

DOI 10.51558/2490-3647.2022.7.1.225

UDK 821.111.09-2

Primljeno: 19. 9. 2021.

Izvorni naučni rad

Original scientific paper

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## **ELEMENTS OF HISTORIOGRAPHIC METADRAMA IN LIZ LOCHHEAD'S PLAYS: *BLOOD AND ICE* AND *MARY QUEEN OF SCOTS GOT HER HEAD CHOPPED OFF***

The most prominent concerns of contemporary British literature have been reserved for the revision of tradition and history and contestation of metanarratives through historiographic metafiction and historiographic metadrama. Liz Lochhead's works are abundant in elements of historiographic metadrama which Lochhead uses to rewrite (hi)stories from a different angle, especially (hi)stories involving famous women and their position in the society, as is the case with *Blood and Ice* and *Mary Queen of Scots Got Her Head Chopped Off*. *Blood and Ice* focuses on Mary Shelley's process of writing her novel *Frankenstein* while *Mary Queen of Scots Got Her Head Chopped Off* presents Mary Queen of Scots and Elizabeth I in the light of their strained relations. Pertaining to *Blood and Ice*, the aim of this paper is to discuss the position of Mary Shelley as a woman artist surrounded by Romanticists such as P.B. Shelley and Lord Byron and their liberal humanist ideology which shows great indebtedness to patriarchal metanarrative. With regards to *Mary Queen of Scots Got Her Head Chopped Off*, the paper examines Mary Stuart and Elizabeth I's roles as women and monarchs, masculinity-femininity dichotomy surrounding the queens, the problematics of their historical representation, as well as the danger of their mythologization. The analysis of the elements of historiographic metadrama in the two plays shows that they are examples of 'herstories' which dismantle male-centred narratives as imposed rather than natural.

**Key words:** historiographic metadrama; *Blood and Ice*; *Mary Queen of Scots Got Her Head Chopped Off*; metanarratives; herstory

*Fiction is a lie that tells us true things, over and over.*

Neil Gaiman

*Until the lions have their own historians, the history of  
the hunt will always glorify the hunter.*

Nigerian proverb

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The epigraphs to the paper adumbrate the overall concern of the paper's content, i.e. the re-inscription and challenging of history in Liz Lochhead's works. The Nigerian proverb problematizes the privileged position of those who write history/histories which promulgate specific modes of knowledge and truth(s), thereby excluding the stories of the underprivileged of all sorts. Gaiman's quote destabilizes the traditional understanding of fiction<sup>1</sup> as a construct with a subjective dimension to it. The importance of the epigraphs can be recognized in postmodernist works of fiction, as is the case with Lochhead, that have been dedicated to the re-examination of history. Although (contemporary) fiction is not on the same ontological level with the past events, it strives to present the stories of the oppressed and underprivileged whose voice/experience was either not heard or was misshaped in historical records. In *History as Theatrical Metaphor: History, Myth and National Identities in Modern Scottish Drama* (2016), Ian Brown suggests that history has been the major thematic preoccupation of contemporary Scottish theatre. The need to go back to history and revise it helps imagine and re-imagine Scottish identity, by "articulating the past in the present, with both past and present's implications for the future" (2016: 218). The interest in history in female dramatists, including Lochhead, emerged by the beginning of the 1980s. The period of the 1970s in Scotland was marked by "macho flowering" in theatre which placed emphasis on "the nobility of male labour, wounded masculinities and beleaguered communities of urban men" (Scullion 118). The male dominion over the Scottish theatre was challenged by feminist theatre which focused on history and its perpetuation of the images of women as subordinate to men. The revision of history would help resolve the contemporary position of women and to resist "patriarchal and phallogocentric discourses" (Scullion 2013: 118). Feminist theatre was a response not only to history but to history plays written by men which operated

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<sup>1</sup> Fiction here should not be understood as narrative fiction but more as an imaginative piece of writing.

“... usually within patriarchal frameworks and with implicit or explicit ideologies that supported chauvinist and largely inward-looking perspectives on political, gender and, indeed, religious visions of Scottish society” (Brown 2016: 160).

Adrienne Scullion points out that Liz Lochhead’s plays were a part of the aforementioned endeavors to give voice to the unheard – women (2013: 119). Both *Blood and Ice* and *Mary Queen of Scots Got Her Head Chopped Off* deal with historical narratives and familiar stories. Elizabeth Wanning Harries observes that revisionist writing is the dominant of recent British women writing (not only Scottish):

“[Lochhead’s] new, allusive method – writing ‘from another angle’ – has become the dominant way women writers respond to old, familiar stories. They change the subject. They tease new versions out of the gaps in older versions, or sometimes out of the inconsistencies between them. The crucial ‘irony’ comes from the friction between familiar versions of the tales and writers’ new angles on them.” (2016: 161)

Such works promote contrapuntal<sup>2</sup> reading of earlier texts, be it myth, fairytale, or historical event, thus questioning various aspects of the accepted version of a particular (hi)story. In *Blood and Ice* (1982), Lochhead explores women writing through the character of Mary Shelley and her writing of the novel *Frankenstein*. Although the focus is on Mary Shelley’s consciousness during her writing process, the play tackles the position of women writers along with their other roles in the society, such as those of a daughter, wife, sister, mother, and fellow author. Also, the play thematizes the relationship between an author(ess) and his/her work. Similarly, Lochhead’s *Mary Queen of Scots Got Her Head Chopped Off* (1987) deals with the eponymous queen, Mary Queen of Scots, her rise to the throne, strained relations with her courtiers and the English crown, as well as her role as a female monarch. The brief summary of both plays confirms Lochhead’s preoccupation with rewriting “familiar stories from another angle” which are concerned with women since Lochhead “didn’t want the women to be the object in the stories, but the subject” (qtd. in Wanning Harries 2016: 161). Lochhead’s appropriation of familiar (hi)stories is an example of fiction that may be “intensely self-reflexive and yet paradoxically also lay claim to histo-

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<sup>2</sup> Edward Said introduced the term contrapuntal reading in *Culture and Imperialism* (1993) to refer to a method of reading (post-)colonial texts whereby different perspectives and histories are taken into account in addition to the dominant one which tended to suppress them. The same term could be applied to Liz Lochhead’s revision of (official) histories.

rical events and personages”, i.e. historiographic metafiction (Hutcheon 2004: 5).<sup>3</sup> Hutcheon’s categorization is slightly deficient since it refers only to narrative fiction. Richard Paul Knowles substituted the term historiographic metafiction with historiographic metadrama to designate self-reflexive plays that discuss history (1987: 228-229). The plays scrutinized in this paper, especially *Blood and Ice*, do not have elements of overt self-reflexivity. However, according to Richard Hornby, metadrama is not necessarily a play within a play but may refer to plays which contain “literary and real-life references” (1986: 32), which fits both of Lochhead’s plays.

The historiographic part of historiographic metadrama considers historiography, history, and historical representation. The postmodernist consideration of historiography tends to contest the grounds on which history is presented as thoroughly objective, which stems from the idea that both drama and history are “human constructs” (Hutcheon 2004: 5). The perception of history as a fabrication implies that it is not objective, thus refuting its uncontested status as a true representation of the past events. Hutcheon emphasizes that “rethinking and reworking of the forms and contents of the past” (2004: 5) is highly necessary since it destabilizes the idea of truth, especially truth which tends to indoctrinate for the purpose of being dominant and oppressive.<sup>4</sup> Lochhead has also recognized the dire need for revising and rewriting the past, thus allowing for the emergence of unheard voices and voices suppressed by different metanarratives. Historiographic metadrama, as will be analyzed on the example of the two plays, shows that our reality is pervaded by metanarratives that have, unfortunately, become naturalized and universalized.

To the best of my knowledge, no attention has been paid to the elements of historiographic metadrama in Lochhead’s *Blood and Ice* and *Mary Queen of Scots Got Her Head Chopped Off*. Previous work has tended to focus on certain metanarratives in some of Lochhead’s plays through the lens of feminism and histrionics, such as Jennifer Harvie’s PhD Thesis “Liz Lochhead’s Drama” (1996) to which this paper frequently refers. The purpose of the present paper is to discuss historiographic metadrama on the example of *Blood and Ice* and *Mary Queen of Scots Got Her Head*

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<sup>3</sup> It should be noted that Hutcheon coined the term historiographic metafiction in 1987 in her essay “Beginning to Theorize the Postmodern” and later expanded it in *A Poetics of Postmodernism* (1988). This paper uses the 2004 edition of *A Poetics of Postmodernism*, which is why a gap may appear between Hutcheon’s coinage and Knowles’s appropriation of it.

<sup>4</sup> Such truths have become recognized as metanarratives. Metanarrative refers to dominant ideological concepts that condition certain perceptions and knowledge as universal. The term was introduced by Jean Francois Lyotard and discussed as such in his study of postmodernity in *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (1979). For example, patriarchy is a metanarrative which imposed the male-centred perception of the world as universal and natural.

*Chopped Off*. In doing so, the paper shall rely on postmodernist theoretical framework. Although both plays have elements of self-reflexivity, the paper shall pay more attention to the historiographic aspects of the plays more than to the metadramatic ones, a topic reserved for some of the future papers.

The subsequent section of the paper shall tackle the methods through which *Blood and Ice* re-examines the portrayal of the historical and literary personae of Mary Shelley, Percy Bysshe Shelley, and Lord Byron. The same section shall analyze *Blood and Ice's* engagement with the liberal humanist metanarrative of Romanticism and the rootedness of Romanticism in the patriarchal metanarrative, eventually showing that Romanticism is not ideologically neutral. The section dedicated to the analysis of historiographic metadrama in *Mary Queen of Scots Got Her Head Chopped Off* discusses the strict sixteenth-century femininity-masculinity dichotomy that has persisted to this day, the problematic representation of Queen Elizabeth I and Queen Mary Stuart, and their enmity. It also looks into the effects of mythologization of the two queens on the contemporary British identities. Overall, the analyses of historiographic metadrama in the two plays show how Lochhead debunks Romanticist and patriarchal metanarratives while allowing for the emergence of female (multiple) voices and specific experiences that have been stifled through history and other narratives.

## **2. HISTORIOGRAPHIC METADRAMA IN *BLOOD AND ICE AND MARY QUEEN OF SCOTS GOT HER HEAD CHOPPED OFF***

### **2.1. *Blood and Ice: Re-thinking Romanticism***

The action of Lochhead's *Blood and Ice* corresponds to a great degree to the official biographical details of Mary Shelley's life, i.e. the time frame and the setting. Much of the revisionist literature tends to situate the action in a contemporary setting. e.g. Caryl Churchill's *Top Girls*, usually to indicate that not much has changed over the course of centuries. However, Lochhead's play remains within the socio-historical context of Mary Shelley's life in order to subvert the context in question from within. It aims to provide Mary's side of the story which had been neglected, which in turn correlates favourably with Lochhead's statement that women in her plays are subjects rather than objects (qtd. in Wanning Harries 2016: 161). The play also dismantles the Romanticist liberal humanist metanarrative. In addition to deconstructing the historical Mary Shelley, *Blood and Ice* deconstructs the figures of Percy Bysshe Shelley and Lord Byron.

The starting point for discussing Romanticism as a liberal humanist metanarrative would be its genesis. In the introductory chapter of *Poezija engleskog romantizma (English Romantic Poetry)*, Srebren Dizdar presents a set of occurrences which influenced the formation of Romanticism, one of which is the French Revolution which sought to promote individual human rights and liberty. Dizdar also observes that a number of changes took place in England by the end of the seventeenth century, including the development of socio-philosophical thought, technology, and science. All of the above-mentioned contributed to industrialization and the influx of population from the countryside to the cities (1999: 20-22). Many artists opposed the neglect of the individual and nature. At the centre of the movement, which would become known as Romanticism, was “the lonely and misunderstood individual, rebellion against the authority, pathos of nobility which breaks within itself since the ideals cannot be attained”<sup>5</sup> (Lešić 2008: 196). Although Romanticists insisted upon breaking free from oppressive systems, they resorted to escapism rather than putting their words into actions. As Dizdar suggests, “no matter how strong their ideas were, they did not have a real driving force to change the existing socio-political state. The solution was to escape reality” (1999: 31). The aforementioned alludes to the contradictions and inconsistencies in Romanticism.

Mary expresses her dissatisfaction with Romanticism several times in the play which can be traced to the very beginning of the play, Act I, Scene 2 when Shelley disrupts Mary’s tea party by coming naked into the room.

MARY: Shelley, how could you?

SHELLEY: Swimming Mary. I want to learn/ to swim.

MARY: Walking naked across the terrace, all/ tangled up with...

SHELLEY: I forgot. I forgot they were/ coming.

MARY: You did not! You only wanted to/ outrage... (Lochhead 1982: 5)

Mary believes that Shelley’s only goal was to contradict the socially accepted norms. Harvie suggests that Mary is critical of the Romanticist “rampant egoism”, a phrase used by Anne K. Mellor to describe situations “where the Romantic considers his or her own behavior right and just and dismisses anyone else’s contrary opinion” (Harvie 1996: 18-19). Other situations from the play allude to Mary’s agency. On several occasions, Mary discusses liberty with Byron. Even though *Blood and Ice’s* Lord Byron is much more benevolent than the historical Lord Byron, he voices some examples of the Romanticist liberal humanist metanarrative. Byron condemns the

<sup>5</sup> My translation.

teachings of Mary's father, William Godwin, insisting that he himself is "not a Godwinite" and that "he won't tyrannise the/ world by force-feeding it freedom" (Lochhead 1982: 19). Yet in the same scene, Byron uses the naivety of Mary's maid and ignorance to prove his point and to offer "man's truth", a phrase used by Christina Crosby to indicate "a gendered structure of understanding that excluded women and other marginalized groups from "historical and political life"" (Kucich 2000: 200). Mary reprimands him for doing so. Byron then replies that Elise is "but a maid" whose time and attention was bought by Mary:

MARY: But I have not bought the right to/ abuse her. I ought to act towards all/ creatures with benevolence.

BYRON: Benevolence by all means, Mrs/ Shelley. Nicety costs nothing. But/ recognise that were you are the paymaster, / benevolence is yours to bestow ... or to/ take away. (Lochhead 1982: 19)

While adhering to an ideology that seeks liberation from the imposed social hierarchy, Byron is insisting upon preserving despotic social order. On other occasions, Byron is a voice of reason as he tries to persuade Mary to write or when he shows fatherly feelings for the daughter conceived with Claire. Maria Elena Capitani analyzes Byron as "a catalyst for Mary's growing awareness" since

„Byron pushes the hesitant young woman to express herself and develop the creativity she has stifled in order to feed her man ego: "I look at you Mary and I see someone who is holding it all within. A lovely lady, who yet suppresses every gust, every gale, every giggle. Don't sit on your wit just to please Shelley." (Capitani 2020: 117)

It can be concluded that Byron's character is full of self-contradictions and could be considered emblematic of Romanticism which promoted and restricted liberty at the same time, which leads to a conclusion that Romanticist propagation of liberty was selective. Lochhead's treatment of Romanticism in *Blood and Ice* follows the strategies used in historiographic metadrama by questioning Romanticism's undisputed status as a liberating force. It shows that Romanticism is a metanarrative or "a form of ideology which functions violently to suppress and control the individual subject by imposing a false sense of 'totality' and 'universality' on a set of disparate things, actions, and events" (Nicol 2009: 11).

The play also points to the embeddedness of Romanticism in the metanarrative of patriarchy. At one point in the play, Mary directly repudiates patriarchy by telling Elise that she is a "slave's slave" and that "[T]o be born a woman is to be born a

slave” (Lochhead 1982: 32). Mary seems well aware of the imposed duties of women. Other reasons that would make Mary feel like a slave could be caused by the pressure she feels as a writer, mother, and wife. Unlike Mary, Shelley finds inspiration easily and advises Mary to do the same to which she replies that she needs to tend to their child. Both Mary and Shelley are writers and parents. Therefore, one may ask a question what makes it easier for *him* to find inspiration in comparison to *her*? Are their roles of parents and writers on par? Lochhead asserts that women writers have been unable to find inspiration/Muse since there is only female Muse (Muse for men), alluding to the idea that literature had been a realm reserved for men only. Lochhead questions whether women writers need to “discover, or re-discover some ‘masculine principle’” in themselves to be equal to male writers (qtd. in Horvat 2011: 182). Similar questions are posed in the previously mentioned Churchill’s *Top Girls* in which the main character, Marlene, behaves in a misogynistic manner in order to succeed. Both Lochhead and Churchill interrogate if women need to abandon their womanhood in order to succeed, thus dismantling the patriarchal metanarrative that has been ingrained in the collective consciousness to this day.

Lochhead deconstructs Romanticism and questions its relation to the metanarrative of patriarchy in Act I, scene 6, through the group’s (Mary, Shelley, Byron, and Claire) discussion of Romanticism. Samuel Taylor Coleridge’s poems that they refer to, “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner” and “Christabel”, present women as demonic creatures. For example, Life in Death figure from Coleridge’s “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner” is described as follows: “Her lips were red, her looks were/ free,/ Her locks were yellow as gold;/ Her skin was as white as leprosy/ The Nightmare Life In Death was she/.” (Lochhead 1982: 15). Shelley is petrified by the description and begs Mary to stop. He hallucinates that Mary is naked and that her breasts have eyes on them. Shelley’s negative reaction to Mary’s alleged nakedness is incongruous with his perception of his own nudity mentioned earlier in the paper. For Shelley, a Romanticist, male nudity is even desirable while female nudity should be loathed and suppressed, i.e. kept in line with patriarchal notions of the social order. Romanticism clearly reinforces the imposed female sexuality. Hence, the Romanticist writing could be classified as what Linda Hutcheon terms “instructional literature“ whose purpose is to tell women how to ‘appear’ – to make themselves desirable – to men” (Hutcheon 2004: 155-156). According to Greg Kucich’s article “Mary Shelley’s *Lives* and the Reengendering of History”, Mary Shelley did criticize Romanticism and its rootedness in “patriarchal codes of knowledge and law” (Kucich 2000: 202). Feminist scrutinies of Romantic ideologies, including Liz Lochhead’s, aim at “the gender

ideologies and subordinations that operate throughout much of Romanticism's dominant social and writing practices" (Kucich 2000: 202). Lochhead's merit lies in the subversion of the long established paradigms of womanhood and female sexuality that have been promoted and supported through literature.

## **2.2. *Mary Queen of Scots Got Her Head Chopped Off: Being a Woman, Being a Monarch & The Problematics of Historical Representation***

The rivalry between the historical Mary Stuart and Queen Elizabeth I has risen to mythic proportions through numerous official records, unofficial stories, film adaptations, etc., that have been passed down from Mary and Elizabeth's time. Although the conflict between Mary and Elizabeth was caused by a number of reasons and socio-historic circumstances, it is usually ascribed to Mary's and the Scottish general public's expectation that she would be the successor to the English throne and the idea that she has stronger claims to the throne than Elizabeth, the bastardized daughter. An unfavorable set of circumstances, such as the death of Mary's first husband Lord Darnley (Dunn 2003: 270) and her marriage to Earl of Bothwell (Dunn 2003: 359), made Mary abdicate the throne and seek refuge in England. Mary would spend nineteen years as Elizabeth's captive until she was beheaded on February 8 in 1587 on account of treason (Dunn 2003: 505-506).

Liz Lochhead's play *Mary Queen of Scots Got Her Head Chopped Off* (1987) re-creates the above-mentioned rivalry between the two queens. The focus of Lochhead's play is the problematics of being a queen and woman in a time which supported the myth of patriarchy, as proposed at the beginning of the play by La Corbie who asks: "when's a queen a queen/ And when's a queen juist a wummin?" (Lochhead 1987: 16). Lochhead questions the personality traits a woman needed to possess in order to be a queen. In *Elizabeth & Mary: Cousins, Rivals, Queens* (2003), Jane Dunn probes into the lives of the two queens individually, their relationship to each other, and the impact of their conflict on the British history. Dunn describes Elizabeth as "wanton and flighty one" while Mary is "seen to exhibit every feminine and queenly virtue" (Dunn 2003: 231), suggesting the idea of cruelty and martyrdom in their relationship.

Lochhead's Mary and Elizabeth do resemble the historical queens in the aforementioned traits or rather what was recorded about them. Elizabeth's alleged denouncing of her sexuality (the Virgin Queen) and feminine virtues raises a number of issues which could be traced to her famous speech at Tilbury: "I know I have the body but of a weak and feeble woman, but I have the heart and stomach of a king

and a king of England too” (Dunn 2003: 140). Close reading of the speech points to a denigration of feminine virtues and emulation of masculine ones for performing the duty of a monarch. On the other hand, Elizabeth’s speech confirms the sixteenth-century notion of femininity and masculinity in terms of their most prominent traits, where masculinity is associated with strong will and firm views while femininity is identified with weakness and docility. The above-cited speech is usually read as Elizabeth’s confirmation and support of the patriarchal metanarrative. However, it can also be hypothesized that Elizabeth’s move was a political one due to her realization that this would be the only way to succeed in a world replete with patriarchal and oppressive values. Harvie underlines that Lochhead’s play

„... explores the determinants of female power, examining the ways women institutionally are meted or simply denied power, the sacrifices demanded of powerful women in patriarchal cultures, the cultural insecurities and anxieties which engender limits on women’s power.“ (1996: 116)

John Knox, the Scottish Protestant preacher and Mary’s fierce opponent, is paradigmatic of the views that women, especially those who are Catholics, are not fit to rule. In Scene 4 of the Act I, Knox says:

„I hae been commandit to blaw the first blasd the trumpet against the monstrous regiment o’ women, an/ abomination against nature and before God; and to disclose/ unto this my realm the vanity and iniquity of the papistical/ religion in all its pestilent manifestations in Sodom priesthooses/ and poxetten nunneries.“ (Lochhead 1987: 19)

Knox’s views suggest the prevailing opinion of his time that men were ordained by God to rule on Earth and that female rule is nothing else than blasphemy. However, Lochhead dispels the myth of femininity as a concept synonymous with docility and frailty. Any display of female sexuality, especially for a queen whose private life is in the public spotlight on the verge of becoming public property, is met with rigor as presented through Mary’s different marriages. She is deemed a “wee hoor o’ Babylon” by Knox who claims she seduces men:

„Lukk at ye! Wi’ yir lang hair lik’ a flag in the wind an advertisement/ o’ lust tae honest men an’ they big roon een lik’ a dumb animal, slinkan along the road wi’ yir hurdies hingin’ oot/ yir sark an’ yon smell aff ye, ya clurty wee fork-arsed bitch ye./ Nae wunder it is written in the Guid Book that your kind are the very gate and post o’ the devil—A’hll leave the rid mark o’/ ma haun on your white flesh afore Ah.“ (Lochhead 1987: 33)

Harvie analyzes Knox's speech as an example of patriarchal scapegoating since Knox, just like the Mariner in Coleridge's poem referenced in *Blood and Ice*, is alarmed by his lust and "make[s] [his] lust women's sin" (1996: 104). Elizabeth, on the other hand, is determined not to marry, being aware of the burden of marriage at the time for a woman and a queen as well: "If we, the Queen, were to follow our own nature's/ inclinations it would be this: we would rather be a beggar/ woman and single than a queen and married" (Lochhead 1987: 14). Elizabeth is aware of the possibility that she would be denied her independence in ruling in favor of her husband if she gets married. Furthermore, Elizabeth could be aware that she would have to, in plain terms, take care of her husband in the same manner Mary does with Lord Darnley who appears quite immature. The two arguments are reinforced in Elizabeth's comment on her relationship with Earl of Leicester: "I am not proud I love him – but I/ am proud that loving him, still I will not let him master me" (Lochhead 1987: 25). Anne Varty suggests that Elizabeth's preference of power over love "is presented as necessary in a culture where women are not the 'natural' heirs to power" (1994: 72), i.e. in a culture which sees the monarch as a man exclusively sent by God. Nevertheless, Elizabeth's speech indicates that she suppresses emotions not only in favor of her rule but also in favor of herself as a woman whose life is marked by male decisions, e.g. the beheading of her mother.

Elizabeth's character is contradictory throughout the play since she appears progressive, as progressive as it was possible at the time, and seems to support patriarchal narratives at the same time as evident in her aversion to Mary's marriages. Harvie notes that Elizabeth is compelled to "detest Mary Stuart for even attempting to exercise both regency and sexuality". Harvie further refers to an early draft of the play in which Elizabeth decidedly expresses her dislikes of Mary as a female ruler: "I hate her for trying to be a woman-queen!" (1996: 117). The inconsistencies Lochhead presents in Elizabeth's character can be observed as a typical postmodernist destabilization of history, i.e. the idea that there is more than one truth and that it is almost impossible to get a full grasp of the past events. Therefore, it is highly necessary to approach history with caution and interpret the effects of history on the present carefully.

Lochhead is exploring the relationship between history and the past it records or rather reliability of the methods historiographers use to record the past. Lochhead's historiographic metadramatic approach serves to tease our knowledge of the past events, "it problematizes the entire notion of historical knowledge" (Hutcheon 2004: 89). Hayden White's study titled *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nine-*

*teenth-Century Europe* (1973) calls into question the objectivity of history by comparing the techniques that historiographers and writers use to assemble a text. Both need to use the same linguistic elements to build a text and there is always the danger of being subjective. History for White is

“... a verbal structure in the form of a narrative prose discourse. Histories (and philosophies of history as well) combine a certain amount of “data,” theoretical concepts for “explaining” these data, and a narrative structure for their presentation as icon of sets of events presumed to have occurred in times past.”(1973: ix)

In other words, history is a fabrication just like drama which in turn undermines the difference between history as fiction and drama as an imaginative concept. White’s definition of history underpins the purpose of historiographic metadrama in its refutation of historical knowledge. As Linda Hutcheon notices, it follows that drama/literature has “a truth claim” just like history since both are products and fabrications of their own time (2004: 93). The problem postmodernist literature has with history lies in the unquestionable nature of myths and ideologies it speaks about, as is the myth of two rival queens. Lochhead’s play offers more besides the feud of the two by presenting the queens in their everyday lives, their relations with their courtiers, and presenting them as *women with their own desires*. The aforementioned alludes to the idea that there might have been more than what the historical records tell. Milena M. Kostić Kaličanin intimates that this play may be classified as Lochhead’s ‘herstory’ project since it promotes the role of women, speaks of the conundrums of female monarchs, and is “told from a woman’s point of view” (2015: 108). Kostić Kaličanin explains that herstory

“... is a neologism coined in the late 1960s as part of a feminist critique of conventional historiography. [...] The word has been used in feminist literature since its inception. The Oxford English Dictionary credits Robin Morgan with coining the term in her 1970 book *Sisterhood is Powerful*. At present, “Herstory” is considered an “economical way” to describe feminist efforts against a male-centered canon. In other words, the purpose of this movement is to emphasize that women’s lives, deeds, and participation in human affairs have been neglected or undervalued in standard histories.” (2015: 108)

Harvie believes that Lochhead’s play does not tackle “the epistemological conundrum of putative historical veracity; what it is concerned with are the social implications of histories’ effects. Historical accuracy is not at issue; the effects of historical narratives are” (1996: 99). The implications of historical narratives with

their various aspects, including certain metanarratives, are an issue for contemporary relations between Scotland and England. Ian Cowan's *The Enigma of Mary Stuart* explores the effects that the perpetuation of the myth of Mary Stuart has. Cowan argues that the representations of Mary as either a martyr or a villain can be transferred to the representations of Scotland as a martyr country dominated by England or a rough country that needs guidance by the English (1971: 12-34)

The Union of the Crowns (1603) is considered to be one of the seminal dates in the Scottish history which has not only provided the English with a Scottish monarch but has had severe reverberations for the Scottish national identity. Lochhead's play presents the events preceding the Union but the figures presented in it are important for the Stuart myth and the meditations on the events that could have happened had not the queen been executed. Edwin Muir finds correlation between myth and identity in the point that "a people suffering the loss of national identity fill that loss with a legend" (qtd. in Harvie 1996: 123). The legend in question is the Stuart dynasty which in Scotland is considered to be the rightful heir of King Arthur. Furthermore, the figure of Mary Stuart who was exiled and executed operates as a metaphor for the position of Scotland in relation to England.

In the play, Lochhead shows that Mary makes errors and that her fall can be ascribed to her own acts to a certain extent. *Mary Queen of Scots Got Her Head Chopped Off* delves into the construction of the myth and not only its validity. The analysis above has provided several examples where women are considered unfit to rule and marginalized. Moreover, the analysis shows how female monarchs are being mythologized either in a positive or negative manner. Nonetheless, the mythologization of female monarchs by the same men (male population) who oppressed them is another example of patriarchal oppression since the men are the ones to choose whom to celebrate.

The play questions the antithetical images in creating a myth. The antithetical images have become recognized as "Caledonian Antyzyzygy" [sic] or "the merging of opposing or paradoxical viewpoints" which have been glorified together in spite of their incompatibility (Kostić Kaličanin 2015: 106). However, the descriptions of Queen Elizabeth I are also paradoxical, so it can be argued that the play, either deliberately or not, dismantles the British antiszyzygy.

In addition to hinting at and dispelling the Stuart myth, *Mary Queen of Scots Got Her Head Chopped Off* calls into question the Tudor myth embodied in Elizabeth by providing details from Elizabeth's private life and alluding to her sexual relations with Earl of Leicester which contests her status as a Virgin Queen in which the Eng-

lish take great pride. Barry Wood's recent book *Invented History, Fabricated Power: The Narrative Shaping of Civilization and Culture* (2020) discusses how power and monarch's legitimacy were constituted through narratives as natural. The chapter of the book titled "Narratives of the Virgin Queen" inquires into Elizabeth's mythic stature as the Virgin Queen and the members of the Tudor dynasty as direct descendants of King Arthur: "This Tudor myth, acted out by Queen Elizabeth and supported by numerous literary disciples surrounding the monarchy, became the vehicle of Elizabeth's remarkable power and throughout her long reign" (Wood 2020: 277). The period of the 1560s is regarded as the cult-making period in Queen Elizabeth I's reign since a number of literary works praising her position as "the handmaid of the Lord" and "a divinely ordained exception to male rule" came into being, e.g. *The Faerie Queene* by Spenser (Hamilton 1990: 623). The literary works consolidated the Queen's position and firmed her claims to the throne. Lochhead's Elizabeth, unlike Spenser's allegorical representation of Elizabeth, is more human and realistic. These aspects of the play do not only bring to light the thin line between drama and history but question the purpose of literature and its role in promoting and perpetuating myth.

### 3. CONCLUSION

Overall, the aspects of historiographic metadrama in Lochhead's *Blood and Ice* and *Mary Queen of Scots Got Her Head Chopped Off* have proven to be multilayered. *Blood and Ice* questions the practice of the main principles of Romanticism and the indebtedness of Romanticism to the patriarchal metanarrative. The play shows how oppressive the Romanticist liberal humanist metanarrative is towards women and their manifold roles as well as towards lower classes. It shows that, quite contrary to the popular opinion, Romanticism is not liberating and that it does not deviate much from the ideologies it tended to criticize.

*Mary Queen of Scots Got Her Head Chopped Off* deals with similar issues as *Blood and Ice* in terms of questioning female sexuality and agency through the figures of Queen Elizabeth I and Mary Stuart. *Mary Queen of Scots Got Her Head Chopped Off* probes into the problems of historiography, historical representation and its veracity. It deconstructs myths by presenting their contradictory aspects and subtly alludes to the effects certain metanarratives have as well as to the dangers in adhering to particular myths. The most marked observation that emerged from the analysis of this play is that history is only a version of the past events which people and nations perpetuate to hew their own purposes.

Both plays are examples of 'herstories' which question the historical representation of famous women (artists and rulers) and various ideologies which conditioned their respective representations. Lochhead's plays fulfill the role of historiographic metadrama in insisting upon incredulity towards history and historical representation. Furthermore, aspects of historiographic metadrama in the plays shed light on the gap between history and the experiential event as well as the dangers of history's promotion of metanarratives. The analyzed aspects of the plays explain why Lochhead finds credence among fellow (female) dramatists and why certain metanarratives need to be dissected fully. Lochhead's engagement with the re-examination of history on the example of Mary Shelley, Mary Queen of Scots, and Elizabeth I might have positive effects on the contemporary society's consciousness about the position of women since it shows that oppressive patriarchal relationships and male dominance are no longer acceptable.

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## **ELEMENTI HISTORIOGRAFSKE METADRAME U DRAMAMA LIZ LOCHHEAD: *KRV I LED I ODRUBLJENA GLAVA MARIJI KRALJICI ŠKOTA***

### **Sažetak:**

Najistaknutije potke savremene britanske književnosti vežu se za preispitivanje tradicije i historije kao i osporavanje metanaracija kroz historiografsku metafikciju i historiografsku metadramu. Djela Liz Lochhead obiluju elementima historiografske metadrame koju autorica koristi da ponovo ispiše određene historije i priče iz različitog ugla, posebno one koje se tiču poznatih žena i njihovog položaja u društvu, kao što je slučaj s dramama *Krv i led* i *Odrubljena glava Mariji kraljici Škota*. *Krv i led* je usredotočena na spisateljicu Mary Shelley i proces pisanja romana *Frankenstein* dok drama *Odrubljena glava Mariji kraljici Škota* predstavlja Mary, kraljicu Škota, i Elizabethu I u svjetlu njihovih zategnutih odnosa. Cilj ovog rada je da razmotri poziciju Mary Shelley kao žene umjetnice okružene romantičarima poput P. B. Shelleya i Lorda Byrona te da razmotri njihovu liberalno-humanističku ideologiju koja je usko povezana sa patrijarhatom. Glede drame *Odrubljena glava Mariji kraljici Škota*, rad razmatra uloge kraljica Mary i Elizabethe kao žena i kao monarha, dihotomiju muškost-ženskost koja okružuje kraljice, problematiku njihove historijske reprezentacije, kao i opasnost njihovog mitologiziranja. Analiza elemenata historiografske metadrame u ove dvije drame pokazuje da su obje primjeri *njene priče (herstory)*, tj. primjeri koji razotkrivaju androcentrične narative kao nametnute a ne prirodne.

**Ključne riječi:** historiografska metadrama; *Krv i Led*; *Odrubljena glava Mariji kraljici Škota*; metanarativi; njena priča

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