a recipe book.
I'll watch our tangled undies bleaching clean
in the humdrum of the laundromat machine.
I'll take my pet dog vacuum on its daily walk through rooms
and knowing there is no clean sweep,
keep busy still with brooms.⁶²

The poem depicts the utter dejection of a newly married woman. The first line sets the sad tone that enhances the atmosphere of disillusionment. The female speaker shares her frustration after realizing that her life has turned into a series of repetitive and meaningless tasks. Despite Lochhead's amusing verbal gymnastics ("pet dog vacuum") and creative use of clichés ("clean sweep") that provide a brief humorous relief, there is little consolation for the speaker. As far as this life-changing experience is concerned, Beauvoir explains why woman is adversely affected by marriage:

The tragedy of marriage is not that it fails to assure woman the promised happiness—there is no such thing as assurance in regard to happiness—but that it mutilates her; it dooms her to repetition and routine. The first twenty years of woman's life are extraordinarily rich, as we have seen; she discovers the world and her destiny. At twenty or thereabouts mistress of a home, bound permanently to a man, a child in her arms, she strands with her life virtually finished forever. Real activities, real work, are the prerogative of her man: she has mere things to occupy her which are sometimes tiring but never fully satisfying.⁶³

The speaker certainly implies that her former sexually adventurous lifestyle is over. The second line indicates that she has to adopt a conservative one. She is required to obey new rules imposed by social and cultural norms. It also shows that patriarchy expects her to change her role from the whore to the wife. The female is once again associated with immanence because her marriage imprisons her in the home. In contrast, the man does not have to change at all. While he keeps his transcendent attributes of force and ambition, she is left with poor substitutes for real activities. Consequently, the redecorating ideas mentioned in the third and fourth lines represent what Beauvoir calls "mere things" that never fully satisfy her. I assert that "Wedding March" demonstrates that marriage damages women. It provides satisfaction to men whereas women are silenced and mutilated.

62. Lochhead, *Dreaming Frankenstein*, 193.

63. Beauvoir, 502 – 503.

Marriage entails more than repetitive and meaningless tasks on the part of the wife. It gives man a guarantee that he can do as he pleases. He is no longer bound by the cultural rules of the courtship ritual. These rules oblige him to show at least a limited amount of respect for his future wife. Marriage grants him power and supremacy. Instead of showing understanding and making woman's transition from her single to the conjugal stage easier, he is free to become indifferent and even hostile. "Scotch Mist (The Scotsport Song)" uses the stereotypical image of man's obsession with football to criticize his indifference toward his wife:

Match of the day, action replay it's on Scotsport.
Chuck us a can, a man's not a man without Scotsport.
You can cook good, you can look good
You can play hard to get.
To turn him on's impossible —
He's turning on the set.
He'll never tell you he loves you
Unless he's pissed.
...
He'll say, after Scotsport
You're next on the list.⁶⁴

The speaker might be the man's wife or any other disenchanted married woman that is forced to withstand humiliation in marriage. Her account of the domestic reality of marriage criticizes a few commonly known injustices. First, married men often have interests that render their wives secondary. They consider their wives a piece of accessory that culture and tradition expects them to keep for display when necessary. Second, the sex roles women take on do not grant them a fulfilling life. The wife ("you can cook good), madonna ("you can look good"), or the whore ("You can play hard to get."), are stereotypical images of women created by phallogocentric imagination to accommodate men's needs. As soon as man's fantasies have been satisfied, the roles cease to stimulate their interest in *his* woman. Third, a married man is likely to show interest in his wife's psychology and emotions only when it suits him, especially when he is selfishly seeking consolation. These are some of the chief conditions of woman's enslavement in marriage. Beauvoir argues that it is the patriarchal society that is responsible for this unhealthy pattern of interaction:

Conjugal slavery is chiefly a matter of daily irritation for the husband; but it is something more deep-seated for the woman; a wife who keeps her husband at her side for hours because she is bored certainly bothers him and seems

64. Lochhead, *True Confessions*, 8.

burdensome; but in the last analysis he can get along without her much more easily than she can without him; . . . The great difference is that with woman dependency is interiorized: she *is* a slave even when she behaves with apparent freedom; while man is essentially independent and his bondage comes from without. . . . If it is asserted that *men* oppress *women*, the husband is indignant; he feels that *he* is the one who is oppressed—and he is; but the fact is that it is the masculine code, it is the society developed by the males and in their interest, that has established woman’s situation in a form that is at present a source of torment for both sexes.⁶⁵

The poem reflects Beauvoir’s analysis of the source of irritation in marriage. The speaker describes the fruitless efforts of the wife to win her husband’s attention. As a result, he experiences boredom that can be temporarily relieved by watching sport on the television and alcohol abuse. His indifference is a proof that he does not need her unless he wants to use her as a technique of stress management. The wife’s interiorized dependency on the husband, often reinforced by raising a child, worsens her situation. It confines her to the household and prevents her from leaving.

Lochhead dramatizes this sense of hopelessness in “Apple Pie.” The speaker contrasts woman’s dependence and man’s superiority in sexual politics:

Though first the news you’re overdue
Is a bolt from a blue sky
Soon he’ll warm to marriage and the chapel,
You’re the apple of his eye!
All His, and he knows you’re gonna
Make a swell madonna —
No problem, Hushaby!
Cause when you’ve a bun in the oven,
Everything is apple pie.⁶⁶

This poem derives its energy from Lochhead’s play with clichés and puns. The narrator describes man’s expectations from woman in the context of unintended pregnancy (“a bun in the oven”). Besides ridiculing woman’s stereotypical role of madonna, Lochhead stresses the underlying pattern of ownership. The fifth line opens with an allusion to patriarchy’s traditional concept of marriage that grants man an exclusive prerogative to own woman. This property-driven economy along with the barter system constitute some of the basic conditions of woman’s continuous subjugation. Lochhead shows that the patriarchal institution of marriage controls and humiliates women.

65. Beauvoir, 506 – 507.

66. Lochhead, *True Confessions*, 88.

PART III

SEXUALITY

Chapter 7

Virility and Vulnerability

Despite the biological origins of sexual instincts, notions of sexual desire have been constructed and shaped by social, cultural, and economic criteria. Although I do not question the biological difference between the sexes, sexual behavior and attitudes to sexual intercourse are products of learning and social norms. Their arbitrariness is demonstrated by the fact that what is considered morally acceptable in one culture can be utterly immoral in another. However, all patriarchal cultures have in common the pathology of virility. They all share a structural pattern of sexual power in men. Displays of male virility are dominated by the image of coitus as the supreme expression of men's superiority. In fact, coitus represents a particularly powerful model of sexual politics because it is a paradigm of power over human beings.⁶⁷ Patriarchal cultures typically depict man as the active participant in coitus whereas woman is stereotypically portrayed passive. While women's genuine sexual desires are either misrepresented or repressed, male fantasies govern the traditional sexual narrative.

Lochhead's poetry often documents the imbalance of power-structured relationships in the context of men's sexual exploitation of women. She analyzes the model of sexual politics from a female perspective. This approach offers a counter-narrative to the traditional depiction of female sexuality. In "Song of Solomon," the female speaker describes male virility:

You
smell nice he said
What is it?
Honey? He nuzzled a soap-trace
in the hollow of her collarbone.
The herbs of her hair?
Salt? He licked
a riverbed between her breasts.⁶⁸

The passage presents a few stereotypes that reflect Western sexual imagination. The second and third lines embody the pretentious nature of masculine

67. See Millet, 22 – 23.

68. Lochhead, *Dreaming Frankenstein*, 99.

sexual discourse. The male character starts his sexual assault on the woman's body in a cliché-ridden style. First, he tries to flatter the female speaker by pointing out her body scent. It is merely a rhetorical question—a learned response to a socially established pattern of interaction. Since he does not expect any answer, which highlights his assertion of power over a weak unintelligent woman, he immediately engages in the sexual exploitation of her body. His actions present a view of male sexual force that bears a striking resemblance with animal sexual behavior. Lochhead's choice of words and phrasing in the third and seventh lines adds a particularly animal-like character. She depicts the man as a beast that is about to devour his prey represented by the woman. His violent acts leave an impression of sexual potency and cruelty. As soon as he approaches her, he targets the concave symbols of female sexuality—her breasts. The graphic description highlights two aspects of male virility in Western culture. First, the man's potency is overwhelming and his sexuality is a symbol of power. Second, the woman displays signs of servility and vulnerability. In contrast, the second stanza focuses on the physical dimensions of her body:

(He'd seemed
not unconvinced by the chemical
attar of roses at her armpit. She tried
to relax have absolute faith in
the expensive secretions of teased civet to
trust the musk at her pulse spots
never think of the whiff of
sourmilk from her navel
the curds of cheese between the toes
the dried blood smell of many small wounds
the stink of fish at her crotch.)⁶⁹

The woman clearly represents a typical victim of male carnal desires. She epitomizes the patriarchal stereotype of standardized beauty. She applies the technological products of the beauty industry to her body in order to stimulate the man's sexual fantasies. This is a proof of her compliance with the patriarchal standards of sexuality.

The whole passage describes the psychological strain and humiliation of the female, who is seeking approval from the man. She has interiorized patriarchal ideology to the degree that she encourages the man's traditional expression of male

69. Lochhead, *Dreaming Frankenstein*, 99.

virility. At the same time, her sexuality radically differs from the man's. While the man avails himself of all the culturally positive aspects of virility, she loathes her body. He typifies male sexually aggressive potency whereas the description of her body parts renders her filthy. In other words, the scene celebrates the male and degrades the female. Lochhead achieves here two goals. She criticizes patriarchal notions of female sexuality by subverting the traditional male narrative because she puts the female voice in charge. More importantly, she exposes the pathological nature of male virility, especially in the last stanza:

No there he was above her apparently
as happy as a hog rooting for truffles.
She caressed him behind the ear
with the garlic of her cooking-thumb.
She banged shut her eyes
and hoped he would not smell her fear.⁷⁰

The male character in the poem is blinded by his sexual instinct. The speaker uses an animal simile to stress his raging virility. However, she is a passive victim to his egotism. Even though the speaker is allowed to mock the man in the third and fourth lines, she ends up a casualty of his vile intentions. She obediently submits to his oppressive attempts to conquer her body. The poem portrays the patriarchal image of coitus as an experience that is empowering for men. Fear is seen as fuel that powers their sexual exploits. The last two lines suggest evidence that the sexual intercourse represents an assertion of master-slave relationship.

Lochhead explores this power-structured relation from several perspectives. Besides using the stereotypical images of male virility to criticize the pattern of sexual politics, she also looks at its origins. If "Song of Solomon" demonstrates the final stage of women's internalized inferiority, "The Sins of the Fathers" examines the initial one. It dramatizes the issue of child molestation:

Look at me, I'm only three
Sittin' on my daddy's knee
Who would guess I'm gonny be
His next victim victim victim.
...
And the sins of the fathers
Will visit the children
Nightly in their beds
And there's grown-up mothers

70. Lochhead, *Dreaming Frankenstein*, 99.

Who are still little children
In the darkness of their heads.⁷¹

Lochhead uses a nursery rhyme tune to foreground the unspeakable horror of child sexual abuse. The speaker's rape experience should be seen in the context of women's history of subjugation. Her early victimization establishes a pattern of behavior that leads to the internalized inferiority and self-loathing that I analyzed in the previous poem. It also gives an important insight into the use of physical force in sex. Millet argues that in patriarchal societies force is an exclusively male prerogative, and man typically resorts to physical violence, which materializes in the act of rape, to reinforce his assertion of power.⁷² The sexual character of physical force is particularly noteworthy here. The male, represented by the father, employs his physical strength to inflict damage and hurt the female. It is a self-reassuring act of mastery. Patriarchal culture and society render the female, epitomized by the little girl, defenseless against man's physical assault because it assigns force to man. Moreover, the social stigma of rape, dramatized in the poem as the sins that visit children nightly in their beds, prevents woman from pursuing legal actions against the rapist. This further reassures man of his dominance and power.

Society's extreme disapproval of rape also complicates woman's psychological recovery. This fact is demonstrated by the last three lines. They illustrate how the traumatizing experience of sexual abuse becomes deeply ingrained in woman's psychology. It has far-reaching implications for sexual politics. Man uses force in the form of either verbal or physical abuse to humiliate and degrade woman because it is a pathological expression of his power. It helps to explain why sexual politics is dominated by men.

Lochhead's criticism of this pattern of domination can be traced to her earliest collection *Memo for Spring*. It opens with one of her most controversial poems, "Revelation." It explores the difference between male and female sexuality. The female speaker recollects her childhood memory of facing a bull at a farm:

I remember once being shown the black bull
when a child at the farm for eggs and milk.
They called him Bob – as though perhaps
you could reduce a monster

71. Lochhead, *True Confessions*, 100.

72. See Millet, 44.

with the charm of a friendly name.⁷³

The poem starts with a classic contrast between masculine and feminine attributes. The bull is a powerful male symbol of strength and its black color suggests an air of power and control. In comparison, the eggs and milk symbolize new life and vulnerability that are traditionally associated with the female. Both these symbols are white, which in Western cultures usually allude to purity and innocence. As a result of this binary symbolism, the poem establishes a gap between the male and the female. Moreover, the divide between them is widened by the fact that the female speaker classifies the bull as a monster.

As the poem progresses the profile of the bull becomes more aggressive and virile. The speaker gives a vivid description of his threatening masculinity:

At first, only black
and the hot reek of him. Then he was immense,
his edges merging with the darkness, just
a big bulk and a roar to be really scared of,
a trampling, and a clanking tense with the chain's jerk.
His eyes swivelled in the great wedge of his tossed head.
He roared his rage. His nostrils gaped like wounds.⁷⁴

The young innocent girl is forced to witness how the terrifying silhouette of the bull emerges from the darkness. Its description highlights the masculine attributes of male power. She feels overwhelmed by the bull's unmistakable smell that symbolizes the musk of the male body. What follows are references to male physical strength represented by the bull's muscular structure and the sound quality of his roar. Both aspects intimidate the little girl who had never faced such an expression of male aggression. The bull is seen as equivalent to man's omnipotent sexuality that seeks satisfaction through the violation of the female.

Gradually, the speaker becomes aware of the implications of the bull's virility. She contrasts its force with female passivity:

And in the yard outside,
oblivious hens picked their way about.
...
I had always half-known he existed –
this antidote and Anti-Christ his anarchy
threatening the eggs, well rounded, self-contained –
and the placidity of milk.⁷⁵

73. Lochhead, *Dreaming Frankenstein*, 147.

74. Lochhead, *Dreaming Frankenstein*, 147.

Using the hens as a symbol of female ignorance and docility, she compares man's aggression with woman's vulnerability. Although the hens are ignorant of the bull's hostility and evil nature, the speaker realizes that subconsciously she has always been aware of the existence of male aggressiveness. In his analysis of the poem, S. J. Boyd claims that [t]he child glimpses male desire as a threat but also catches sight of desire for the male within herself."⁷⁶ The comment is indicative of phallogentric bias. Boyd's statement is based on the assumption that the female is roused by the masculine attributes of force. This interpretation is based on the assumption that male virility is the basic principal of Western sexuality. However, the girl in the poem feels threatened, not attracted by the bull.

In fact, she expresses her general concern about woman's safety. The last two lines imply that the bull poses a threat to the female discourse which is again represented by the symbols of eggs and milk. Here I want to re-emphasize the connection between male virility and violence. Millet believes that "[p]atriarchal societies typically link feelings of cruelty and sexuality, the latter often equated both with evil and with power."⁷⁷ That is clearly the case in the poem because the bull boasts all the attributes associated with evil and power, ranging from black color to physical strength and uncontrollable temper. It is described as a cruel beast that puts the symbols of female sexuality in danger. The emphasis on the link between cruelty, aggression, and sexuality shows Lochhead's concerns about the injustices perpetrated by men against women. Looking at the issue from a female perspective, she highlights the traditional pattern of sexual politics in order to expose the underlying pathology of virility. This strategy can motivate women to discard the victim role imposed by patriarchal culture and society.

75. Lochhead, *Dreaming Frankenstein*, 147.

76. S. J. Boyd, "The Voice of Revelation: Liz Lochhead and Monsters," in *Liz Lochhead's Voices*, eds. Robert Crawford, and Anne Varty (Edinburgh: EUP, 1993), 46.

77. Millet, 44.

Chapter 8

Sexual Self-definition

This chapter is closely related to the previous one. It builds on my analysis of Lochhead's depiction of male virility. So far I have focused on the strategies she uses to expose and criticize the underlying misogyny of sexual politics. My primary concern here is to look at Lochhead's own view of female sexuality. Her poetry raises questions not only about patriarchy's misrepresentation of female sexuality but also about the authenticity of her own perspective. It is obvious that Lochhead's poetry subverts the traditional phallogocentric notions of femininity to raise consciousness about women's victimization. However, there is a thin line between using stereotypes to make a point and accepting them as a valid means of representation.

Such is the case with "The Legend of the Sword & the Stone" in *Dreaming Frankenstein*. It is inspired by the classic legend of King Arthur's magical sword Excalibur. According to the legend, King Arthur was the only person who could pull the sword out of a stone in which it had been inserted. The female speaker addresses the sword from the stone's perspective:

I wish I wish we'd stopped before
It wasn't making love any more.

I had this trust. It broke.
Who was that lady ...? It's no joke.⁷⁸

The poem opens with allusions to coitus, and the speaker's regretful attitude in the first two lines implies an act of sexual abuse. The whole scene feels a little bit surreal because it presents a stone accusing a sword of rape. However, if we look at it as a metaphor for sexual politics, the trope makes sense. The sword is an explicitly phallic symbol powered by its ability to *penetrate*. According to the legend, it had been fixed *inside* the stone until Arthur pulled it out. Therefore, the passage can read like a sex/rape/cheat sequence narrated by a victimized woman. The third and fourth lines give evidence of infidelity on the part of the male represented by the sword. First, the speaker complains about her lover's faithfulness. Then she refers to another woman—perhaps another character in the legend called the Lady of the Lake—whom

78. Lochhead, *Dreaming Frankenstein*, 58.

she identifies as the male's mistress. Until this point, the poem can be said to epitomize Lochhead's subversive use of stereotypes as a vehicle for her gender politics. However, what is noteworthy is the way she addresses the female speaker's sense of jealousy and mistreatment. Instead of condemning the male, the speaker challenges him:

But I dare you. Unzip my dress.
Turn me into an enchantress.

Enter with me on this act,
I will not give you back intact.

...
I know what witches know.
I won't free you, won't let you go.⁷⁹

It is not enough that the speaker should experience abuse and humiliation. She uses sexually suggestive incentives to encourage the male's comeback. Despite her former complaints, she recovers from the post-traumatic stress and is more than willing to be the sword's lover again. In fact, she presents her sexual desirability as an instrument of manipulation and control. First, she stimulates his fantasies by claiming she has magical powers. Then she appeals to his sadist sense of mastery that links danger with sexuality. Therefore, the last four lines may be interpreted as symbols of female power over men. However, this interpretation of woman's sexuality as her ultimate source of power is not empowering. Rosalind Coward explains the negative impact of this common fallacy:

Far from using the greater equality between the sexes to determine their own sexual image, we have seen women reaffirming the notion that what is most important to a woman is her sexual allure. . . . Not only is women's greatest power still seen as sex, but that sexual power is still essentially passive, courting the approval and response of men. And with the increasing sexualization of culture, a woman is under contradictory pressures: she is still essentially a passive subject, yet she is expected more and more to be defined by her ability to provoke and satisfy a sexual response in men. . . . The real problem lies in women's readiness to buy into the myths of sexual desirability as the ultimate source of female potency, as if for women the only power they can wield is sexual power.⁸⁰

Judging by Lochhead's choice of phrasing in the poem, it seems as though she cannot resist the process of sexualization of culture and society. Despite her claim that

79. Lochhead, *Dreaming Frankenstein*, 58.

80. Rosalind Coward, "Slim and Sexy: Modern Woman's Holy Grail," in *Feminisms*, eds. Sandra Kemp, and Judith Squires (Oxford: OUP, 1997), 361 – 362.

she is a feminist,⁸¹ she consciously decides to define female sexuality within the traditional phallogocentric framework. The speaker in the poem explicitly uses her sex as a source of female potency. This approach reaffirms not only the stereotypical image of women's sexuality but also the sexist division of roles in a patriarchal society. In this poem Lochhead appears to contradict her feminist belief because she intentionally renders the female speaker passive.

Concerning Lochhead's controversial definition of female sexuality, "What the Pool Said, on Midsummer's Day" raises even more questions about her feminist commitment. It presents a far more evident affirmation of the notion that sexual desirability is woman's chief source of power. Its theme is very similar to "The Legend of the Sword" because the female speaker, represented by the pool, seduces a male character:

I've led you by my garrulous banks, babbling
on and on till – drunk on air
and sure it's only water talking –
you come at last to my silence.
Listen, I'm dark
and still and deep enough.
...
What are you waiting for?
I lie here, inviting, winking you in.⁸²

The poem opens with metaphorical references to stereotypical feminine attributes. The speaker describes herself as a talkative person who "babbles." This is a misogynist view of female personality because it promotes a stereotypical description of woman's temperament associated with excessive talking. It implies a contrast between woman's emotional instability and man's self-composure. Moreover, Lochhead presents these feminine qualities as symbols of woman's empowerment. The second and third lines show the speaker using them to manipulate and control the male. This view of female personality is not only a misrepresentation of the female but also reduction of her potential. Instead of highlighting woman's intellectual and other capacities she can utilize as sources of power, Lochhead opts for the typical depiction of her sexual attractiveness and the ability to rouse seductive thoughts. This reductive attitude is apparent especially in the last three lines of the passage. They portray the female as a passive object of man's lust. She is motionless, lying and

81. See Matt McGuire, *Contemporary Scottish Literature* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000), 79.

82. Lochhead, *Dreaming Frankenstein*, 3.

waiting for the male to take action. At the same time, they exemplify Rosalind's observation because the speaker is expected to provoke the male and offer him sexual satisfaction. Consequently, the poem seems to follow the traditional pattern of sexual politics.

Lochhead also adds the stereotypical aspect of sexual competition between women. The speaker testifies to hurting another woman during the process of seducing the male:

The woman was easy.
Like to like, I called her, she came.
In no time I had her
out of herself, slipping on my water-stockings,
leaning into, being cupped and clasped
in my green glass bra.
But it's you I want, and you know it, man.⁸³

The speaker uses figurative language to describe a fierce rivalry for the man. The second line indicates that she appealed to the woman's sense of shared experience and sexuality to deceive her. In other words, she is proud of killing her sister—betraying her own sex—to win the man. In the ruthless pursuit of her goal she epitomizes the decline and fall of woman's solidarity. It is ironic that she kills another woman for the sake of seducing the man because he will most likely victimize her. Lochhead depicts female sexuality as a motive for a free-for-all death match. In this bizarre version of the survival of the fittest the woman's actions reflect the patriarchal paradigm of sexual behavior. The last line introduces a typical male fantasy based on the assumption that women are hungry for men. Therefore, in this poem Lochhead seems to define woman's sexuality with respect to two variables. First, women's rivalry, and, second, dependency on man. Irigaray shows that in this context woman

is only a more or less obliging prop for the enactment of man's fantasies. That she may find pleasure there in that role, by proxy, is possible, even certain. But such pleasure is above all a masochistic prostitution of her body to a desire that is not her own, and it leaves her in a familiar state of dependency upon man.⁸⁴

Irigaray's description of women's role in Western sexual imagery throws a new light on the foregoing passage. Both women are depicted as props in a male sexual fantasy. They engage in what phallogentric imagination finds particularly

83. Lochhead, *Dreaming Frankenstein*, 3.

84. Irigaray, 351.

stimulating—a deadly struggle that results in the death of one of them. Additionally, I want to point out the link between violence and sexuality that I analyzed in the previous chapter. Lochhead presents violence as a source of pleasure not only for man but also woman because the female speaker seems to enjoy her detailed description of the woman's removal.

As soon as the speaker eliminates her rival, she continues seducing the man. The tone and imagery become increasingly sexually suggestive:

Yes, I could
drown you, you
could foul my depths, it's not
unheard of. What's fish
in my could make flesh of you,
My wet weeds against your thigh, it
could turn nasty.
...
I watch. You clench,
clench and come into me.⁸⁵

First, she returns to her previous strategy to gain control over the man. For a brief moment, it may seem that she has achieved superiority because she threatens him. The second and third lines warn the man of possible risks if he decides to pursue the speaker. They imply her superiority. However, this assertion of power over the man is an illusion because it relies on the myth of sexual desirability as the ultimate source of female power. Lochhead lets her reduce her dignity and self-respect to a simple definition of sexuality.

But more relevant to the larger issues under investigation is the description of her erotic experience. Interpreting the four and fifth lines as signs of erection, Whyte criticizes Lochhead's use of phallogentric imagery in the context of female sex organs.⁸⁶ His criticism of Lochhead's preoccupation with the traditional modes of representation of women seems to be valid, especially if we look at the typical depiction of coitus. The sixth line draws on the binary wet—dry/vagina—phallus opposition. Lochhead's phallogentric imagery in the poem presents a reductive view of woman's sexuality and her ways of experiencing pleasure. In contrast, Irigaray claims that woman

85. Lochhead, *Dreaming Frankenstein*, 3.

86. See Whyte, 188.

finds pleasure almost everywhere. Even if we refrain from invoking the hystericization of her entire body, the geography of her pleasure is far more diversified, more multiple in its differences, more complex, more subtle, than is commonly imagined—in an imagery rather too narrowly focused on sameness.⁸⁷

Irigaray's notion of diversity and complexity of female sexuality offers a new angle of looking at the poem. Although there are certainly more centers of stimulation involved in female sexuality, Lochhead seems to acknowledge only one receptor of erotic pleasure in woman. The last two lines show her compliance with the misogynistic discourse. They present a traditional view of coital orgasm. While Nicholson interprets the poem's ending as "an orgasmic merging of selves"⁸⁸ I am more inclined to see it as the opposite. It can hardly be identified as a merging process because it is dominated by man's ejaculation. The act of his *coming* is what concludes the poem. The focus on his penis is symptomatic of masculine sexuality. Therefore, the man controls the narrative.

To sum up, Lochhead's poetic repertoire seems to offer a limited notion of female sexuality because she typically defines it within the traditional framework of phallogentric imagery. I assert that this reductive view, reinforced by occasional references to female essentialism, defers Lochhead's efforts to consistently subvert the dominant pattern of sexual politics.

87. Irigaray, 353.

88. See Nicholson, 165.

PART IV

FEMALE SUBJECTIVITY

Chapter 9

Woman's Self-discovery

Women's oppression under patriarchy is a fact. They have been silenced and humiliated, but their victimization is not a terminal condition. Despite centuries of patriarchal brainwashing, they have managed to assert their individuality. The recent history of women's struggle for liberation shows that they can infiltrate and influence patriarchal structures of power. However, this does not mean they have changed the pattern of sexual politics to their advantage. They still have to work hard toward this goal. The more women discover their inner self, the sooner it will be achieved. Lochhead's poetry can be an essential source of information and experience that can help women learn about themselves. In this chapter I want to show how Lochhead's poems address woman's self-awareness and self-discovery. In particular, I will analyze her views on women's independence and autonomy.

As far as woman's right to make choices for herself is concerned, "The Choosing" is an extremely important poem because it deals with decisions that affect women's lives. It was first published in Lochhead's earliest collection *Memo for Spring*. The fact that she decided to include it in her latest poetry book *A Choosing* (2012) indicates its great symbolic significance. It also proves Lochhead's lasting fascination by the topic. The poem contrasts the different life trajectories of two women who used to be the best friends in their childhood. The female speaker, who is identical with one of the women, points out men's influence on women's development:

Mary's father, muffled, contrasting strangely
With the elegant greyhounds by his side.
He didn't believe in high school education,
Especially for girls,
Or in forking out for uniforms.⁸⁹

The speaker criticizes man's interference in woman's life. The derogatory tone of the first two lines indicates her dislike for her friend's father. Comparing his appearance with the dogs, she downplays his assumed maleness and dignity. The last three lines show the reason behind her negative remarks. She depicts him as an

89. Liz Lochhead, *A Choosing* (2012; repr., Edinburgh: Polygon, 2013), 24.

obstacle in a young girl's search for knowledge and self-discovery. His negative attitude to education for girls represents the silencing of women who are held back by male authorities. Therefore, the speaker points out the father's misogyny to criticize the latency of women's oppression in modern patriarchies.

When the speaker sees her friend Mary ten years later, she realizes how much they are different. She notices her walking "with a husband who is tall," but she is far from jealous of her friend's conjugal life: "not that I envy her, really."⁹⁰ She defies the stereotypical image of women's sex roles because she is single and educated. Having identified the gap that separates her from her childhood friend, the speaker goes on to ruminate on decision-making processes that determine women's lives:

And I am coming from the library
with my arms full of books.
I think of those prizes that were ours for taking
and wonder when the choices got made
we don't remember making.⁹¹

This passage highlights the striking difference between the two women's lifestyles. Unlike Mary, whose "arms are round the full-shaped vase/ that is her body,"⁹² the speaker's hands are burdened with symbols of knowledge and intelligence. Lochhead uses here two extreme metaphors to contrast dependency on men with women's independence. While Mary is walking next to her husband empty handed, the speaker is leaving a library loaded with books. Moreover, she is on her own which implies self-reliance. The last two lines suggest a degree of self-awareness because the speaker questions women's ability to reflect on their lives. Instead of following the traditional pattern of sexual politics, exemplified by Mary, she has achieved autonomy. Therefore, Lochhead offers a moderate view of a confident woman who has discovered independence through self-improvement.

In comparison, "Mirror's Song" expresses woman's frustration and anger at her oppression. Replete with feelings of passion and destruction, the poem challenges woman to break free:

Smash me looking-glass glass
coffin, the one
that keeps your best black self on ice.
...

90. Lochhead, *A Choosing*, 186.

91. Lochhead, *A Choosing*, 186.

92. Lochhead, *A Choosing*, 186.

She'll spill the Kleenex blossoms,
the tissues of lies, the matted
nests of hair from the brushes'
hedgehog spikes, she'll junk
...
the whalebone and lycra,
the applebosom and the underwires,
the chaffing iron that kept them maiden,⁹³

The opening lines introduce powerful metaphoric language inspired by stereotypical images of women. The speaker—a mirror—symbolizes women's imprisonment. It is described as a "coffin" which implies immanence and death. The third line reinforces the sense of confinement because the mirror inhibits woman's spirit and self-discovery. It delays her awakening because it forces her to accommodate herself to culturally constructed standards of beauty. Consequently, these values imposed by patriarchy distract her from pursuing spiritual development.

However, Lochhead does not use any ambivalent language or reverse psychology here. Instead, she opts for direct criticism of sexualization of culture. Calling Kleenex "tissues of lies," she draws a link between the cosmetic industry and woman's self-deception. She also depicts fashion garments like the whalebone and underwires as tokens of women's physical affliction. The last line explicitly condemns these items as examples of torture women have had to withstand in order to live up to the patriarchal ideals of beauty.

Encouraging woman to destroy these symbols of her oppression, the speaker invokes the historical continuity of women's struggle for liberation:

Smash me for your daughters and dead
mothers, for the widowed
spinsters of the first and every war
...
She'll crumple all the
tracts and the adverts, shred
all the wedding dresses, snap
all the spike-heel icicles
in the cave she will claw out of –
a woman giving birth to herself.⁹⁴

The first three lines symbolize more than a link between women's oppression in the past, present, and future. It is an appeal to unity. The speaker rouses women to

93. Lochhead, *Dreaming Frankenstein*, 74.

94. Lochhead, *Dreaming Frankenstein*, 74 – 75.

take their revenge on the symbols of their subjugation to honor their fallen sisters and inspire the future generation of women activists. She prophesizes the arrival of a new woman. This new woman will consciously refuse cultural propaganda represented in the poem by “the tracts and adverts.” She will do away with the sexist division of labor symbolized by the wedding dresses. She will also erode the patriarchal industrial complex by boycotting fashion goods that mutilate her body. Through this liberating process, woman will discover her true self.

In fact, this poem presents Lochhead’s notion of a radical feminist Hegelian dialectics. Her dialectic triad consists of a woman (thesis) who is subjugated and oppressed by patriarchy (antithesis), but through the destruction of the patriarchal system (negation) she achieves liberation (synthesis). Consequently, a confident and autonomous woman emerges at the end of this painful journey of self-discovery.

Concerning women’s spiritual awakening, “Feminine Advice” offers a far more explicit appeal to female dignity. I am inclined to interpret this rap as a poetic version of grand narrative. It tells the story of a woman who has been exposed to misogyny from childhood to adulthood. The speaker looks back and sums up her life experience:

But I’m aware and now I know
that men are overrated.
I’ve cast my simpers, found myself,
I’m Spare-Rib liberated.
I fly above False Consciousness
I love me more, I love him less
I use Real Words for parts of me
Which formerly I hated.⁹⁵

Without any doubt the first two lines offer the most powerful statement of woman’s self-awareness in the passage. The speaker proudly embraces her dignity and autonomy while she dismisses dependency on men. The following five lines open with the anaphoric repetition of the personal pronoun “I” which emphasizes the woman as the subject of the sentence. Metaphorically speaking, it also adds more weight to her previous statement on her independence because it asserts her subjectivity. She then proceeds to give more examples of her gradual self-discovery, including references to popular culture. She acknowledges the benefits of reading *Spare-Rib*, which was a widely read influential feminist magazine that promoted

95. Lochhead, *True Confessions*, 43.

women's power. More importantly, the speaker's accent on self-love shows that women can thwart the process of internalizing inferiority and self-hatred.

Moreover, she also rediscovers the geography of her body that has been misinterpreted and misrepresented by patriarchal culture. The poem does not present a selfish view of women's self-discovery because it challenges women to rise up against patriarchy and its sexualized culture ("Don't conform to sexist fancies/ refuse to shave your legs."⁹⁶). Its aim is to diffuse notions of women's rights and self-respect.

The notion of individualized approach to self-discovery reappears again in "Almost Miss Scotland" that I analyzed in an earlier chapter. After realizing that she is only a prop in male fantasies, the speaker decides to leave the beauty pageant and regain her dignity:

And I let my oaxters grow back in
Rally rid and thick and hairy.

Because the theory of feminism's aw very well
But yiv got tae see it fur yirsel
Every individual hus tae realize
Her hale fortune isnae in men's eyes,
Say enough is enough
Away and get stuffed.⁹⁷

Lochhead lets the speaker channel her anger into a self-awakening process. She re-employs the theme of defying sexualized culture through the rejection of its sexist norms. First, the speaker decides to demonstrate her feminist commitment by growing back her underarm hair. Then, as a result of the cathartic experience, she discards the patriarchal framework of reference as the epistemological basis for her self-definition. The fifth and sixth lines show Lochhead's heavy emphasis on the importance of individual self-discovery. This view may contradict Lochhead's notions of discovering woman's self from the previous two poems. However, it shows that Lochhead acknowledges the benefits of both approaches—the collective and individual.

96. Lochhead, *True Confessions*, 43.

97. Lochhead, *Bagpipe Muzak*, 6.

Chapter 10

Herstory

During the course of human history, myths and traditional folk narratives have played an important role in consolidating patriarchal power. These ideological structures, including religions, have been used to help us understand the world around us and our place in it. They have provided ideological support for the establishment and development of all cultures and civilizations. This is particularly true of the distribution of power and wealth. They often account for the hierarchic structure of human societies and the right of some people to rule over others. Therefore, it comes as no surprise that they have been used to justify the sexist division of labor and the legitimacy of male supremacy. In the context of these ideological power structures, Beauvoir argues that

One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman. No biological, psychological, or economic fate determinates the figure that the human female presents in society; it is civilization as a whole that produces this creature, intermediate between male and eunuch, which is described as feminine.⁹⁸

The ideological narratives have largely contributed to the process of determining women's fate in patriarchal societies. However, if women have been constructed by these myths, they can be deconstructed and reconstructed because they are products of tradition. In fact, the retelling of traditional narratives have been long identified as a major strategy in feminist writing. Lochhead often draws on popular myths and folk tales in her poems. She retells them from a woman's perspective to twist their phallogocentric paradigm and give a voice to the silenced female characters.

The Grimm Sisters, whose title is itself a wordplay, best exemplifies Lochhead's retelling strategy. It includes a large number of adapted narratives that were originally published by the Brothers Grimm. These two nineteenth-century German academics are credited with researching and anthologizing popular folklore. Since their stories have contributed to the shaping of Western culture, Lochhead's poems offer an interesting attempt to re-shape it from a female point of view.

98. Beauvoir, 281.

Such is the case of “Rapunzsiltskin.” The poem’s title is a proof of Lochhead’s creative use of *puns*. She turns the original Grimm’s tale of Rumpelstiltskin upside down. Instead of following the classic narrative of a submissive female character dominated by men, Lochhead’s narrator subverts it:

& just when our maiden had got
good & used to her isolation,
stopped daily expecting to be rescued,
had come to almost love her tower,
along comes This Prince
with absolutely
all the wrong answers.⁹⁹

The speaker ridicules the typical pattern of female dependency that is associated with the genre of folk tales. The first three lines have a sarcastic tone that underlines the stereotypical image of isolated women in distress. Unlike the heroine in the original Grimm’s version, Lochhead’s female character has got used to her condition. This symbolizes the hopelessness of women in general. They have become accustomed to their isolation and inferiority in a patriarchal society. When the male character appears in the poem, he is not there to save her. He comes to assert his mastery disguised as courtly love:

so at first she was quite undaunted
by his tendency to talk in strung-together cliché.
‘Just hang on and we’ll get you out of there’
he hollered like a fireman in some soap opera.
...
well, it was corny but
he did look sort of gorgeous
axe and all.
So there he was, humming & pulling¹⁰⁰

The maiden feels flattered by the prince’s chivalry at first. Despite her awareness of his stereotyped attitude to courtship, she admits that she is attracted to him. Lochhead wants to show the disarming effects of the use of clichés in modern society. The speaker highlights the fact that regardless of women’s ability to spot this rhetorical device, they are repeatedly fooled by the men who use them.

The last three lines criticize the concept of romantic love. According to Carruthers, who condemns romance for its essentially misogynistic nature, romantic

99. Lochhead, *Dreaming Frankenstein*, 89.

100. Lochhead, *Dreaming Frankenstein*, 89.

love displays tendencies to view women as fragmented and incomplete.¹⁰¹ The prince deploys this strategy to deceive the maiden. As soon as she is trapped in the tangled web of courtly love stereotypes, the prince starts to assert his power and dominance by pointing out her deficiencies. In Carruthers' words, his romantic attitude renders the maiden incomplete. She notices his attempts to patronize her:

till, soon, he was shimmying in & out
every other day as though
he owned the place, bringing her
the sex manuals & skeins of silk
from which she was meant, eventually,
to weave her own escape.¹⁰²

This scene epitomizes the true intentions of the prince after he has gained access to the maiden through the discourse of romance. It was instrumental in tricking her into compliance. The first three lines underline the patriarchal principle of ownership which constitutes an integral part of sexual politics. It is a way of asserting mastery. Moreover, the fourth line hints at patriarchal intellectual arrogance. He considers the maiden an uneducated girl who is in dire need of patronage. The prince wants her to adapt her sexuality to male fantasies and become a mere object of his carnal desires. At the same time, the last three lines in the passage expose the prince's lack of serious commitment. Although he was supposed to rescue the maiden, he suggests she is not his responsibility anymore. The author transparently identifies with the speaker whose detached mocking tone criticizes the traditional folk narrative of female subjugation.

More importantly, Lochhead exposes the pretentious nature of the concept of romantic love. As far as women's strategies to combat romance are concerned, Carruthers identifies two most common types—parody and vulgar diction.¹⁰³ "Rapunzsiltskin" exemplifies the former. Lochhead's parody of the classic Grimm's tale reaches its climax "as she finally tore herself in two."¹⁰⁴ It suggests that the maiden commits suicide—either real or metaphysical—as a result of the prince's clichés and promises that never came true. Lochhead parodies not only the genre of fairy tales and romance but also men's mistreatment of women. She rewrites the

101. See Mary Carruthers, "Imagining Women: Notes towards a Feminist Poetic," *The Massachusetts Review* 20, no. 2 (Summer 1979): 297, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25088953> (accessed July 3, 2015).

102. Lochhead, *Dreaming Frankenstein*, 89.

103. See Carruthers, 297.

104. Lochhead, *Dreaming Frankenstein*, 90.

traditional patriarchal narrative from a woman's perspective to reveal its underlying misogyny.

"The Complete Alternative History of the World, Part One" represents another example of Lochhead's successful use of this fruitful strategy. The poem deconstructs the core biblical narrative that has been used in Western patriarchies to justify woman's subordination. Lochhead retells the traditional story of Adam and Eve from a female point of view with a particularly sarcastic note:

There was this man alone
In a beautiful garden.
Stark bollock naked
(Scuse my French, beg your pardon)

He was yes, the original Nature's Gentleman.
He was in tune, at one, with nature
And the lion lay down with the lamb,
Each peaceable creature
Knew its place in the Order of Things
(And if God meant men to be angels
He'd have given them wings).¹⁰⁵

Lochhead rewrites the myth of the Fall with the intention to ridicule its patriarchal bias. This is evident in the first two stanzas which mock the origins of male supremacy in Christian imagination. It depicts the Garden of Eden as an ideal environment dominated by a carefree man. First of all, Lochhead downplays the aspect of nudity in the last two lines of the first stanza. Unlike the solemn portrayal of male nakedness in the original narrative, Lochhead's parody satirizes the elevation of the male body using derogatory phrasing.

The second stanza offers a critical insight into the patriarchal myth. It ridicules the assumption that the Garden of Eden is a well-organized place where man represents the prototype of human virtues and innocence. In fact, the satirical tone infers that the Garden of Eden is a utopian dictatorship with a male God in charge who decides to complement man with a subordinated woman servant:

But, the Lord Our God being a Male God,
He knew exactly whit it was [lacking] . . .

A slave.¹⁰⁶

105. Lochhead, *Bagpipe Muzak*, 12.

106. Lochhead, *Bagpipe Muzak*, 12 – 13.

Lochhead subverts the biblical narrative with an iconoclastic interpretation of the creation of Eve who represents women in general. The first two lines criticize the patriarchal bias in the creation story because the Christian God is traditionally assumed to be male. Moreover, he is omnipotent which underlines the link between maleness and power that is inextricably bound to patriarchal ideology.

Additionally, Lochhead stresses the pragmatic aspect of sexual politics behind God's decision to create woman. Men need someone to rule, control, and use in order to stimulate their egotism and satisfy their needs. However, the poet also interprets the introduction of the female element as a scapegoat because patriarchy needs someone to blame for its deficiencies:

So they were both ripe for Revolting
When that Slimy Serpent came
But – would you Adam and Eve it? –
She got the blame.¹⁰⁷

Lochhead twists the classic myth of the Fall to dramatize its ideological function in Christian patriarchies. The original narrative serves to identify woman as the sole reason for human suffering and misfortune. I claim that Lochhead's satirical version of the myth contributes to the destabilization of patriarchy's fundamental ideological structures. She exposes the biased intentions of the original story that has been often used to justify the sexist division of labor and sexual attitudes.

However, it is neither authentic nor sexually didactic. Millet points out the link between the classical Greek Pandora myth and the myth of the Fall and concludes that the latter was inspired by the former with the only exception of the snake.¹⁰⁸ The serpent is an explicitly phallic symbol which inspires Eve to hand Adam the forbidden fruit. Lochhead criticizes the hypocrisy of the Christian myth that blames woman for humanity's Fall. Eve was manipulated by a symbolic male genitalia to trespass God's rules in the first place. Therefore, Lochhead stresses the self-serving nature of the myth of the Fall. Her retelling of the classic patriarchal narratives gives women hope and confidence because she contributes to the reinvention and exploration of woman's own story—herstory.

107. Lochhead, *Bagpipe Muzak*, 13.

108. See Millet, 52 – 53.

Chapter 11

Wholeness and Fragmentation

Patriarchal oppression appears to be a universal condition shared by women of all ages all around the world. Its forms and manifestations vary from culture to culture. Ranging from domestic violence to systematic state persecution, patriarchal victimization of women has caused considerable ego damage to the female. Its detrimental social effects show that even in contemporary democracies women are far from equal partners of men. However, despite the ruthless policies of patriarchal systems, women have not been defeated. They have developed strategies to survive and fight back. Solidarity and mutual aid seem to be some of the most powerful weapons they have used to assert their rights. Although the universally shared condition of womanhood should theoretically unite women, many females have preferred competition and rivalry to fighting for a common cause. In this final chapter, I intend to analyze Lochhead's poetry from the perspective of women's wholeness and fragmentation. Even though she criticizes patriarchy's misrepresentations of the female, her own views are often controversial when it comes to the concept of sisterhood and women's solidarity.

In this context, "Cloakroom" gives a reason to question Lochhead's feminist commitment. It consists of two stanzas that contrast younger and older generations of women. The poem is narrated by a collective speaker who represents the older generation. She is supposed to embody maturity and experience. First, she addresses the younger generation:

you girls who are younger
and therefore more hopeful,
thinking this is Woman's Own World
...
you think you can tangle him [a dream lover] in your curls
and snare him with your fishnet
stockings.¹⁰⁹

The speaker's cynical remarks about the younger generation's naivety and vanity seriously undermine any notion of sisterhood. In fact, instead of bridging the gap, the female speaker mocks the girls' inexperience without any hint of compassion.

109. Lochhead, *Dreaming Frankenstein*, 184.

She patronizes their assumptions about the world and the sexist division of social roles. On the one hand, this implies Lochhead's criticism of women's compliance with the stereotyped view of sex roles. The speaker's description of the girls' obsession with sexual allure may certainly infer an attack on the concept of sexual desirability as the ultimate source of female power. On the other hand, the lines read like reversed misogyny because the female speaker seems to be jealous of the younger generation. Carruthers offers an interesting explanation of this phenomena:

The motive for the generational hostility of women is a simply terrifying and inevitable one—loss of beauty. The woman who matures becomes through loss of beauty the monster her mother is. Even in consciously feminist poetry, it is difficult to find wholly positive expressions of the mother-daughter relationship.¹¹⁰

Even though there is no explicit mother-daughter relationship between the speaker and the younger girls, Carruthers' theory can help to understand the divide between the women in the poem. First of all, the speaker's focus on the girls' age and allure indicates her loss of beauty. Her realization of this fact is likely to motivate her cynicism. Moreover, metaphorically speaking she can represent the generic mother referred to by Carruthers. Instead of assisting and guiding the younger girls who are enjoying their prime, she decides to attack them. The second stanza appears to justify this argument:

we girls who are older
and therefore – but is it wiser
to recognize our failure
...
Our eyes are blank
of illusions
but we automatically
lengthen lashes, lacquer hair
lipstick our lips for later¹¹¹

The speaker's attitude oscillates between self-pity and misogyny. The first three lines suggest maturity and loss of prime. Although she acknowledges the inevitable effects of the aging process, she refuses to sympathize with the younger girls. Carruthers defines this condition as "woman-blindness" which is "produced by the inability to imagine a woman's life as a multi-dimensional shape rightfully

110. Carruthers, 295.

111. Lochhead, *Dreaming Frankenstein*, 184.

culminating in old age and death.”¹¹² The speaker exemplifies the refusal to see women as whole human beings. She disrupts the collective experience of womanhood through the fragmentation of the younger girls. She achieves this by criticizing the individual aspects of their appearance such as curls and stockings. Therefore, I argue that she epitomizes the internalization of disrespect for women by women. The closing lines of the passage show that her culturally learned subjectivity is self-destructive because she keeps doing what she knows is damaging to women.

Speaking of damage and women’s psychology, “The Other Woman” shows a possible result of the shared condition of patriarchal oppression. The poem seems to contrast two female rivals who compete for man’s attention. The female speaker voices her hostility against the other woman:

The other woman
lies
between us like a bolster.
...
When my shaped and hardened words turn
machine-gun
against you she’s rock solid
the sandbag you hide behind.¹¹³

The opening passage of the poem reads like a typical love triangle where the speaker represents the lovelorn element. She complains about the other woman because she jeopardizes her relationship with the man. He typifies the opportunist who manipulates women to keep them under his control and avoid conflict. Instead of identifying the man as the source of her woe, the speaker displays feelings of hostility toward the other woman. As a result of her attachment to the man, she becomes paranoid and jealous of his lover:

I send out spies, they say relax
she’s a hag she’s just a kid
she’s not a patch she’s nothing to she’s
no oil painting.
I’d know her anywhere.
I look for her in department stores, I scan
every cinema-queue.¹¹⁴

112. Carruthers, 294.

113. Lochhead, *Dreaming Frankenstein*, 106.

114. Lochhead, *Dreaming Frankenstein*, 106.

In order to humiliate her, the speaker resorts to misogynistic remarks that closely resemble those in “Cloakroom.” For one thing, she uses offensive vocabulary to derogate the other women. For another, she exploits the generation gap issue to mock the other woman’s assumed immaturity and inexperience. Moreover, the third and fourth lines refer to the aspect of sexual allure. I believe that the combination of these two factors—age difference and physical appearance—supports Carruthers’ theory of the inability to imagine women whole and complete. This tendency is primarily motivated by the loss of beauty. The last three lines suggest a developing psychosis because the speaker’s hostility toward the other woman turns into paranoia.

This suspicion proves reasonable, especially in the last stanza which offers an interesting twist:

The other woman
lies
the other side of my very own mirror.
Sweet, when I smile
straight out for you, she
puts a little twist on it, my
right hand never knows what her left is doing.
She’s sinister.
She does not mean you well.¹¹⁵

The speaker obliges the reader with a shocking discovery that the other woman is herself. The third line gives evidence that her rival is her other self because she describes her as a reflection in a mirror. Consequently, she turns out to be an unreliable narrator who enjoys misleading the reader. The sixth line provides a playful comment on this “twist.”

Nonetheless, her matter-of-fact delivery implies that she is not aware of her personality split. The fact that the last two lines display ongoing hostility toward the *other* woman raises questions about the pathology of internalized oppression. Drawing a comparison between post-colonial theory and women’s oppression, Donovan claims that schizophrenia represents one of the most explicit aspects of women’s internalized condition of otherness.¹¹⁶ Since schizophrenia is often manifested in the fragmentation/split of self, I assert that the poem exemplifies Lochhead’s tendency to picture women incomplete rather than whole.

115. Lochhead, *Dreaming Frankenstein*, 106.

116. See Donovan, 101.

Concerning the image of women's hostility toward each other, "Almost Miss Scotland" displays some of the familiar symptoms of the internalized fragmentation. During the course of the beauty pageant, the female speaker shares her feelings of woman-hatred with the reader:

Well, the waiting was murder and it suddenly occurred there
Was something *absurd*
About the hale position
Of being in competition
Wi other burds like mase
Who I should of kennt very well
Were ma sisters (at least under the skin)
Yet fur dubious prize I'd have scratched oot their eyes
And hoped they'd git *plooks*, so I'd win!¹¹⁷

The contestant's account of her participation in the beauty pageant shows a striking contrast with the characters from the previous two poems. Unlike their latent misogynistic attitudes, the speaker begins to realize the psychological impact of internalized patriarchal oppression. The first four lines depict her sneaking suspicion that she is being manipulated and mistreated. This epiphany gathers momentum as she comprehends the absurdity of the situation. The fifth and sixth lines provide a poignant comment on her efforts to re-establish the link between herself and other members of women's community.

The remaining lines retrospectively analyze the characteristics of internalized misogyny. The speaker exemplifies a person who channels frustration and anger into hatred toward her own kin. Millet argues that women share these features with marginal groups and oppressed minorities in society because their everyday experience of humiliation and disrespect damages their ego.¹¹⁸ The speaker arrives at the conclusion that her fellow-contestants are her sisters. She seems to regret that she has been brainwashed into thinking of other women as her rivals rather than sisters. Given the rather pro-feminist ending of the poem, "Almost Miss Scotland" presents a more complete image of women. The fact that it moves from fragmentation to wholeness shows Lochhead's rather ambivalent attitude to womanhood.

117. Lochhead, *Bagpipe Muzak*, 4.
118. See Millet, 55.

CONCLUSION

Empowering Women

As far as women's struggle against patriarchal oppression is concerned, Liz Lochhead represents a powerful force that has the potential for empowering women. Although she has gradually moved toward performance and drama, she became famous as the woman poet who changed Scottish literature. Her radical approach to the traditional phallogocentric paradigm of Scottish poetry brought about a dramatic change in imagining women. Giving women voices and confidence, she has repeatedly challenged the prevailing patriarchal modes of (mis)representation. Since her emergence in the 1970s, Lochhead has inspired and influenced a growing number of women who have followed her efforts to interpret women from women's perspectives. Despite the institutional recognition of her talent and achievements, she remains a grass-roots poet who stays in touch with the local community through the public reading and performance of her work. As a result of her relentless pursuit of female subjectivity, Lochhead has become a popular symbol of women's emancipation.

Patriarchy is a power-structured system that has been developed and maintained by men for men. Women can overcome it and achieve their ultimate goal—end sexist oppression. This task is not an easy one because women have been long subject to patriarchy's phallogocentric ideology and institutional abuse. However, no matter how complex, it is a system based on power-relations that can be identified and deconstructed. I claim that Lochhead's poetry offers creative strategies for recognizing and destabilizing the rigid pattern of sexual politics that has contributed to women's enslavement under patriarchy. Therefore, women can benefit from reading and interpreting her poetry in this context.

I want to highlight two potential sources of empowerment women can find in Lochhead's poetry. First, she uses the traditional phallogocentric modes of depicting women in order to expose their bias. This may initially seem rather counter-productive because she relies on patriarchy's intentional misrepresentation of women. However, she does not merely copy male-centered stereotypes and clichés that offer nothing more than deformed images of women. She employs these deep-rooted

notions of womanhood to criticize their crucial role in patriarchal propaganda. Since women have been socialized to subconsciously accept and internalize these stereotypes, Lochhead's playful subversion of these devices can make women consciously aware of their ongoing brainwashing and mistreatment. Ultimately, her poems may contribute to women's spiritual awakening that is a vitally important precondition for the negation of sexist oppression.

The second source of empowerment stems from the previous one. If Lochhead's poetry helps women become more conscious of their subordination in patriarchal cultures, they can then proceed to challenging their fundamental principles. This includes the sexist division of labor and the objectification of the female body. For example, Lochhead often employs stereotypes and irony to satirize the traditional sex roles that patriarchy attributes to men and women. She presents grossly exaggerated views of women as chattels and domestic servants who slave away in the home while the man enjoys his freedom outside. Additionally, her iconoclastic poems target the reduction of the female body to a mere object of the male gaze. Combining poignant images and comic relief, they criticize patriarchy's lack of respect women. I assert that such satirized depictions of women are likely to raise consciousness. If women who have been forced into these deformed social and cultural roles read them, they will recognize their own reflection in them. Consequently, this powerful epiphany may help them channel their frustration and anger into a storm of protest against patriarchal injustices.

This also applies to Lochhead's descriptions of patriarchal institutions of control, especially the family. Her poems provide an authentic insight into the concept of the patriarchal family as the chief unit of social reproduction and socialization. They are peopled with female characters ranging from little girls to adult women who typify the victims of male supremacy. Speaking of the process of socialization, Lochhead also criticizes the traditional concepts of school and marriage because they both mutilate woman. Her bleak portrayal of the school environment dramatizes the indoctrination of young women who are forced to adopt patriarchal values in order to pass for fully socialized individuals. The process of woman's mutilation is concluded in marriage, the purpose of which is to give men the exclusive right to own woman. Therefore, Lochhead's poems show the essentially feudal character of the patriarchal family and marriage, both of which represent man's assertion of mastery. More informative than the insight into the patriarchal institutions of power and control is the

fact that it is provided by women's voices. This is what makes Lochhead's criticism of sexual politics unique.

The fact that Lochhead explores the patterns of sexual politics from a woman's perspective offers a rare opportunity to dispel phallogocentric misconceptions of female sexuality. Her poetry attacks what has been long seen as the fundamental difference between man and woman, namely the virility/passivity binary opposition. Although her female characters range from typical victims of male carnal desires to empowered women, they all comment on the pathology of virility. She criticizes men's pathological obsession with coitus as a means of asserting their superiority. She uses the act of sexual intercourse to delineate the power relations between the sexes.

Even though Lochhead's poems often satirize Western sexual imagination, some of them seem to comply with its sexist agenda. In particular, Lochhead's politics of gender is rather ambivalent when it comes to viewing women's sexual desirability as the ultimate source of their power. This essentialist-like representation of women has serious implications for the female. It refers to a set of inherently feminine qualities that are supposed to define her sexuality. I argue that this feature of Lochhead's poetry does not benefit women at all because it depicts them as passive props in male sexual fantasies. Woman must use her sexuality to discover her self. In contrast, Lochhead's approach suggests she should use it to seduce man in order to tip the balance of sexual politics. This only results in her further mutilation because sexual allure is a socially constructed concept that entails sexism.

What is also somewhat disturbing is Lochhead's ambivalence about womanhood in the context of the shared condition of patriarchal oppression. Some of her poems not only present a view of fragmented women but infer misogyny. Highlighting the generation gap that separates mothers from daughters and older from younger women in general, Lochhead offers hardly any hope to bridge it. In fact, some of her female characters explicitly mock and ridicule younger women. Instead of establishing a link between the generations of women to unite against a common enemy—patriarchy—Lochhead accommodates the typical stereotypes of female rivalry without any hint of irony. This strategy is highly unlikely to subvert the power-structured relations of sexual politics because it denigrates women. As a result, her female characters sometimes lack the ability to imagine women as complete human beings. Although women tend to compete with each other, I assert that

Lochhead's characters' uncritical acceptance of this learned pattern of behavior suits patriarchy's misogynistic policies.

Despite these rare occurrences of ambivalent notions, Lochhead's poems are a rich source of inspiration for women who are trying to (re)discover their selves. They encourage women to do away with symbols of their imprisonment. These range from various products of the beauty industry to various manifestations of phallogentric fantasies. Furthermore, her search for woman's independence and autonomy is evident in her retelling strategy. She rewrites the traditional male-centered myths and popular folk tales to promote woman's self-discovery. Since the biblical stories and fairy-tales have been typically used by patriarchy to justify women's subjugation, Lochhead's deconstruction of this phallogentric narrative discourse shows a great potential for challenging the ideological foundations of male supremacy. If women read closely Lochhead's retold poems that parody the traditional male narratives, they will see how the concept of herstory can help woman rise and forge her own identity.

These findings suggest a hitherto unsuspected aspect of Lochhead's poetry, a potential to empower women's efforts to end sexist oppression outside the limited context of Scottish literature. So far, her poems have been analyzed with respect to their literary and cultural significance for Scotland. However, the fact that her poetry, *Dreaming Frankenstein* in particular,¹¹⁹ has been translated and published abroad proves the timeless and universal quality of her work. Once we understand her general strategies for subverting the traditional paradigm of phallogentrism in literature, it should be possible for women all around the world to better understand the universal condition of their subjugation and do away with the system of patriarchal oppression.

119. See Susanne Hagemann, "Lochhead Translated," in *The Edinburgh Companion to Contemporary Scottish Literature*, ed. Berthold Schoene (Edinburgh: EUP, 2007), 62.

RESUMÉ

Feminismus a skotská poezie?

Historie skotské literatury a zejména pak poezie je neodmyslitelně spjata s převážně mužskými autory. Od básnické ikony osmnáctého století Roberta Burnse přes Edwina Muira až po kontroverzního modernistu Hugh MacDiarmida, tradiční kánon skotské poezie nezahrnoval autorky, jež by mohly výrazně narušit jeho maskulinní charakter. Ženy čelily bezohlednému procesu marginalizace a jejich hlasu nikdo nepřikládal velkou váhu. Až do nedávna se jejich právo na sebevyjádření v literatuře buď dezinterpretovalo nebo přímo ignorovalo. Proto je těžké odhadnout míru bezpráví a psychologické újmy, s níž se ženy v kontextu falocentrické skotské literární tradice musely vyrovnat. Toto výlučně mužsky orientované paradigma se však dramaticky změnilo v 70. letech dvacátého století, když se na skotské literární scéně objevila básnířka a dramatička Liz Lochhead. S jejím příchodem se spojuje nový pohled na ženy v literatuře a společnosti, protože svým nekompromisním postojem k útlaku žen oslovila a inspirovala velké množství dalších autorek, které následovaly její příklad.

Tvorba Liz Lochhead je velice specifická svým ikonoklastickým přístupem k tradičnímu zobrazování žen a jejich zkušeností. Místo toho, aby se držela klasického patriarchálního postupu při nazírání na ženu jako pasivní hospodyně v domácnosti, jejímž úkolem je uspokojit fyzické a i psychické potřeby mužů, Lochhead tvořivě využívá těchto stereotypů, aby podkopala tradiční rámec sebeuspokojující falocentrické literární tradice. Tím poskytuje ženám možnost uvědomit si své podřadné postavení v patriarchální společnosti a bojovat proti genderové nerovnosti.

Přestože je patriarchát mocenský systém, který využívá širokou škálu efektivních ideologických a institucionálních nástrojů k udržení své nadvlády, historický vývoj hnutí za ženskou emancipaci ukazuje, že ženy mají schopnosti a prostředky k tomu, aby ho svrhli a skoncovali se sexismem. Ve své práci dokazují, že poezie Liz Lochhead v tomto směru ženám nabízí bohatý zdroj inspirace a poučení v jejich boji proti patriarchálnímu útlaku. Její básnická tvorba ženám předkládá kreativní strategie k rozpoznání a narušení tradičního vzoru sexuální politiky, která určuje směr patriarchálního společenského diskursu. Jelikož se jedná o systém moci a nadvlády, jež

vychází ze vztahů nadřazenosti jednoho pohlaví nad druhým, četba a interpretace feministicky orientované poezie Liz Lochhead, která napadá tento způsob útlaku a vykořisťování, má potenciál nasměrovat ženy ke změně těchto mocenským vztahů.

Způsoby, jimiž ženy mohou docílit přehodnocení a převrácení polarity dosavadního vývoje sexuální politiky, zkoumám v poezii Liz Lochhead v několika základních rovinách. Nejdříve poukazují na strategie, jež básnířka využívá ke kritice tradičně chápané dělby rolí a práce v patriarchální společnosti. Lochhead za tímto účelem vychází z klasických stereotypů a klišé, jejichž prostřednictvím útočí na předsudky a kulturně determinovaný výklad pohlaví. Ve svých básních nabízí přehnané karikatury a parodie typických rolí, včetně takzvané svůdnice nebo madony, jež mají ženy podle patriarchálního diktátu plnit.

Tato strategie navíc odhaluje zásadní význam představy o intelektuální podřadnosti ženy, jenž dominuje patriarchálním společnostem a kulturám po celém světě, pro ideologii maskulinní nadřazenosti. Její tvorba odráží fakt, že muži záměrně využívají ženu jako zrcadlo své domnělé velikosti a výjimečnosti. Básně Lochhead vyzývají ženu k vyvrácení tohoto principu, jenž má za následek oslabení jejich postavení vůči nadvládě mužů. V souvislosti s tím analyzuji autorčin přístup k problému objektivizace ženského těla, která deformuje a redukuje ženu na pouhý předmět mužského chtíče. Lochhead kritizuje pokrytectví a aroganci spojené se sexistickým pohledem mužů na fyzické rysy ženského těla.

Vedle toho se také zabývám odrazem institucionalizace žen v básních Liz Lochhead. Tuto problematiku nazírám z pohledu třech základních patriarchálních institucí, jež zásadním způsobem přispívají k socializaci a podmanění ženy ve společnosti. Konkrétně se věnuji kritice rodiny, školy a tradičního konceptu manželství, jejichž motivy se prolínají tvorbou básnířky. Lochhead systematicky útočí na představu patriarchální rodiny, která se zakládá na feudálním vztahu podřízenosti. Tato instituce, společně se školou a manželstvím vede ženu ke zvnitřnění patriarchálního útlaku, což má neblahý vliv na její psychiku. Všechny tři instituce jsou v básních nejčastěji zobrazeny jako nástroje kontroly a zotročení ženy.

Ženská sexualita představuje kontroverzní téma, které je středobodem feministické teorie. Lochhead poskytuje detailní rozbor patologie mužské virility z pohledu ženy, což pochopitelně odkrývá účelelost a zaujatost falocentrické obrazotvornosti. Autorka kritizuje tradiční představy o ženě, jako submisivní oběti mužského sexuálního instinktu, který má v západní civilizaci vůdčí postavení. Na

druhou stranu některé básně naznačují, že Lochhead se nedokázala vymanit ze zajetí esencialismu, jenž interpretuje ženu prostřednictvím souboru vlastností—esencí, jež jí mají být vrozené. Jednou z těchto údajně ženských kvalit je její sexuální přitažlivost, která má představovat hlavní zdroj ženské moci v boji s patriarchátem. Tento přístup je však reduktivní, protože omezuje potenciální schopnosti ženy zvítězit nad patriarchálním útlakem pouze na její sexualitu. Přestože tento problematický jev netvoří hlavní pilíř autorčiny básnické tvorby, poukazuje na to, že ji není možné bez výhrad klasifikovat jako feministickou autorku.

Největším přínosem poezie Liz Lochhead však zůstává její důraz na nahlížení ženy z ženského pohledu. Tento samotný fakt totiž poskytuje možnost autentické interpretace ženské subjektivity, který v případě mužských autorů, jež popisují ženy, chybí. Lochhead ve svých básních nabízí inspiraci skrze silné a sebevědomé ženské hlasy. Zdůrazňuje potřebu vlastní definice ženství a sebenalezení, které se osvobodí od dosavadního patriarchálního diskurzu. Její poezie ponouká ženy k dosažení nezávislosti a autonomie jednak skrze zásadní odmítnutí symbolů svého podmanění, ale také pomocí převyprávění a dekonstrukce tradičních patriarchálních mýtů a příběhů za účelem vytvoření své vlastní *herstorie*.

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ANOTACE

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Liz Lochhead představuje jednu z nejdůležitějších osobností moderní skotské literatury, především v oblasti poezie a dramatu. Její nekompromisní kritika patriarchální kultury a společnosti zásadním způsobem ovlivnila nejen tradičně maskulinní charakter skotské literatury, ale především způsob nazírání na ženy a jejich postavení v moderním světě. Její básně nabízejí ženám bohatý zdroj inspirace v jejich boji proti sexismu a šovinismu. Lochhead prostřednictvím své poezie narušuje klasické paradigma sexuální politiky, jež představuje komplexní systém mocensky orientovaných vztahů, které zaručují nadvládu jednoho pohlaví nad druhým. Tvořivým využitím a převrácením stereotypů a klišé, básnická tvorba Lochhead ponouká ženy k sebeuvědomění a zavrnutí jejich dosavadního podřadného postavení. Takto feministicky zaměřená poezie nabádá k přehodnocení tradičně maskulinního diskurzu za účelem dosažení ženské autonomie a nezávislosti na patriarchálních strukturách moci.

ABSTRACT

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Liz Lochhead represents one of the most important figures of modern Scottish literature, especially in poetry and drama. She has been credited with challenging the traditionally masculine landscape of Scottish literature. Her poetry dramatizes women's shared condition of patriarchal oppression in modern society. Lochhead's poems offer women a rich source of inspiration for their struggle against sexism and chauvinism. She systematically undermines the traditional paradigm of sexual politics because it is a system that maintains men's dominance over women. Using stereotypes and clichés, she subverts the power-structured relations between the sexes. Lochhead's poetry raises women's consciousness and encourages them to do away with their subjugation. She advocates women's pursuit of self-discovery and autonomy through the deconstruction of the traditional male narrative discourse.