Eco-Spirituality in Kathleen Jamies' Selected Poems

ABSTRACT

This research explores the subject whether or not religious beliefs should play a part in current environmental advocacy. Kathleen Jamie, the Scottish Maker, demonstrates her ecological awareness within her poems by developing a theory of the sacred in which humans and non-humans are united. Jamie claims that the language of poetry reveals this eco-spirituality by going back to the basics of what it means to call a place "home," a term that is applicable to both humans and non-humans. The language of poetry, according to Jamie, unveils this eco-spirituality by returning to the primordial essence of the concept of home that fits perfectly both humans and non-humans. As such, language is the architect of Jamie's vision for the home, not just as a location of the human population, but as a place where nature and humans are equal.

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Eco-روحانية البيئية في قصائد مختارة لكاتلين جيمي

الملخص

يقع تحت هذا البحث موضوع ما إذا كان يجب أن تلعب المعتقدات الدينية دورًا في الدعوة البيئية الحالية أم لا. تُظهر كاثلين جيمي، شاعرة اسكتلندا، وعيها البيئي في قصائدها من خلال تطوير نظرية ما هو مقدس التي يتحد فيها البشر وغير البشر. تؤمن جيمي أن لغة الشعر تكشف عن هذه الروحانية البيئية من خلال العودة إلى أسس ما يعنيه تسمية المكان "الموطن"، وهو مصطلح ينطبق على كل من البشر وغير البشر. تكشف لغة الشعر، وفقًا للجيمي، عن هذه الروحانية البيئية من خلال العودة إلى الجوهر الأساسي لمفهوم الموطن. على هذا النحو، فإن اللغة هي أساس رؤية جيمي للموطن، ليس فقط كموقع للبشر، ولكن كمكان تساهم فيه الطبيعة والبشر.
Introduction

Instead of the devotional act of prayer that is conducted to introduce the Divine into the world, Kathleen Jamie, the Scottish poet, essayist, and non-fiction writer, introduces the reader to a secular contemplation or "prayer-in-the-world" to improve the quality of attention to the world and the intensity of listening to nature. Only through them, humans could have their deepest connection with then nature. What nature is suffering from, is neglecting, men are taking the nature out of the picture. In the London Review of Books (2002), Jamie argues in her diary about her perspective about connecting with nature as a type of prayer:

I don’t believe in God, I believe in spiders, alveoli, starlings... I might suggest that prayer-in-the-world isn’t supplication, but the quality of attention we can bring to a task, and the intensity of listening, through the instruments we have designed for the purpose. It might be the outermost reaches of the Universe. (p. 39)

Artificial places for Jamie convey a feeling of the impermanence of tenuousness. She deconstructs the commonly held belief that humans are "embedded" in a living environment, which, ironically, is a symptom of acute separation. Jamie is not the only academic to draw attention to this aspect of environmental worldviews and related notions; the discussions on religion and ecology are increasingly marked by Born Taylor's elaborations, and he makes a great jumping-off place for empirical studies.

Taylor (2008), claims a new global religion, the Dark Green Religion, is on the rise. Members of this new faith have a deep spiritual connection to nature and hold it in the highest regard. These thoughts and emotions inspire a fresh environmental ethic based on a sense of closeness to the natural world. Taylor (2008), gives the following description of the phenomenon:

When I say "dark green religion," I mean a faith that holds environmental values highly and views the natural world with awe and respect. Even though they are of little practical service to humans, members of the Dark Green faith nonetheless give these other creatures their respect and admiration. Such a faith articulates and advocates for a morality based on a sense of interdependence amongst all forms of life. (p.89)

Taylor classifies "Dark Green Religion" into several distinct varieties, including: spiritual animism; naturalistic animism; gaian spirituality; gaian naturalism (Taylor .2010,p.14–41). It is important to note that there are certain commonalities between them despite their distinctions. In addition to the above-mentioned characteristics, there is a reverence for nature as sacred and a sense of connection with the natural world, followers of this religion also give nature worth beyond what it provides for humans. This means they reject an anthropocentric worldview and hold that nature is valuable in and of itself, apart from whatever use it may provide to humans. This necessitates a different ethic toward nature, which Taylor calls "an ethic of kinship with non-human life" since it extends beyond human concerns for its own survival and takes into account the welfare of the non-human world.
Essentially, Jamie deifies thinking of nature as something supernatural or closely related to a God, but rather implying that she enjoys it in the same way that religious people might. Jamie applies the idea of the sacred to things that are strictly religious objects because she deeplyvalues and believes they should be preserved in their current form. As for eco-spirituality, according to Alan Drengson (2012), it is characterized by "recognition of the inherent value of all living beings and the use of this view in shaping environmental policies". 'Earth-based' spirituality is another term related to eco-spirituality; in which Jamie is associating it with intertwining of intuition and bodily awareness pertaining to a relational view between human beings and the planet. In "Materials" a winter setting is presented, empty from most of its birds and beaten by waves where she imagines pursuing "just one strand" of the unraveled undertaking, but she looks to have nothing to show for herself at the end of her beach-combing.

And look at us! Out all day and damn all to show for it.

Bird-bones, rope-scraps, a cursory sketch — but a bit o’ bruck’s all we need to get us started, all we’ll leave behind us when we’re gone. (l.15-18)

The poem’s vision is found in the recognition of immanent truth. Jamie has "Bird-bones, rope-scraps, a cursory sketch, or bruck" as she dismissively labels it, but which is nevertheless "all we need to get us started" (l.17). They are the essence that lead us to a fresh start. In "The Bower," Jamie highlights the human responsibility to make spaces for spirituality on earth. For her, these spaces are even physically uninhabitable "nothing but an attitude of mind" (l.3), which speaks to us as symbols of some primitive dwelling places which contain "the essence of the notion of home". She explores an exemplary non-colonized natural, modest space.

Neither born, nor gifted,
crafted noor bequeathed
this forst dwelling's little
but a warp or tease (ll.1-4)

The entire poem revolves around this entity, an offer to build a conceptual dwelling as an experience in the rhythmic language of poetry since it is a substance with never-ending qualities. A poetic dwelling for her is much deeper than an ordinary one. In Who Built Scotland (2007), by Alexander McCall Smith, Alistair Moffat, James Crawford, James Robertson, and Kathleen Jamie, Jamie asserts the possibility to "stop being just travelers, and become builders" (pp.10-22). For her, the building does not mean stone piled on another one; building means creating a home, culture, and profound knowledge communicated by stories, memories, and instructions by the elderly to youngsters.

the bower is a ‘forest dwelling’,
which is ‘nothing
but an attitude of mind (ll.6-8)

Jamie’s bower is a make-shift shelter that explores its capacity by pushing it as far as it goes. Occupies it with a zona media: it is an "anchorage/ or musical box , listening deeply" (l.9). Given this, the created language provides a light-filled place for the self and soul, as well
as life for both art and the world. The poet is attempting to recreate a structured bower in language that is analogous to the forest bower. She portrays this "attitude" as her essential way to conceive nature spiritually.

In his essay "The Sense of Place", Seamus Heaney (1977), remarks that "humans are dwellers, namers, lovers, make homes connective leaps and they search for their histories" (p.13). Similarly, Jamie’s illustrations of dwelling through the poetic of creation often suggest further reconciliations with the world. In other words, the notion of "dwelling" is a kind of building a new culture for Scotland through poetic poetry. This idea could be interpreted as an effort to create a spiritually conducive environment, to reconstruct what is already broken. "Only when we have been truly broken can we be whole, [. . .] "After pain comes to a security, wish for a new seawashed spirituality" (National Library of Scotland).

The proximity of the "chamber" in "The Tree House" to the limb of the tree is contrasted with the poet's relationship with the readers, "a complicity/like our own" (ll.16-17). "Complicit", is derived from the old French meaning "associate" (Brown, 2020). And ultimately the Latin verb "complicare," means "to fold together, a word that reflects Jamie's inclusive tone on the important of deep ecology and its influence on ecospirituality. Such a reality makes the poet face a double claim. On the one hand, she is exploring the essence of dwelling "dwelling of sorts" (l.43) through the distinctive kind of encounter with nature, while on the other hand, the tree is described with ecological lament as the house is being held by a tree and made by another dead one. An equal sense of bereavement is made toward the destruction made toward nature, and toward the lost connection between nature and humanity.

we’ve asked the tree to carry
of its own dead, and every spring
to drape in
leaf and blossom, like a pall’ (ll.4-8)

For Robert Crawford (2000), "Jamie is very altered to the spirituality of our natural environment, a pantheistic viewpoint that takes various approaches to the critical relationship between humans and the earth seeing the core, matter, and energy of humans are interconnected with the planet" (p.36). In "Hame", "a Scottish Gaelic word for home" (Brown, 2020). Jamie suggests the ultimate consideration for a home that provides her with spiritual qualities freed from national barrens or any other type of restrictions, in this poem, she renewed her love for "Yard" as "thing-in-itself "or the substance, and sought for returning to it as our final solace.

What's tae Ken
"If Whiles Ah dauner
Yur back –braes ,O Yird
And pu wild berries
Tae stock ma luve fur ye (ll.1-4)
For her, the world ceases talking about the earth's need for healing. Earth does not require treatment. Humans do, it is their responsibility to rediscover themselves in nature. They have to perceive the world as their mirror and realize that their sense of freedom and authenticity is tied to the well-being and authenticity of others – including animals, plants, and land.

Conclusion(s)

Jamie's poetry aims to break the constructed duality between the human and natural world. This aim leads to the conclusion that humans create a dual level existence as organisms and as individuals, which is half nature, half culture, and half body as well as half mind such as in the poem "The Bower" where she "half sees, half imagines a forest dwelling" (l.18). The poems examined can be viewed as reveries in and of themselves. She mentions the necessity to discover or create areas for reverie as a means to give a "dwelling of sorts" as in "The Tree House". However, for Jamie, these are "nothing but attitude in the mind" as in "The Bower", she shows that locations, even the physically uninhabitable ones such as a cave on the shoreline, a clearing between trees, a bird's song, even the reflective surface of a puddle, can communicate with us as representations of the primeval dwelling place, which contains the essence of the concept of home. "Home" comes to indicate "good neighborhood", the coexistence of humans and their natural environment (Gairn 2008, pp. 158-167).
References


