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Human-Nature Interactions in Kathleen Jamie's Selected Poems

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Abstract

Kathleen Jamie's poetry illustrates the effects of human actions on the natural world. Jamie's poetry expresses a viewpoint on the inevitability of human impact. This tendency is demonstrated by the traces that remain and integrate into the natural environment. This study's aim is to provide a thorough analysis of Kathleen Jamie's poetry and its impact on the natural environment and ecocriticism. The poet promotes awareness and a reconnection with nature, highlighting many natural beings that are sometimes neglected or mistreated in their coexistence with humanity. The poet's work promotes a connection with the natural environment.

Keywords: Ecocriticism, Kathleen Jamie, nature, environmental studies

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التفاعلات بين الإنسان والطبيعة في مختارات من قصائد كاتلين جيمي

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المستخلص

يوضح شعر كاتلين جيمي تأثيرات الأفعال البشرية على العالم الطبيعي. حيث يعبر عن وجهة نظر حول حتمية التأثير البشري. ويظهر هذا الاتجاه من خلال الآثار التي تبقى وتندمج في البيئة الطبيعية. تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى تقديم تحليل شامل لشعر كاتلين جيمي وتأثيره على البيئة الطبيعية والنقد البيئي. يعزز الشاعر الوعي وإعادة الاتصال بالطبيعة، ويسلط الضوء على العديد من الكائنات الطبيعية التي تتعرض في بعض الأحيان للإهمال أو سوء المعاملة أثناء تعايشها مع الإنسانية. كما يعزز عمل الشاعر الارتباط بالبيئة الطبيعية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: النقد البيئي، كاتلين جيمي، الطبيعة، الدراسات البيئية

1.1. Introduction to Ecocriticism

Ecocriticism is an interdisciplinary field that examines the relationship between literature and the environment, drawing on various scientific disciplines, such as anthropology, sociology, and psychology. Its primary objective is to explore potential solutions to address the ongoing environmental crisis. It demonstrates a strong interconnection with various academic disciplines, including social ecology, deep ecology, ecofeminism and environmental justice. Similar to feminism,

ecocriticism is also categorized into three distinct phases throughout history: the first wave of literary studies, which occurred from the mid-1980s to the late 1990s, was characterized by an interest in pastoral life in the 1990s and its geographical context with an emphasis on nineteenth-century literature. This wave was further categorized into American and British literature (Bressler, 1999).

The Second Wave, however, occurred in the late 1990s, with a distinct focus on addressing contemporary environmental issues. It sought to engage with and critically analyze the current environmental challenges. The inclusion of transcultural literature in second-wave ecocriticism marks a significant departure from the traditional focus on British and American literature. The second wave is notably contemporary in its endeavor to dismantle traditional differentiations between the human and non-human realms, thereby critically examining the fundamental nature of these concepts. Hence, the emergence of third-wave ecocriticism in 2009 has had a lasting and ongoing impact since it mixes the aims of all the previous waves. The primary focus of third-wave ecocriticism lies in the examination of the global notion of place, with particular emphasis on specific geographical locations. It focuses on the construction of the built environment within urban settings. This paradigm shift prompted economists to engage with additional concerns, including but not limited to racism, poverty, and gender bias (Garrard, 2004).

Ecocriticism theory focuses on various interconnected aspects that pertain to the representation of nature in literature. Following that, it explores concepts such

as the environmental imagination, which emphasizes the influence of the natural environment on the imagination of a cultural group during a particular historical period, and environmental activism, which engages in ongoing social, political, and economic discussions related to environmental pollution and conservation. This specific area of research also examines the notion of nature, the significance of nature, and the connection between nature and humanity (Di Lio, 2023).

Ecocriticism movement of the late twentieth century was marked by an appreciation of nature and all its beauty. The movement made a relatively strict distinction between the human world and the natural world, though it did attempt to eliminate this distinction. It promoted fighting for better environmental policies that would benefit the planet. Ecocriticism at this time was sometimes accused of lacking nuance (Phillips, 1999).

Throughout literary history, poetry has always been attentive to the environment that surrounds the perceiving subject. More recently, these ideas have been framed in terms of ecocritical thinking and theory. Contemporary poetry thrives on its diversity and dynamism. It delves into pressing social, cultural, and environmental concerns, with poets acting as voices for identity, equality, and sustainability. They experiment with form and language, pushing boundaries with vivid imagery and fresh perspectives. This inclusivity of voices and experiences, further amplified by technology, fosters global connection and enriches our understanding of the world. In essence, contemporary poetry is a vibrant platform

for exploring the complexities of our times, offering both reflection and connection (Özkan, 2019).

1.2. Hypothesis

The primary objective of the study is to explore and analyze the selected poems of Kathleen Jamie from an ecocritical perspective. By focusing on this contemporary poet and her works, the study aims to contribute to the understanding of the relationship between humans and the natural world in literature.

1.3. Aim of the Study

This study establishes a link among literature, ecocriticism, and environmental studies. An analysis of the poetry of Kathleen Jamie reveals the unique methodologies and perspectives on environmental issues, and it elucidates the representation of ecological themes in modern poetry. This can improve our understanding of how literature impacts ecological awareness and fosters a connection with the natural world.

1.4. Research Questions

1. What insights does Kathleen Jamie's selected poems offer into the relationship between humans and the natural world?
2. What is the significance of the non-human world in the poetic landscapes of Kathleen Jamie?

1.5. Methodology

This study will use a qualitative research method, including a close reading of the poems and analysis of the ecocriticism theory and the fragmentation technique used. The study will analyze selected poems by Kathleen Jamie using content analysis and thematic analysis.

1.6. Kathleen Jamie

In August 2021, Jamie was designated as the Makar, or National Poet, for Scotland for three years. In this position, Jamie has compiled collective poems from verses contributed by the citizens of Scotland.

Born in Currie, near Edinburgh, she pursued a degree in philosophy at the University of Edinburgh, where she published her initial poetry as an undergraduate. Her writing is grounded in the Scottish environment and culture, encompassing travel, women's issues, archaeology, and visual art. She composes in English and intermittently in Scots.

Jamie's collections encompass *Black Spiders* (1982) and *The Queen of Sheba* (1995). Her 2004 collection *The Tree House* demonstrated a growing fascination with the natural environment and garnered the Forward Poetry Prize as well as the Scottish Book of the Year Award. *The Overhaul* received the 2012 Costa Poetry Award. In 2014, Jamie committed to composing one poem per week. The poems were compiled in *The Bonniest Companie*, which received the 2016 Saltire Society Book of the Year award. Her *Selected Poems* were released in 2018. For the past decade, Jamie has furthermore authored non-fiction works. Her essay collections,

Findings, *Sightlines*, and *Surfacing*, are recognized as significant contributions to environment and landscape literature. The latter shared the Highland Book Prize in 2020. Upon its release in the United States, *Sightlines* received the John Burroughs Medal and the Orion Book Award. Jamie composes sporadic pieces and critiques for the London Review of Books and The Guardian (Scottish Poetry Library).

1.7. Kathleen Jamie's Ecocritical Perspective

Kathleen Jamie's book, *The Keelie Hawk*, features a cover that symbolizes a natural element, notably the kestrel, a bird of prey. In literature, hawks represent untamed independence in nature and their vulnerability to human-induced environmental disruptions. The research will examine selected poems from the book related to ecocriticism.

The first poem is *Green Glade*, which is a depiction of the natural world as a living thing and an example of how ecocritical ideas are brought to life. People have the impression that the glade is a place of renewal since it is marked by "dewy breith risin / frae its heathery flair" (Jamie, 2024, p.6, L: 3-4). which provides an indication of the inherent energy of the terrain. The poet invites readers to view nature not as a passive entity but rather as an active participant in the life that they are living.

Through the speaker's interaction with the surrounding environment, which allows for the observation of the wind's movements through the branches and trees, the connection between people and the natural world is brought into focus. The aforementioned statement is in agreement with ecocritical perspectives, which aim

to re-establish a link with the natural world in order to cultivate ecological consciousness and satisfy the spiritual needs of humans.

The poem makes an examination of the contrast between the fleeting attributes of humans and the unchanging nature of nature. While the speaker is thinking about the ephemeral quality of life, they also reflect on the death of their parents. The poem makes an examination of the contrast between the ephemeral nature of humans and the unchanging nature of nature. The speaker ponders the transient aspect of existence, which is brought to light by the death of their parents “whaur are they gane / ma mither and ma faither?” (Jamie, 2024, p.6, L: 17-18).

The everlasting "thoosan years" of the stone's blink are evidence that nature is active, as evidenced by the moment. Because of the juxtaposition, it is clear that the existence of humans is unimportant in the context of the enormous natural system. It is emphasized throughout the poem that in order for humans to have significance in their lives, they must respect nature and appreciate its necessities.

The next poem is *Rose*, which examines the interplay between humans and nature, addressing an ecocritical issue related to environmental degradation. The rose is personified as a sentient entity, representing nature's voice and its struggle for independence against harmful forces. The speaker's request, “Rose, speik mair!” underscores humanity's need to connect with and comprehend nature, which is muted by the “birslin winds” that disturb its petals, serving as a metaphor for environmental degradation. The rose's inability to respond with "Ah canna"

illustrates the devastation inflicted upon nature, which suppresses its voice. The rose symbolizes resilience in the face of human-induced environmental changes.

An examination of the intricate connections that exist between literature and the natural world is the focus of ecocriticism, which is a theoretical framework. This multifaceted approach examines the ways in which literary works portray nature and studies the cultural, social, and political repercussions that these depictions have (Tajane et al., 2024).

The poem *Keelie Hawk*, which shares its title with her book, effectively captures the kestrel's dominant role throughout the ecosystem. It also addresses topics relevant to ecocriticism, including the diverse relationship with humankind and the notion of autonomy. The Kestrel is depicted as monitoring from her position and managing her "hunger stance," symbolising the survival instinct in relation to human concerns. This illustrates her influence within her ecological context, so reinforcing the principles of ecocriticism.

Her ability to notice her surroundings despite the fact that her back was turned is an example of this dominance. "ye ken ye are as naethin in her een" is a saying that depicts the insignificance of people in the realm of the kestrel. It also highlights the larger ecological environment in which the existence of humans is not a primary consideration. The kestrel is a prime example of the wild's resilience, which poses a challenge to ecocritical approaches that promote the idea that the natural world is of essential importance.

Jamie creates a sense of immediacy of location by imagining potential characters and then populating the empty houses, beaches, ships, and meadows with those characters. The incorporation of an animal presence, such as that of a bird, helps to ease the difficulty that the human observer experiences when they are alone. She chooses not to write about these settings from the perspective of an insider; rather, she maintains a distance in order to be able to marvel at even the most minute details, much like a Romantic visionary did (Tajane et al., 2024).

The field of ecocriticism examines the relationship between humans and the natural world during a particular period in the history of literature. Ecocriticism is the study of the relationship between literary settings and the physical environments in which they are set. The literary approach known as ecocriticism places an emphasis on the natural world.

Ecocriticism is an approach to literature that seeks to draw attention to the necessity of reevaluating the relationship that has been established between man and his environment (Singh, 2019). The definition and meaning of the term ecocriticism are applied in Jamie's writings, whether in poetry or prose. She treats nature not as a subject but rather as someone that has a voice and expresses its emotions.

The poem *Grey Feather* examines themes of loss and being displaced within nature, which are connected to concerns that are environmental in nature. The feather is described as being "cast frae an antrin burd," which is a metaphor for a severed connection between the individual and its origin. This suggests the idea of

widespread ecological disruptions that have been caused by either human involvement or natural processes.

There is a similarity between the visual of feathers and a lack of interest in human-centred ideas of purpose. The poet questions preconceived notions about the precarious nature of the connections that exist between the natural world, which is characterised by the requirement for harmony amongst all things (Jamie, 2024, p.49, L: 2). Kathleen Jamie meets all the terms and concerns of ecocriticism in her poems in which she manages to paint a picture for readers to explain issues related to nature.

This intimate association is one of the repercussions that delineates one of the major objectives of ecocriticism. The goal of mind-body emancipation is consistent with the goal of environmental stewardship, which is one of the repercussions of this close relationship (Cella, 2013).

Conclusion

Kathleen Jamie's poems demonstrate the impact of human activity on the natural environment. Jamie's poetry conveys a resigned perspective on the inevitability of human influence. This disposition is evidenced by the traces that remain and blend into the natural environment. This aspect of the ecological cycle reveals human and animal behaviours, while the poems address the legacy and consequences of human actions on the natural environment. It illustrates the transformation of natural landscapes into sources for human goods, indicating that

this transition is happening. These poems prompt individuals to reassess the enduring impacts of their ecological footprints.

This study offers a comprehensive examination of the poetry of Kathleen Jamie and its influence on the natural environment and the field of ecocriticism. The poet advocates for awareness and a reconnection with the natural world, addressing every aspect by giving a voice to several natural entities that are often overlooked or underappreciated in their coexistence with humanity. The poet's work advocates for communion with our natural environment.

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