"DAUGHTERLANDS": PERSONAL AND POLITICAL MAPPINGS IN SCOTTISH WOMEN'S POETRY

In their 2016 anthology, *Aiblins: New Scottish Political Poetry*, editors Katie Ailes and Sarah Paterson claim that poetry engages with the political landscape "by issuing provocations which reframe and challenge conventional assumptions" (11). Tracing such relationships between creative work and political climates can be difficult. Since the Scottish Independence Referendum of 2014, the idea of "a parliament of novels" – a body of fiction which had a significant influence on debates around Scottish self-determination – has been critiqued by a range of critics who question the contribution culture can make to political change or who interrogate assumed relationships between the imagination and politics.[1] Much of this reassessment has suggested the influence of fiction has been overestimated. (Hames 2017) This essay demonstrates that the kind of provocative reframing described by Ailes and Paterson has in fact been embedded in the work of Scotland's contemporary women poets for some time although in ways that are not always overt or obvious. In particular it asserts that in their poetry the configuration of personal landscapes facilitates more flexible understanding of broader political terrains. It considers poems by a number of women writers from the 1990s to the present moment in a period which saw a new cultural energy generated after the failure of the 1979 Devolution Referendum, the establishment of the Scottish Parliament through the 1997 Scotland Bill and the further raising of expectations for self-determination which led to the 2014 Referendum. The essay identifies and traces two key and intersecting features of poems by Liz Lochhead, Carol Ann Duffy, Jackie Kay, Kathleen Jamie, Theresa Muñoz, Claire Askew and Em Strang: a fascination with the spaces of daughterhood

and a recourse to the language of negatives. Together these produce, and are produced by, states of indeterminacy that serve to challenge binary markers of identity, crudely antagonistic politics and conventional models of nationalism. The essay thus suggests a lineage of poetry that, by exploring a key area of gendered experience, has subtly contributed to the shaping of Scotland's narratives around itself.

Motherlands and "daughterlands"

Motherhood, both positively and problematically, is situated at the heart of reproduction and race: when physical lineage is traced or valued, the figure and body of the mother become freighted with significance. The complicated and symbolic configuration of mothers and motherlands has therefore been central to analysis of the nation state and ideas of belonging. Benedict Anderson emphasizes the dominance of familiar and domestic metaphors in the construction of nations as originary, existing before giving birth to their citizens (1991, 143). Anne McClintock (1993) has convincingly demonstrated how the gendered production of national identity serves to locate the family as the analogous unit to the nation while also appearing to remain outside history.[2] In a Scottish context, as in many others, mothers have been inextricably linked to the imagining of both home and nation. The domestic sphere has served as paradigm of community and shared values; the family as an instance of blood connections. In her study of Scottish imaginings of nationhood, Kirsten Stirling notes: "The fascination with origins, national or other, leads back to the body of the mother, and the association of nation with mothers bolters the belief that nations are something to which we are naturally tied"(2008, 22). Looking at both Irish and Scottish "ImagiNations", Stefanie Lehner draws on Spivak's idea of double displacement to examine the ways in which "women's actual body is transformed:

first into landscape or nature, and then into mother and as nation" (2011, 9).[3] Women writers, formulating a sense of who they are, have to confront these various identities – biological, psychological, racial, cultural, social – represented in the figure of the mother. For writers reflecting on changing national paradigms, the motherland is an equally troubling concept.[4]

Scottish women's poetry in recent years has, however, evinced a specific interest in the more liminal space of daughterhood. Rather than contesting gendered notions of the motherland, these poets have explored personal and national formations through attention to an arena of experience that might be termed "daughterlands". For daughters, mothers represent their past, their own future, and potentially the future of their own children. Although to daughters mothers are defined by a temporal relationship, beginning with their own origins, this simple model is complicated by perceptions of intergenerational parallels and differences. Women are shaped by shared gendered experiences but also by social histories which place them in distinctive and different contexts.

These dynamics are also informed by individual lives: the specifics of their own mothers, their positioning as daughters, their possible futures as, or as not, being mothers. Through the complex play of past, present and future concerns and the multiple positions it offers women, the daughterly space can be understood as one of multiplicity and in-betweenness. Emotionally charged negotiations around the spaces of daughterhood can therefore be deployed to complicate dominant models of personal, political and national belonging. This essay suggests that "daughterlands" offer a terrain on which to map out more flexible and plural geographies of identity. Less demanding of allegiance than the problematic idea of a "motherland", the (still

gendered) space of "daughterlands" becomes one in which Scottish women poets can inhabit a range of positions, explore multiple perspectives.

The language of negatives

In the poetic mapping of these daughterly spaces a second shared characteristic is evident: the use of a language dominated by negatives and negative constructions, saying "no" to, or "not" being, something. This trope is not uncommon in discourses of resistance. In a Scottish context, the influential battle cry of the Scottish Renaissance was Hugh MacDiarmid's insistence on "Not Burns – Dunbar!" for his poetic agenda. The motto of the *Scottish Chapbook* was equally polarised: "Not tradition – precedents!" Through this rhetoric, oppositional thinking drew on binaries to state its claim in what has been described as a kind of 'kulturkampf' (Thomson 2016, 6). In poetry by Scottish women negatives have also been deployed as a means of reshaping traditional poetic imaginings but their use extends beyond binary opposition of positive and negative. In the poems discussed here negative language clusters around the idea of not being something but does not necessarily imply an alternative opposite. The rhetorical drive of refusals push rather towards the creation of indefinite or indeterminate states. Negative language becomes therefore particularly appropriate for executing explorations of "daughterland" spaces and, by implication, more fluid and complicated configurations of belonging.

To shape a poem around saying "no" can be an act of resistance and power. Ellie McDonald, for example, in "On Not Writing Poetry" (1996) uses a strong Scots voice to advise against poetic procrastination:

Nae mair sclatchin' i the kitchen,

nae mair hingin out the washin,

nae mair stour soukin.

This is yer Muse talkin

fae the wyste paper basket. (58)

McDonald's poem enacts a refusal to comply with traditional poetic modes, or to write in English, or to remain within the domestic sphere. Her angry and Scots-voiced Muse rejects a range of conventions. A similar refusal of poetic models is also evident in more recent work. Claire Askew, a relatively new and striking arrival on Scotland's poetry scene, complains in "Bad Moon" (2015) about traditional images of the moon: "The moon must be sick of being in poems". Rejecting the various romanticized ways in which the moon is evoked – "always an eyeball or symbol, / always a radiant woman, a bowl". The poem then constructs a series of alternative metaphors, presented through negatives, to establish a different and darker kind of poetic discourse:

Never the buried skull,

never the gummed plug in the junkie's sink.

Never the white cat under the truck's wheel,

never the beached and stinking jellyfish.

Never the gallstone or the pulled tooth, of course.

Nobody wants to read poems about this. (67)

The use of the negative as a trope also informs, in deeper ways, poetry that is less obviously resistant. In the case of Liz Lochead, the use of negatives is pervasive in her poetry. A simple survey of the titles of her poems reveals the extent to which her

imagination and voice is shaped through "not" being something. Poetry that has "not"; "never"; no"; "none" or "neither" in the title or in first two or three lines includes: "Poets Need Not"; "Trouble is Not my Middle Name"; "Glasgow's No Different". Her opening lines are equally drawn to the negative: "Social History" begins, "My mother never"; "A Night In" with, "Darling tonight I want to celebrate / Not your birthday, no, nor mine"; "In the Dreamschool" starts , "You are never the teacher"; "Nae time eftir the bells" are the opening lines of "Fetch on the First of January"; "Hafiz on Danforth Avenue" opens with, "There are no nightingales in this lunchroom"; "The Offering" with, "Never in a month of them would you go back";" For My Grandmother Knitting" with " There is no need" ; "Spinster" begins with, "This is no way to go on" and, less obviously the first stanza of "Dreaming Frankenstein" starts: "He came with a name that was none of her making" (Lochhead 1972; 1991; 2003a; 2003b; 2011). One of Lochhead's most successful early poems "Local Colour" (first published in *Memo For Spring* in 1972) focuses entirely on difference and the idea of a self constituted by what it is not. A woman reflects on her sari-wearing neighbor and child, their talk described, in the poem's opening line, as "Something I'm not familiar with […]" (25). Circling around what the speaker doesn't know about this 'sullen' faced woman she moves from a series of negatives to the open question: "How does she feel?" In her influential discussion of the political deployment of emotion, Sara Ahmed observes: ". . . being against something does not end with that which one is against. […] Being against something is also being for something but something that is not yet articulated or is not yet." (175) This essay examines poetry in which negative impulses focus on a set of relationships, as writers explore what it means to be or not to be their mothers, to occupy the space of a

"daughterland". This compulsive interest helps move the writers' thinking towards openness: a means of considering new, if not fully articulated, possibilities.

The essay begins by identifying the dominance of daughterly spaces and the characteristic negative syntax through which these are articulated in a generation of poets working from the 1990s onwards: Liz Lochhead, Carol Ann Duffy, the early work of Jackie Kay. All these poets have high public profiles: Duffy was the Poet Laureate; Lochhead and then Kay have held the post of Scottish Makar. They have been frequent public performers, their work has been anthologized for schools and is widely taught in universities. In other words, they are influential beyond poetic circles. The essay then turns to Kathleen Jamie, again an award-winning poet but also known for her creative non-fiction writing. It discusses a relatively long poem from 2015 which revisits and reworks the daughterly obsessions of the earlier poets before moving on to consider briefly further and more recent revisioning of these tropes by Theresa Muñoz, Claire Askew and Em Strang. It concludes by examining a recent, very public, and explicitly political articulation by Jackie Kay of what these daughterly spaces can offer as a country seeks to shape an imaginative sense of itself.

There are challenges to acknowledge and qualifications to make in asserting a "special" lineage or identifying a specific subject matter as dominant in poetry by Scottish women. As Dorothy McMillan and Michel Byrne note when introducing their anthology of *Modern Scottish Women Poets*: "Retrospective traditions may perhaps provide some satisfaction for the academic seeking connections but do they matter at all to writers?" (xxvi). Nevertheless, there are affinities of interest in a central element of female experience shared by the writers here that is worth

comment. The active dialogues enacted across their poetry and, in some cases, the positive deployment of emotions evoked by that mother/daughter dynamic in themselves draw attention to particular structures of feeling. While investigations of maternal modeling have been key to feminist and postcolonialist thinking more generally, recent Scottish women's poetry evidences an engagement with daughterlands that is reflective of Scotland's broader volatility around questions of identity and self-determination.[5]

Mothers and daughters: Kay, Lochhead and Duffy

An early poem by Scotland's Makar, Jackie Kay, demonstrates the imaginative energy generated by thinking of mothers and daughters and shows the ways in which language structured through the negatives can move towards affirmative and open expression. "Lucozade", first published in 1997 and reprinted in the 2007 collection *Darling*, exemplifies the resistant and yet celebratory use of "no" and the complexities of the mother-daughter dynamic. Lying ill in her hospital bed, a mother issues a stream of admonitions to her daughter in sentences which begin each time with a negative: "Don't bring flowers, they only wilt and die"; "Don't bring Lucozade either"; "Don't bring magazines, too much about size" (138). When the daughter follows these directives and empties the mother's bedside of all these objects, including the "orange nostalgia" of the Lucozade, her mother is released and triumphant. By the poem's conclusion the actions, like the sentences, are clear and positive:

> My mother, on her high hospital bed, waves back.
> Her face is light and radiant, dandelion hours.
> Her sheets billow and whirl. She is beautiful.

Next to her the empty table is divine. (138)

This wonderful poem creates an electric energy between mother and daughter, as fizzing as the drink of the title, and based on the communication of negatives. In an inversion of the mother and daughter relationship conventionally conjured up by old Lucozade posters, in which a sick child is ministered to by a saintly mother, here the child cares for the parent. The mother meanwhile asserts her own self and is in turn consecrated by her acts of refusal, by denying rather than giving. The poem offers an acknowledgement of time passing, of the reversal of roles, of a future in which the mother might die. Yet it depends upon that resilient negative – the admonishing "don't", the saying no – to create an empty space, an open and free space, which is transformed into the "divine". Mother and daughter can momentarily inhabit this space together in their mutual challenge to "orange nostalgia". They occupy a moment in the present, free for an instant from their shifting places in personal history and in time. This experimental fusing of time schemes and roles, expressed in affirming negatives and played out across a familial dynamic, is a recurring feature in Scottish women's poetry. Not all such explorations of mother and daughterhood share the triumphalism of Kay's poem but all use distance, difference and "not" being something in their nuanced exploration of personal relations.

Liz Lochhead's "Social History" from *The Colour of Black and White* (2003) and included in her 2011 collection, *A Choosing* more explicitly engages with the temporal complexities of gendered experiences shared by mothers and daughters. It too opens with a highly explicit negative: "My mother never / had sex with anyone else / except my father" (2011, 14-15). The poem goes on to itemize all the suitors her mother had or might have had during the war, dancing through a range of

scenarios, with the daughter poet reveling in the exuberance of these imagined experiences:

> The sex my mother could've had
> but didn't
> sounded fantastic. Clever Jewish boys
> from the East End of London
> whirled her round the dance floors
> niftily slow foxtrotting her into corners,
> telling her the khaki matched her eyes. (14)

With its own fox-trotting rhythm, the poem shows the speaker in a range of empathetic fantasies, in which she imagines and enacts the opportunities open to her mother. It concludes however with a slower pace and statement of actuality setting out differences between the two women.

> my mother never
> had sex with anyone else,
> except my father, which was a source
> of pride to her, being of her generation,
> as it would have been a source
> of shame to me, being of mine. (15)

This poem too can be read as doing the work of feminism through opposition: it is "refusing" versions of the past that did not put women or mothers in their narratives. Hence its title "Social History" suggests thinking back through our mothers and a celebration of ordinary lives. It is however more complicated than this. It is not a sentimentally nostalgic poem although separation and distances are there and it does

not offer easy identifications. The poem attempts to replicate the mother's experiences – as the daughter tries to see through her mother's eyes – but also evaluates them from a cultural and temporal distance. Through these negatives, the poem becomes a nuanced recognition of the complicated play of difference. It frees the mother from both her past and her future in its imagining of the pleasures she might have had; it frees her from her daughter by locating her in a space prior to the maternal; and it frees the daughter from the mother in that her generation allows her to call into being the sex she can imagine but her mother could not have. It becomes both a very loving act of restoration and but also one of separation. This separation is presented positively in many ways but the complexity of the dynamic can only be articulated through negatives.

Both Kay's and Lochhead's poems speak back to an earlier and well-known negotiation of this daughterly space: Carol Ann Duffy's well-known poem, "Before You Were Mine" (1993). This is a poem with another dancing mother: in this case the daughter's voice in the poem imagines and acknowledges the earlier self – a pre-child version – of her mother. Here too the lines fizz with excitement as they play out difference and distance through the use of a present, although less obvious, negative discourse:

> I'm not here yet. The thought of me doesn't occur
> in the ballroom with the thousand eyes, the fizzy, movie tomorrows
> the right walk home could bring. I knew you would dance
> like that. Before you were mine, your Ma stands at the close
> with a hiding for the late one. You reckon it's worth it. (13)

Imagined and acknowledged differences – between daughters and mothers; between generations; between timelines; between the shifting positions of possession and control in relationships – are central to this imagining of "your mother" before she was yours. The poem itself moves with speed between "your" and "mine", "I" and "you". The mother who is not a mother is seen by the daughter who simultaneously is and is not the daughter; the poem again plays in rich ways with being and not being.

In all three poems there is an assertion of motherly and daughterly selves in different moments and each poem is driven by the attempt to understand the other through the trope of "I am not you". This joy – perhaps even "*jouissance*", as Julia Kristeva and Luce Irigaray redefined Lacan's term – emerges in the recurring references to radiance but also more surprisingly in the rhetoric of denial. Radiance shines through "Lucozade" and inhabits the dancing mothers of Lochhead's and Duffy's poems. Significantly the joy that is given to the mother is not related to being a mother; rather it is given back by a daughter who is defined less by separation from the mother and the need to establish her own identity than by her reinvestment of daughterly pleasure in her own mother. Negatives and refusals provide the opportunity to move beyond, or at least challenge, boundaries and binaries. This basic play of negatives is further complicated by the situation of each self in relation to past, present and an implied future. The structural emphasis on temporality, which shapes the linguistic oscillation between you" and "I", allows the poems not only to question fixed and gendered roles but to present a broader challenge to teleological and progressivist thinking. "The family trope", argues McClintock, "offers a 'natural' figure for sanctioning national *hierarchy* within a putative organic *unity* of interests." It also presents a "natural" trope "for figuring national time" (1995, 357). Kay, Lochhead and Duffy interrogate

these "natural" hierarchies and time schemes through their complication of familial dynamics and their conflations of temporal experiences. Instead they begin to suggest more flexible ways of imagining personal, and by implication political, ways of belonging.

Maternal spaces and national belongings

Maternal spaces and the situation of daughters offer these writers a productive imaginative palette both for exploring aspects of the familial that have shaped feminist thinking and for complicating gendered models of national belonging. In the twentieth century Nancy Chodorow questioned classic Freudian models of gender acquisition by situating them in specific historical and social contexts, asking: what happens when the social/cultural values placed upon femininity, and represented by the mother, are rejected by the daughter? How does the girl negotiate relations with both ideas of motherhood and a real mother? In 2012 Alison Stone mapped out the temporal challenges presented by maternal time: "Even though I see maternal time as distinctive in its movement of cycling back through the past once more, this form of lived time is only possible because each mother is and remains a daughter. The daughter undergoes initial intimacy with and gradual differentiation from her mother; the mother repeats this double movement with respect to her child" (141). These questions and ambivalences are a central preoccupation of Lochhead, Duffy and Kay' intricate, intimate, funny and moving poems. As they show, while a driver of feminism is to recognize and celebrate women's lives, there is an equally powerful drive for women to challenge and to separate themselves from their mothers' lives and influences. Each poem addresses the tensions between acknowledging origins,

celebrating the past and moving forwards, refusing old paradigms and, from this interplay, forging new identities.

The metonymic and metaphoric connections between mothers, motherlands and nations means that the mapping of personal relations between mothers and daughters leads into consideration of broader configurations of identity. The ambiguous and borderline states occupied by daughters, as outlined by both Chodorow and Stone and as explored in the poems discussed, can also be read as representative of women's complicated relationship to nation and nationalism. In "Gender and Nation: Debatable Lands and Passable Boundaries" (2002) Aileen Christianson notes the "openness that Scottish women's writing presents in its multiple and heterogeneous relation to gender and nation" (80), suggesting that women occupy decentred positions in border territories.[6] The insertion of female experience into nationalist debate, she argues, reshapes political consciousness through its focus on "in-between spaces." The concept of "in-between" or borderline states is key to Chodorow's analysis of the mother/daughter relationship. It also, as Christianson suggests, promotes new patterns for understanding national identities. In negotiating the maternal and the spaces occupied by daughters, Lochhead, Duffy and Kay articulate complex emotions and political desires. In the poems cited, the pressures on women to situate themselves in a domestic space, in a historical dimension and in a broader inheritance of a cultural identity are both understood emotionally and "embodied" by the figuration of mother and daughter relationships. Lochhead, Duffy and Kay offer new ways of thinking about connections between "blood" and belonging and through exploration of "daughterland" spaces challenges linear narratives of origin. They thus contribute to that woman-centred attentiveness to borderline states which,

Christianson suggests, shapes wider political responses to ideas of nationhood, blurring relationships between place, family and history and using gender to complicate the idea of national affiliation. Work by Lochead, Duffy and Kay is central to the establishment of this project and its influence undeniable.

"Daughterlands" revisited: Kathleen Jamie

By the time of the 2014 Independence referendum there was a new cultural confidence in Scotland even if the relationship between aesthetics and politics had become more complicated.[7] The contexts in which feminism operates had shifted too. Kathleen Jamie's poem, "Another You", from her award-winning 2015 collection *The Bonniest Companie* (55-57), also focuses on being a daughter. Its explicit engagement with nostalgia offers a subtle rethinking of the past and, in an act of intertextuality, revisits and questions the mother-daughter dynamic of the earlier poems. In Jamie's poem memories are evoked by the speaker hearing on the radio in her own kitchen a familiar song from her childhood. :

> That Sixties song on the radio tonight
> Shrank me right down
> …….
> . . . Well,
> That old Seekers thing
> sure took me home again: (55)

Jamie's poem oscillates in its rhythms, the voice zigzags between English, Scots and nineteen-sixties grooviness. As if responding to sister poets who have explored maternal spaces, producing intimate and emotional explorations of the psychic and

cultural dynamics of daughterhood, this poem boldly translates such anxieties into new ways of imagining personal selves and identity politics.

Jamie's poem, like the others discussed, creates fluctuating temporalities in its conflation of past and present. It too combines abstract emotions with material specifics and is infused with images of the everyday. It focuses on interiors, on the domestic and local. In its address to a dead mother the poem replicates the "close work" she did, by focusing in detail on her sewing, her knitting, her teaching, her singing and all the objects of a feminized space.

> . . . warmly-clad we were,
> if rarely hugged –
> love was a primary seven
> dance dress you sewed for weeks,
> a florid pinafore I wore
> but once, then took scissors to — (56)

Shaped by that song from the Sixities which evokes emotions of loss and nostalgia, this is a lyric poem delicately poised in exploration of those different pulls of a girl's desire to be and not be her mother. When the daughter tries on her mother's spectacles "the sideboard loped, / the carpet yawed, / — but you'd snatch them back, / claiming I'd ruin my eyes" (56). To take on your mother's eyes and see through them, both mother and poet suggest, skews the vision: the desire to emulate the mother is powerful and perhaps a necessary impulse in growing up but also a dangerous and difficult one.

Yet Jamie's poem goes further in its play of mothers and daughters, past and present. It explores the intersections of a remembered past, the emotions of loss, sorrow and freedom through the shifting and multiple use of objects: the steam iron, the sewing machine, "Dad's chair, sofa, ornaments, /your knitting bag, all / needles and pins" (55) which metonymically embody connections to the spaces of childhood but acquire a wider metaphoric significance. Like Mrs Joe's apron in *Great Expectations,* the maternal womb of the knitting bag is apparently creative but spiky in actuality. In the poem the daughter separates from the mother in classic ways: taking scissors to the dress her mother had sewn in the hope that she might "magic some transformation" produces an interestingly feminized image of castration/separation (56). Objects and their effects are framed in a relatively critical appreciation of the past. Yet the poem is also shaped by a maternal pull evoked by the song: "that old number / swelling through my kitchen / this dark November night / moves me dearly." As the music plays through the intimate domestic space, it brings together the kitchen in the past and the kitchen in the present, fused in the "swelling" and darkness. As a whole the poem embodies both separation and identification, a dynamic highlighted by its image of the daughter holding the mother's knitting wool: "hands outstretched, I'd tension / skeins of wool for you to wind" (56). Here "tension" in the wool encapsulates both the positive and negative elements of the relationship.

That tension which resides in the personal element of the poem is by implication replicated in the social and cultural spheres. The song "I'll Never Find Another You", by the highly successful 1960s pop group The Seekers, which frames the poem, assure its listeners that "There's a new world somewhere / They call the promised land. / And I'll be there someday / If you could hold my hand". The lyrics are about

loss, nostalgia, looking back– in this case with regret – but also looking to the future. Imbricated in that loss is the idea of "a promised land" and a "someone" who is meant for you: "There is always someone / For each of us they say" (Springfield 1965). Jamie's poem too is shaped by emotions, looking back with a sense of loss, but it creates an ironic distance both from the song from the past replayed in the present and from its simple utopianism. The poem rejects the teleology of "a promised land" or a final union with one significant Other, instead concluding with the lines "I'll never / find another you. But that's alright" (57). It resolves itself in the present tense of "that's alright", and into an easier, more accepting relationship with the contradictory positions and emotions the poem has explored. It thus takes the song by The Seekers, about seeking, to reject the promises of futurity, to reject fantasies of organic unity, and to occupy and celebrate the borderlands of difference. It turns its back on the "explaining" the daughter in the poem finds so difficult: "I never / could explain myself, never could explain". By giving up on "seeking" and solutions, the poem becomes instead an acknowledgement, even assertion of, the potential of spaces that are "in-between".

In *Nomadic Theory* Rosi Braidotti promotes a "nomadic" methodology which "works by empowering creative alternatives". Such "philosophical creativity' serves to operate "a shift of paradigm towards a positive appraisal of difference, multiplicity, and complexity" not as an end in themselves but as steps "in the process of recomposition of the co-co-ordinates of subjectivity" (2011, 232). Later in her study, she suggests a project of "flexible citizenship" in which post-nationalist Europeans, through the pain of loss and disenchantment, may be able to become the subject of "multiple ecologies of belonging. Thus they will go out into the world; nomadic,

disenchanted, but ethically vibrant, in love with complexities" (264). Like Ahmed, Braidotti seeks to frame ethical antagonisms in ways that are not structured by dialectical negatives. The earlier poems discussed in this essay are still enmeshed in negative language – even if these negatives are then translated into positives. Jamie's poem becomes freer, less under pressure from the vibrant negatives of the earlier poems, and allows a positive assertion in its conclusion. It takes on board and moves beyond its own negatives of "I'll never find" and "I never could explain". Its speaker, at the poem's conclusion does indeed go out into the world, less rooted, possibly disenchanted, but certainly, in Braidotti's words, "ethically vibrant, in love with complexities" (264).

New generation, new configurations: Muñoz, Kay, Askew, Strang

Although the 2014 Referendum Debate was couched in the stark opposition of a Yes/No vote, the Scotland in which it took place was one in which the distancing of the Scottish Parliament from the British government in its responses to immigration, its position on LGBT rights, its attempts at a green politics and its welfare policies, at least suggested an interest in social and cultural plurality. In the post-referendum work of Scottish women poets familial and generational landscapes remains the terrain on which complex subjectivities are mapped out. But, as with Jamie there are increasingly complicated configurations of familial dynamics. Theresa Muñoz, in her 2016 collection *Settle*, again uses the dynamic between mothers and daughters to explores notions of home and distance, but in a wider global context. "Twenty-two" draws on parallels and differences between the speaker's and her mother's migrant experiences, evoking the parallel brutalities of encountering a new world in its account of the precise details of their different journeys:

Same long-haul flight leaving us

Sand-tongued, the chilled air

A punch in the face

When she landed mid-winter. (3)

Her mother's movement from Manila to Canada creates a mirror of her own transition from Vancouver to Glasgow, as both enter cold, new and estranging spaces. More importantly, that community of experience frames the uncertainty of feeling with which the poem ends: "should I go back, or have I begun again?" (4). Rather than comforting or invoking a home, the echoes with her mother contribute to the troubling sense of a global destabilization, again expressed in the intersection of temporalities. The migrant experience again blurs the language and lineage of motherlands, in "Alma Mater". Here Muñoz draws on the figure of her father, whose own aborted college experiences are buried until she herself graduates: only when they stand together in the campus rose garden does she realize "he had already seen the Pacific from that angle" (6). Sharing her father's perspective across time offers a different model of familial identification and separation.

In her 2017 collection *Bantam* Jackie Kay also turns her attention to fathers as a means of reconfiguring familial relationships in ways that illuminate the broader politics of identity. "Private Joseph Kay" explores, in tight couplets, not only her father's but his father's experiences of war. Kay, like Jamie, explores musical memories, a song in Scots, to break through the poem's litany of military roles and masculine occupations. Only when her father breathes out the words sung by his father is it possible to feel as well as think back through that male line: "Ballads, slide

down the years, broken lines, / My father, still ninety, singing his father" (5). Emotive family connections again become a means of exploring wider social histories

Kay's collection also complicates intergenerational boundaries in its celebration of grandmothers – in particular in "My Grandmother's Hair" (65-7). Claire Askew too, in her first collection *This Changes Things* (2016), moves joyfully across generations, as in "Catalogue of my grandmother's sayings" (21) and "Visiting Nannie Grey" (23). As if in confrontational conversation with previous delineations of domestic and maternal ties, "I'm sorry I'm still in love with my grandmother", mourns yet celebrates her grandmother as a "Creature in curlers" (12). In these examples of recent poetry, metaphoric frameworks subtly shift. Generational relationships remain of interest but are increasingly complicated; negatives are still present but become less insistent. In her compelling first collection *Bird-Woman* (2016) Even Em Strang, a poet who moves across and beyond the anthropocene, explosively challenging linguistic and species categories, still at times configures identities through the familiar models of maternal and negative troping. Her poem "For We Are not Horses" imagines walking "with Papa Buddha" on a dazzling hot Sunday, "on the lane that leads like an eager dog to the horses" with her mother walking behind them " . . . It doesn't take a genius to know my mother / wants to be a horse — long legs, glossy mane. But we all know she's not." The poem ends its short movement through a glowing space and time, suggestive in itself of transformation: " . . . When we walk back, we walk back slowly, / my mother up front with her tail swishing" (38). Human and non-human fuse to suggest new possibilities, again fruitfully and vibrantly denying the negative of the poem's title. These recent works explore new possibilities that go beyond binaries and map out new geographies of being.

Threshold living: Jackie Kay 2016

Which brings us to a tweet by the Scots Makar. In November 2016 Jackie Kay went back with her mother to the school where her mother had worked as a teacher. A good time was had by all, as evidenced in the image posted on Twitter of Jackie Kay, her mother and the children looking happy and rather over-excited. Her words: "We loved returning to the school […] we had a blast – a trip down memory lane . . ." (2nd November 2016) confirm this positive mixing of generations, looking to both past and future. Writer and broadcaster Hardeep Singh Kohli commented on Twitter: "I love your refusal to use the definite article when talking about your mum" to which the poet replied: "— well it felt like today she belonged to everybody so "my mum" would have cramped her style! Plus she loves the indefinite things in life." (3rd November 2016). This short exchange encapsulates a number of elements. It offers a snapshot of what Scotland appeared to be politically at that moment – a country with at least two female party political leaders, with a Makar who is a woman and which, after a long history of lagging behind in LGBT politics, particularly in terms of legislation – now appeared unafraid of recognising a range of sexualities. The conversation between Kay and Kohli imagines Scotland as a country which one mother can "belong to everybody". It also celebrates the imaginative possibilities of the indefinite, as a positive, moving beyond the crude yes/no opposition of the referendum debate.

How this new imagining of self, and possibly of nation, might work through a focus on the complicated and indeterminate spaces of "daughterlands" is evidenced in a recent long poem by Kay: "Threshold". Written for the opening of the Scottish

parliament in 2016 and revised for publication in *Bantam* (15-20) it is a poem which is explicitly public and in that sense political. It too takes as its focus the mapping of familial relations and the play of mothers and daughters. Kay's own personal situation liberates her in some respects from the weight of a blood tie that fixes connections with the past. Instead, the space of being a daughter – and indeed being a mother in the case of her own mother – becomes one in which selves are not imposed. In her memoir *Red Dust Road*, she recalls her adoptive mother telling her:

> "You can choose your friends, but you can't choose your family." She'd usually say this with reference to some friend or another having difficulty with some member of her family. But the thing that used to strike me about that cliché was that in my mum's case it wasn't true: she had chosen her family. (34)

Kay draws on the element of choice implied here to bring a sense of agency to both mother and daughter: the chooser and the chosen. Occupying by its very title a boundary space, "Threshold", draws on this fresh and positive image. Referring to the doors of the new Scottish Parliament being opened, it also affirms the potential of spaces which accede neither to the past or future, spaces in which being a daughter or mother can carry multiple meanings:

> Find here what you are looking for:
> Democracy: guard her
>
> Like you would a small daughter
> And keep the door wide open, not just ajar,
>
> And say, in any language you please,

Welcome, welcome to the world's refugees.

Scotland's changing faces – look at me!!
Whose birth mother came through the door

Of a mother and baby home here
And walked out of Elsie Inglis hospital alone.

My Makar, her daughter, Makar
Of Ferlie Leed and gallus tongues. (1)

Through its use of the present tense, the reference to a future of possibilities and the integration of past experiences into that future, the poem reworks and recuperates temporality and reproduction. Here they are confronted and embraced as positive paradigms for a nation's political health.

In her analysis of anger and negativity Ahmed suggests that it is "when feminism is no longer directed towards a critique of patriarchy, or secured by the categories of 'woman' or 'gender' that it is doing the most 'moving' work. The loss of such an object is not the failure of feminism activism, but is indicative of its capacity to move on or to become a movement" (176). By exploring, confronting and negotiating maternal spaces and by paying attention to the even more confusing experience of being a daughter, these writers have "moved us on". They have moved us on in terms of feminism but also offered ways of imagining less fixed and more permeable ways of thinking about our relationships to place, history, culture, belonging. They have

contributed to an imaginative and shifting re-constitution of Scotland by exploring and increasingly embracing the possibilities that lie "in-between". The spaces of daughterhood, "daughterlands", offers a way into flexible explorations of place, time and emotion and become an arena in which the language of negatives is reworked. Poetry by Scottish women has thus played a subtly provocative and transformative role in imagining "Scotland" in the new millennium.

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[1] Duncan McLean, quoted on back cover of *Edinburgh Review* 100 (1999). See also Christopher Whyte: 'the task of representing the nation has been repeatedly devolved to its writers' (284). For a critique of these arguments see Thomson (2016).

[2] See Anne McClintock, **"**Family Feuds: Gender, Nationalism and the Family", 1993, and *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Context*, 1995.

[3] Lehner cites Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (1983), "Displacement and the Discourse of Woman'", *Displacement: Derrida and After*, edited by Mark Krupnick, Indiana University Press, 1998, pp. 169-195.

[4] Earlier versions of some sections of this paper were given to audiences at the Scottish Poetry Library in 2016 and 2017, the ESSE Conference Galway 2016; and *Les Femmes Qui Font L'Ecosse* Conference, Aix-en-Provence, November 2016 and in conference proceedings. I am grateful to comments and questions from audiences at these occasions and to Elspeth Graham.

[5] See Boehmer, Kaplan; McClintock.

[6] Christian draws on Maggie Humm's (1991) description of "border women" as, "not decentred or fragmented individuals but writers who have begun to cohere a core identity by entering the transitional space between self and other" (6).

[7] See Thomson (2016).