

‘redneck’ and  
‘warming her pearls’  
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essay sam...

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' Warming Her Pearls' by Duffy and ' The Redneck' by Lochhead are both dramatic monologues dealing with personal relationships; ' Warming Her Pearls' is narrated by a servant as she expresses her unrequited love for her mistress. ' The Redneck' is told through the eyes of a woman, now divorced as she reflects back on her wedding day and in doing so reveals her attitude toward her ex-husband. The former poem deals with a desire to begin a relationship while the latter deals with the termination of one.

' Warming Her Pearls' is structured into six, quatrain stanzas. This careful organisation reflects the strict instruction the maid is under, and how she is expected to carry out these instructions accurately and precisely. However, ' The Redneck' is written in free verse to represent that the speaker views her marriage as trivial and that she doesn't care much about it as she looks back upon it. The poem is divided into two stanzas, one of which has sixteen lines and the other has only three. The first describes in detail the speaker's wedding day, and the second speaks of her relationship with her new husband; this short stanza symbolises the short length of their marriage.

Lochhead employs enjambment in the first stanza on the second line to emphasis the final word, ' Starving' in order to demonstrate in full capacity, the lengths the speaker went to secure her pride and to look her best. This speaks to the speaker's superficiality. Enjambment is also used throughout ' Warming Her Pearls' in order to exhibit the maid's train of thought and how she allows her fantasies to run on, ' I picture her dancing/ with tall men'.

The extent of the maid's fantasies is demonstrated through the use of ellipses in the third and fourth stanzas; ' I see/ her every movement in my

head... Undressing'. The ellipsis shows that the maid has paused so as she can take time to fully explore the sexual image in her head. In the third stanza the maid's use of sibilance also portrays a sexual desire through her use of the soft, seductive sound, ' the soft blush seep through her skin like an indolent sigh.'

This strong desire is sharply contrasted in ' The Redneck' by the speaker's flat, matter of fact tone and through her callous attitude toward her soon to be husband, ' him shouting ' Perfect working order' / every two minutes... a right rid neck', with the latter statement from her fiancé, the only sexual reference throughout the poem. The lack of affection between the two newlyweds and the blunt language, ' toward that pig' shows that this marriage is far from the fairy tale wedding most women dream of.

However, in ' Warming Her Pearls' there is a definite sentiment of a fairy tale within the maid's description of her mistress' return after a night at a ball. She depicts elements such as a ' full moon', a ' carriage', and her ' dancing with tall men' which are reminiscent of the typical fairy tale to illustrate this. In the maid's fairy tale her mistress comes home alone each night because the men she dances with are, ' puzzled by my faint, persistent scent/ beneath her French perfume, her milky stones'; the maid believes her scent is putting men off her mistress and is therefore keeping her mistress from finding the perfect man. In the maid's mind this will give her a greater chance of having the mistress fall in love with her instead of any man as the pearls give them a deep connection.

However, it seems that the maid is oblivious to the clear power difference between her and her mistress caused by their variance in social class; this power is symbolised line, 'Slack on my neck, her rope.' The 'slack' nature of the 'rope' implies that the maid is not as close to her mistress as she wishes to be, or believes herself to be. However, the mention of a rope immediately suggests the idea of bondage and attachment. It may also imply that this 'rope' of pearls is what is keeping the maid subservient to her mistress and commands her to follow her every demand as without it, the maid has no connection to her mistress; here we recognise the enslavement of desire and love.

However, there is no such lust or desire present in 'The Redneck'; the height of admiration the speaker shows toward her fiancé is when she says, 'Kilt suited him but.' Even the colloquial used by the speaker reduces any sexual appeal the poem may otherwise have possessed as her language seems rough and lacks elegance, 'hoary', 'ma da', 'I had my mammy roasted'. The time following the wedding also lacked any kind of love or desire between the two newlyweds, there is no mention of a honeymoon. The final stanza speaks of how she allowed herself to gain weight as she didn't care what her husband thought of her appearance.

The juxtaposition between the two poems is evident through the poets' use of language, tone, and structure, with one being a long, slow, desire filled poem, and the other a short, matter of fact account of how the speaker's wedding day was endured rather than enjoyed. This shows that personal

relationships can come in many different forms and have many different consequences attached to them.