



ISSN: 1994-4217 (Print) 2518-5586(online)

Journal of College of Education

Available online at: <https://eduj.uowasit.edu.iq>

Zahraa Salih Hameed

Asst. Prof. Shireen
Shihab Hamad, PhDUniversity of Wasit,
College of Education
for Human Sciences

Email:

Zahraahamid4@gmail.com
shhamad@uowasit.edu.iq

Keywords:

Kathleen Jamie,
spiritual dimensions
,Meditation

Article info

Article history:

Received 14.May.2022

Accepted 19 Aout.2022

Published 15.Nov.2022



Spiritual Dimensions: Meditation in Kathleen Jamie's Selected Poems

A B S T R A C T

Poetry is a sensory and cognitive medium in which readers can learn not only to hear and describe the melodic features of poetic language, but also to meditate as a technique of expressing and recreating the world. The purpose of this research is to demonstrate how Kathleen Jamie (1962), the Scottish Makar, employs meditation, as a spiritual dimension, which entails developed abilities in quieting the mind and directing the attention in order to bring a quality of attentiveness to the world. This paper portrays how she establishes herself as having sensitive ear to listen and detect the world's flaws and sees it as a bold act that can be a part of our solution. She claims that poems can be about stillness as much as sound. Meditation, according to Jamie is defined as a type of prayer in the world that encompasses people, things, and environments that share physical space, rather than only those with the agency or privilege to speak.

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.31185/eduj.Vol49.Iss2.3347>

جوانب روحانية: التأمل في مختارات من قصائد كاثلين جيمي

أ.م.د. شيرين شهاب حمد

الباحثة: زهراء صالح حميد

جامعة واسط / كلية التربية للعلوم الانسانية

الملخص

الشعر هو وسيط حسي ومعرفي؛ تثير أصوات الكلمات الإثارة وتدل على مكان يمكن للقراء أن يتعلموا فيه ليس فقط سماع ووصف الجوانب الموسيقية للغة الشعرية، ولكن أيضًا للتأمل كوسيلة للتعبير عن العالم وإعادة بنائه. الغرض من هذا البحث هو توضيح كيف توظف الشاعرة الوطنية، كاثلين جيمي (1962)، التأمل كجانب روحي، يستلزم قدرات متطورة في تهدئة العقل وتوجيه الانتباه من أجل توجيه الانتباه نحو العالم. تُصوّر هذه الورقة كيفية اثبات الشاعرة لنفسها على أنها تتمتع بأذن حساسة للاستماع والكشف عن عيوب العالم ورؤيتها كعمل جريء يمكن أن يكون جزءًا من حلنا. تدعي أن القصائد يمكن أن تدور حول السكون بقدر ما تدور حول الصوت. التأمل، وفقًا لجيمي، يُعرّف بأنه نوع من أنواع الصلاة

في العالم يشمل الأشخاص والأشياء والبيئات التي تشترك في المساحة المادية ، بدلاً من الأشخاص الذين لديهم وكالة أو امتياز التحدث فقط .
الكلمات المفتاحية: كاتلين جيمي ، جوانب روحية ، التأمل

Introduction

Spirituality can be defined in various ways with different modes of expression. Wade Clark Roof (1999), argues that “spirituality in general proposes a source of values to enhance our inner awareness of the world“ (p.35). Meditation may be described in lots of ways too, but to keep up with the triadic nature of spirituality, the term “meditation“ and the phrase “meditative practice “are commonly used to designate any practices that all religions would agree to use as communication with any Divine origins and goals of life. According to Daniel Coleman (1998), “meditation is a practice that enables individuals to use different techniques to train their awareness, focusing their attention on certain activities to overcomes various errors“ (p.107). Depending on this, meditation is the living reality of spirituality .Meditation for Helena Blavatsky(1987) is our way of seeing the world. For it can consecrate our attention to a high level of attentiveness. To do so, man should be able to overcome the physical level of knowledge by registering cosmological consciousness or the higher one :

The greatest challenge is to register the knowledge of the Higher Self on the physical level. To do this, the physical Brain must be rendered completely blank to all save the Higher Consciousness..[...]When the Brain is rendered blank, an impression from the Heart can reach it and be preserved ,the first step in developing concentration is blankness. Then comes consciousness, and finally the transition between the two states is so quick and effortless that it goes unnoticed. (P.696)

As (Coleman, 1988,p.107) notes, the roots of the meditation are decisively Christian, but since it contains a wide range of different practices from different traditions, but for a modern perspective , it seems that they are no longer exclusively called “ religious practices “ . For Jamie, she maintains and cultivates her conventions by a close but uneven connections with those roots. To start with, and as a nonbeliever, she adapts her meditative sources from Christian poetics to the level that is less than true contemplation and more than merely what shall be called a self-attentiveness thereby exhibiting a particular orientation that incorporates listening for a better relationship with the natural world and its deities.

Placing the attention on breathing or doing some physical efforts can not provide a deep state of meditation, for Blavatsky(1980), “it is a higher level of consciousness beyond the world of matter“ (p.701) . To do so, first it is a must to develop attentive skills and then obtain specific instructions. The latter would be useless if the ability to concentrate was severely limited. For Blavatsky (1980), “There is no other method to cultivate the strength of concentration than to daily strength it and without this , no progress can be achieved in practicing meditation, and no beginning is even possible“ (pp.702-3). According to Jamie on the other hand , mediation

means bringing the quality of attention to the world ,secular contemplation that enables her to diagnose the errors of the world (Ferguson & et al ,2005,p.1434).

Listening in or attentiveness is a common trope in much of natures' writings. John Burnside and Maurice Riordan (2004), For instance, see that the natural world "offers an attitude reminiscent of what Romantic poets wrote" with an unknowable truth that suggests a sort of contemplation with the teeming life of the coast," since we have an unsettling sense of communicating some universal truth that lies just beyond our grasp" (p.5). Jamie appears to care more for the process than for results, and instead of the devotional act of prayer that is conducted to introduce the Divine into the world, readers are introduced to a secular prayer in which the action matters more than the abstract itself. In the London Review of Books (2002),Jamie argues in her diary about her perspective on listening as a type of prayer :

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, the intensity of listening, through the instruments we have designed for the purpose. It might be the outermost reaches of the Universe .(p. 39)

Prayer or meditation are two parallel methods of presenting the concept of a practice that leads to the essential experience of spirituality. A dimension that involves developed abilities in quieting the mind and directing the attention to various dimensions of depth to link a passive listener to a listening speaker that helps "to bring a quality of attention to the inner world (Author statement) . Hence, the ability to comprehend actual events depends on and is also limited to, the capacity to listen. For Jamie, the role of the poet is to be shamanic and not political. For her, the poet should mediate and communicate between various worlds and brings massages inward and outward"(Dósa,2009, p.142). It is a lesson in how to create a marvelous experience in the senses and swim into the view of thoughts patiently. No such skill could be learned without interest in the surrounding soundscape to depict or visualize "The Hinds" , in a waking dream where they addresses the looker :

where they stopped, and turned to stare,
the foremost with a queenly air
as though to say: '*Aren't we
the bonniest companie?*
Come to me,
You'll be happy, but never go home.(ll.15-20)

The above lines are about environmental coexistence and cohabitation, and it makes the most sense when considered together . The rhyme of "me , home" is certainly a clue: is it implying that one cannot be happy if one cannot return home, or perhaps the opposite? .There is something in the earlier lines "alive / to lands held on long lease / in their animal minds" (ll.8-10) that maps human notions of ownership as long lease onto the lives of deer and control

them .Such places deers clearly do not belong. She creates what Neal Alexander (2015), refers to as "an ethics of noticing" (p10). Its intended aim is to make "unseen scenes" visible, and Jamie achieves this by stopping and deepening readers' comprehensions of what the portrayed natural place and natural creatures are, or appear to be. As a result of this method, we are seen as part of nature and placed inside, rather than outside it.

Initially, it is important to note that Jamie was previously referred to as a "super listener" (Flaconer ,2015,p.77) in a literal sense, for her emphasis on the act of listening over the act of expression. Listening entails varying degrees of involvement; a listener may be expected to take his turn in a conversation, or he may be adjacent, overhearing, eavesdropping, or simply never responding. It is much more than a skill or a component of the writing process. Only a few writers, such as Jean-Luc Nancy, were interested in it. Nancy (2007) ,argues about the process of listening, considering it as the luminal sense that leads us to mean Listening to him is always on the verge of meaning, or in an edgy sense of extreme (p.7). Jamie, on the other hand, does not associate meaning with sensations; rather, she sees listening as a means of communicating and reconstructing the world. According to her, surroundings are never fully constructed, but they are always under development. She comprehends sounds as reconstructing an awareness of the universe. To finish the healing process; she equates spiritual consciousness with the art of listening. Jamie's essay book, "Sightlines" (2013), records her spiritual experience where she practices a minute in a lifetime to be connected with the vista and never speaks:

Be quiet, I tell myself. Listen to the silence. I take my eye off the raven for a moment, and when I look back it's gone. How long we sit there I don't know. I know only that I'd never heard anything like it, a silence that could dismiss a sound, as wind would dismiss a feather. Five minutes, ten, minutes in a lifetime. Some people say you can never experience true silence, because you come to hear the high whine of your own nerves. That is to say, you hear the very nervous system which allows you to hear at all. (p.13)

Readily, one can agree with Jamie that it would be nonsense for a poet to celebrate a crowded, hurried world. Jamie's writings aim to create an acoustic ecology. A world that is liberated from any limited consciousness, where she can identify herself with the infinite itself. For her, meditation means a silent condition and unspoken prayer, or, as Plato put it, "the ardent turning of the soul toward the divine; not to ask for any particular good (as in the common meaning of prayer), but for good itself , for the universal Supreme Good of which we are a part on earth and from which we have all emerged" (as cited in Blavatsky, 1987,pp.10-11). Listening, for Jamie, involves being willing to fail, to bear the times when nothing meaningful is returned. The "torn-throated" in "The Long House" gulls provide dreadful continual comfort for what cannot be heard.

And gulls too,

uttering the same
 torn-throated cries
 as when you first imagined
 hours hunched
 against the windabraded
 wall might yield some
 species of understanding. (ll.8-15)

In "Findings", she comes up to mention her unhurried examination of the objects in Jars: "For two, perhaps three hours, I have been gazing in silence" (pp.42-131). Her micro-listening appears to be a tool for holding the "experience in her mind and bringing it home intact. To Jaime, understanding acoustic design is made by viewing the world's soundscape as a massive musical composition that is always unfolding around us and listening attentively to what it tries to say. We are, according to R. Murray Schafer (1977), the audience, performers, and composers all at the same time, and in this way, acoustic ecology is defined as" the study of sounds in relationship to life and society (p.205).

Most of the poems in *The Overhaul* work as recurring motifs for the growth of spirituality, an invitation to learn how to be a listener, journeying elsewhere, and taking a flight toward natural resources that can compete with congregations as a source of spirituality. Ear cleaning or creating an attentive awareness is an exercise to help cleanse the ears. For Jaime, a listener is not the one who merely listens but the one who respects the silence, and to be an observer who observes everything with a keen ear. In "The Whales", the poem articulates the temptation of fairyland. The persona only lingers on one side of what could have been a fatal enchantment. This creature desires a transporting experience that will add a shimmering intensity and alertness to the tangible world distant from "merfolk" (l.14).

I'd discover a cave
 green and ventricular
 and there, with tremendous patience,
 I'd teach myself to listen (ll. 4-10)

The persona of the poem, feels detached with the chaotic energies of the surroundings. The persona of the poem feels the same way. It seeks, rather, to invent a quiet and removed space where the center of spiritual requirements with its peace is found. The setting, "green and ventricular" could also stand for a green, deep and liberating place, which means that nature is seen as the salvation. A place where poetry should be read these days, somewhere far from the hurried world where the poetic of listening shudders up and creates a metaphorical place to stand, receive, and meditate quietly. Scholars agree on two important factors. According to Aru Narayanasamy (2002), humans are spiritual beings first and foremost, and spirituality and well-being are inextricably linked. Having a better degree of spiritual health is linked to having a higher level of happiness. In this poem, Jaime works to generalize the speaking voice of the poem, giving it the impression that it is not authored by one single

identity, but rather, it synthesizes the shared over-soul that lives in all. This generalization, however, foregrounds the trop of listening in a way that mixes up the distinction between the listener and the speaker (p.1466).

Words like "tremendous", "patience" suggest that achieving an inner listening that leads to spiritual health and inner peace is a difficult process. She promotes a rejuvenation path as the only way to achieve a spiritual experience. Trying to find this elusive force known as spirituality within ourselves is like 'confronting an enemy'. As educational theorist Parker Palmer (1993), puts it, this wild animal may be inherently powerful, with abilities that overpower humans. However, it will likely be shy and seek sanctuary in the deep forest away from human contact. This bear, Palmer says, will ultimately appear if we learn to be calm and wait for it with entire concentration and attention(p.97). The key to achieving peace is by starting to practice listening and develop the ability to pay attention and learn to be patient. Jamie gives a type of elegy to whale eardrums since whales' external ears are filled with a wax plug. This plug is thought to transmit sound from the water to the inner ear. Humans are deaf in the air because the density of the plug is the same as that of water. Whales are probably deaf in the air because the density of the plug is the same as that of water. Soon before the end of Sightlines, Jamie casts the imagination in sound and beyond, all the way to spiritual sense through her elegy to the whales' hearing abilities:

I find them [the eardrums] beautiful and sad and complete; all that can be said about sea-waves and sound waves, song and utterance, is rolled together in these forms. The Stromness one is grey and old, and as you look at it lying on its shelf you have to wonder. What did it hear, in life? Across what distances? Whales apparently hear through their jawbones; they have no external ears as we do so the very jawbones now raised around the country at large would, in life, have picked up sound waves in the ocean. What did they hear, these jaws, these eardrums? They heard us coming, that's what. (p.169)

Depending on Emerson's essay "The Over-soul" (1841), humans and other animals are sharing the same suffering here, and for that, they are both being kept away. According to her, the art of listening, which is according to her requires aural empathy to transcribe the various sounds the world contains, with a fascinating connection with the soundscape to endure the time when nothing useful is being retrieved. The way the speaker is addressing the readers is one of a kind, It implies the reader's equality as a sort of partner, a listener similar to a poet who receives inspiration rather than an accidental passer-by. Through her poetry, Jamie invites the readers to attentiveness, which is a gift, a spiritual gift that may lead to a greater relationship with nature. She spoke with Scott (2005), about poetry providing poets and readers the ability to pay attention which is linked to the experience of being in this world :

When we were young, we were told that poetry is about voice, about finding a voice and speaking with this voice,

but the older I get I think it's not about voice, it's about listening and the art of listening, listening with attention .I don't just mean with the ear; bringing the quality of attention to the world.(para.43)

In "Avowal", The poem is written from a non-human perspective with reverie. The voice of the flower itself is enforced to emphasize the unheard voice of the landscape, showing their acceptance of (the small role life offers you, a few weeks seasoning the hill-foot grasses with shakes of blue... [You accept and consent] (Jamie, ll. 6-10)

Flower,' they ask –
 'd'you want to be noticed?'
Yes, yes, noticed!
 'Or rather left alone?' *Yes,*
left perfectly alone! 'Flower,' (ll.13-17)

That contrast, which forms important part of Jamie's poetic techniques, is meant to emphasize the lack of connection between the flowers and the speaker, listening to nature is underlined as a bridge of connection between the two to affirm the fact that all aspects of nature are filled with a sacred mystery or power. Nature gives the human the power to decide whether to "notice them or the leave them perfectly alone "(l.17). The outer experience of listening turns out to be no more less than an inner -mediated one, that leads to develops an attention skill with the need to be able to observe, sometimes with great patience what habits take us away from a point of happy equilibrium or disturb our peace of mind..What earth wants from human is to have "a radical noticing" in Jamie's words (Crowly ,2012) She considers the combination of mediating the wild in the natural world through the body as an otherness to nature that domesticates the wild in modest, as a practical way to make it at least somewhat understandable to be fundamental to her image of inner peace .

It is hypothesized that the spiritual parts of our existence have an exterior and interior complexion. From the outside in, human existence is spiritual in the sense that it connects reality as a whole and makes the cosmos a deliberated object of thought and sensation. Facing inward, our life has spiritual dimensions to the point that it appears to be a project of one's most enduring and vital self, structured by some unanticipated life-task experiences followed by steady development leading to the one truest self-concerning a comprehensive cosmic revelation.

The preceding poem "A vawal " expresses human opinion on whether or not to be open to nature, but the following one "Daisies" is quite different. There is nothing in between if nature is left to its own devices "openness or death "(l.15). The poet examines life's constraints; her arguments are devoted to what humans can hear and what they cannot, as well as what to experience in this life. She talks from the side of the human shared experience with indeterminacy, which refuses to accept things as they are. The "we" moves away from humans and into the environment itself, where Jamie decides to give voices to the flowers.

We are flowers of the common
 sward, that much we understand.
 [. . .] Evening

means sleep, and surely it's better
 to renew ourselves than die
 of all that openness?
 But die we will, innocent
 or no, (l. 1-2 ,ll. 13-17).

Nature's methods of life are different from that of humans; having an oversoul is their only way of life, and being away from humans implies death metaphorically. It is a lesson to all the human, openness to other and have balanced relationship with nature is the only way to avoid have a life similar to death. Poets have the ability to help readers open up to the world by viewing impediments as minute entities in the grand scheme of life. Rather than ego and selfishness, poets expand the universe with hypotheses that encourage positivity, courage, joy, compassion, and willpower as paths to renewal through the medium of poetry. When asked what she wants to write about nature, Jamie says, "I prefer to say "from" or "toward", or occasionally "through"(Collins, 2012,p.112). In this poem, Jamie is able to give her readers a lesson on how to live with a shared soul with nature's creatures .

In "findings", Jamie expresses her consideration about nature as an other and adherence to a secular contemplation without adherence any religion tradition .In one way or another, secular spirituality or contemplation has an emphasize on a personal growth and inner peace of the individual, rather than having any relationship with the higher power, that is to say, secular spirituality is the quest for meaning outside of a religious organization; it analyzes one's relationship with oneself, nature as our other, and anything else one perceives to be the ultimate source of meaning. Secular spirituality is frequently to live happy and or to serve others:

We consider the natural world as 'out there', an 'environment', but these objects in their jars show us the forms concealed inside, the intimate unknown, and perhaps that is their new function. Part art gallery, part church for secular contemplatives. 'In the midst of this city, you think you are removed from nature', they say— 'but look within'.(p.96)

The poet is attempting to draw the attention toward a new form of spiritual awareness. She addresses a new level of elemental meaning rather than ideas ,concepts, or propositions, guiding the readers toward a sphere of immediate experience and feelings, making them listen to an experience rather than telling them what it means. She invites the readers to try out new and expansive ways of perceiving, feeling, seeing, hearing, and living. "A wing's beat and it's gone", she says in the final line of "Sightlines" (Jamie ,2012,p.176).

In "Materials", the poet shows the world a sarcastic sense of humor, what type of world it is, it is a material one with vision of unraveling, assumed the readers to share another type of complicity. The sea is a dirty one filled with shoes and muddy stuff.

Half a dozen waders

mediate between sea and shore, that space confirmed
 –don't laugh – by your own work (ll.4-6)

A poem like this, conceived as a conversation, is daring, it allows the poet to sit at the crossroads of two ways of hearing and understanding the world, not merely two ways of speaking. Jamie honors the objectivist method of returning everything to process and bricolage for her, poetry is not poetry finding a voice, but listening to that voice. "Materials" or the world had a landscape that spoke for itself. A material one with a vision of unravelling, assuming the readers to share another type of complicity. The sea is a dirty one filled with shoes and muddy stuff. And there is nothing to be happy about .

The poem does not romanticize nature or attempt to escape reality, as Jason Cowley (2008), points out " Jamies' works is deeply rooted in ecological consciousness", showing reality as it is, "shedding light on humans as the primary source for consuming our planet, as well as the fact that there is no longer any natural terrain or environment that is unaffected by humans"(p.9). They don't just want to go for a walk in the woods and rhapsodize; they want to see things with a scientific eye and write with literary effect.

In a recent interview ,Jamie speaks about her perspective on how to look at poetry , for her , "poetry is about listening and the art of listening, listening with attention. Which does not mean with the ear; but to bring the quality of attention to the world" (Scott ,2005,para.37). Jamie has a prompt desire to document the incident, to record aspects of the lived experience as a way of capturing elements of Scotland in transition, her work is by far more modest. More reflective, also with no ambition to have an authoritative or age-defining text. The poet, however, utilizes an important conceit in this poem, it is the pathetic fallacy to break bonds between humans, nature, and the greater universe and to reveal the impulses toward such anthropomorphism. She uses the voice of the tree reflects the nature of their feelings regarding the separation between them and offers an invitation to reconsider their relationship, which has become "poisoned" lately. One of Jamie's writings' lessons remains that there is power merely in paying attention. In her interview with Sarah Crown (2012), Jaime speculates the solution for a better planet , by stopping the damage and starts to listen :

I started to question if paying attention could be considered a political or radical act. We have these senses that have evolved with us over millions of years, and to pause for a second and use them to notice a blade of grass or a cobweb in the window means we're saying 'Stop.' 'Everyone, including myself, please stop telling me what to think and what to believe in for a minute.' Perhaps radical noticing can be a part of our solution. If you're pausing to take attention, you're not truly trashing [the planet]. (para.11)

Jamie's conversion to the natural world was neither a step forward to a religious turning nor only an imaginative journey in the contemporary world, it is more like a voyage towards a spiritual goal of renewing the attention to more spiritual practices in life. It is a setback to a journey of subduing the self to a larger world. Furthermore," it has been suggested that

spirituality might bring overall satisfaction as well as improve people's spiritual consciousness". As a result, people's life may gain meaning and purpose" (Ross,2006,p.860).

Conclusion

According to what has been analyzed ,meditation is seen as a practice that aims to achieve a state of abstraction that takes the ascetic exercising it far above the level of sensuous consciousness and out of the realm of matter. This greater state of awareness can help increase the person's concentration on the universe and diagnose the errors of the world .The one solution for the world's flaws according to Jamie is by having a radical noticing as secular contemplation.

as a Scottish Makar , Jamie finds herself responsible to ask the world for ecological civilization and to know the planet totally and honestly; the most important, and probably the only, all-encompassing goal is to grasp our immediate, precise location. Humans must live as near to it as possible, in contact with its particular soils, waterways, and creatures; they must learn its ways, capacities, and limits; also they must make its rhythms our patterns, rules as their guides, and fruit their treasure. That is at the heart of ecological civilization ,and the essence of a new life such as what Jamie mentions in " The Beach " :

"all of us
hoping for the marvellous,
all hankering for a changed life (ll.12-14)."

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