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Transcorporeal Ecofeminism: Women, Earthly Elements and All Entities Entangled in Selected Poems of Kathleen Jamie's *Jizzen*

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Abstract

Pinpointing ecofeminist currents in pre-2000 female-authored poetry presents notable challenges. Kathleen Jamie's poetic works, for instance, were often interpreted through conventional lenses—foregrounding themes of motherhood and the socio-cultural aspects of Scottish identity prevalent at the time of her writing. However, such readings tend to overlook the ecological and feminist undercurrents embedded in her work. This paper reconfigures Jamie's *Jizzen* (1999) through the critical lens of ecofeminism, particularly its interrogation of binary social structures, to offer a new reading of Jamie's poetic vision. It first explores how dualistic frameworks illuminate ecofeminist resonances within selected poems, drawing specifically on Stacy Alaimo's concept of transcorporeality and integrating empirical insights from the chemical and biological sciences. This interdisciplinary approach—bridging the arts and sciences—reveals the material entanglements between human corporeality, chemical substances, and microbial life, ultimately suggesting a profound sense of ecological wholeness. Through hermeneutic interpretation, paratextual analysis, and contextual engagement, the paper further argues that Jamie's invocation of mythic figures—such as Pandora and St Kevin—implicitly maps the convergence of imagination and reality. These ancient narratives can mirror as well as forecast the looming environmental emergency we encounter in contemporary times.

Keywords: Kathleen Jamie, *Jizzen*, ecofeminism, transcorporeality, earthly elements, hermeneutics

There is, inevitably, a degree of inspiration and ulterior motifs in poetic creation, arising from political agendas, religious didacticism, and natural surroundings (Rothenberg, 1970). A myriad of poems, orally and textually recorded since the Homeric period, depict flowers, animals and other natural subject matters. Tarlo (2009) even claims that poetry is perhaps the most

powerful device to envision reciprocity between humans and nature, and between the human world and the non-human world. This is perhaps most obvious in the Romantic movement, with Bennett and Royle (2004) proposing that the reason for existence of nature is to artistically inspire poets to write, while deep nature is exalted as the ideology for poets in their discovery of the meaningful self. Specifically, via the writing process, 'I' and 'Nature' take turns and switch the roles of subject and object in a mutual appraisal of the values of existence.

The thought of nature as pastoral life and the environmental perspective from British to Anglo-American Romanticism have largely faded away since the onset and intensification of industrialisation, capitalism, and overpopulation, triggering eco-degradation in the form of depleted natural resources, deforestation and so forth. Addressing nature and environment is hence a common and worrying issue. In literature, nature and environmental issues converge with sister disciplines like feminism – "the battle for ecological survival is intrinsically intertwined with the struggles for women's liberation and other forms of social justice", giving rise to the term *ecofeminism* (Buell et al., 2011, p. 424).

Many poets have created an anthology of environmental and feminist poetry. Among prominent modern poets, the highly praised poet Kathleen Jamie was appointed *Scot Makar* (Scotland's national poet) in 2021. In the early stages of her writing, with her preference for depicting the Scottish language and landscapes, her works were seen as representative of a sense of Scottish nationhood. Indeed, as Jamie wrote herself in her diary weblog, "I have what Robert Louis Stevenson called 'a strong Scots accent of the mind'" (Jamie, 2021, para. 3). However, multiple complications and ambivalences are raised if we investigate Jamie's literary works, arising from her own denial as either 'feminist poet' or 'ecopoet'. The Guardian noted this in 2005: "Is she a Scottish writer or a woman writer? She is both and she is neither. She feels irritated and confined by it" (Scott, 2005, para. 13). She also disavowed the label 'nature writing' in an interview given to the same newspaper in 2019 (Barkham, 2019).

Indeed, it is not easy for literary scholars to see aspects of feminist and ecocritical criticism in her early writings. Instead, taking a socio-cultural approach to her work has been more fortifying. Jamie's *Jizzen (*1999) is regarded as one of her experimental writings. The poems in this collection describe the speaker's exploration of her inner feelings as they merge with traditional folklores, animals, Scottish landscapes, and her natural surroundings. The poetic narratives in *Jizzen*, composed during Jamie's pregnancy, are non-sequential and presented as discrete pieces (Scott, 2005).

Notably, through her use of the Scots word *jizzen* (also rendered as *gizzen* or *gissan*, meaning 'child-bed'), she, unsurprisingly, has been able to persuade both readers and scholars to think of the poetic details of motherhood and patriotism.

Approaching *Jizzen* (1999) through the lens of ecofeminism, this paper investigates the relationship between women and nature-culture. Further, by employing Stacy Alaimo's (2010) transcorporeality, the paper reexamines the intermingling tropes of earthly elements—human and non-human—that are intertwined with narrative agencies in these selected poems. Lastly, the contextualization, paratextual and hermeneutical scrutiny given to allegorical tales of mythological goddesses and legendary Catholic saints in this poetic collection will be expounded.

Locating Transcorporeal Ecofeminism and Methodology

Critical opinion in previous studies on Jamie's works is mainly divided into two aspects: her sense of Scottish patriotism and her affinity with idyllic Scottish landscapes. Topography has indeed inspired Jamie's works and is a trademark of her writing. Flajšarová (2011), examining the travelogue *Findings* (2005), found that Jamie's preference for using Scottish over standard English and her imitation of the passive role of scientific observer, can awaken us to how Jamie's Romantic inward eye inspires her writing. Yeung (2015) compares Jamie's *This Weird Estate* (2007) inspired upon visiting scientific exhibitions and museums in Scotland, with the biological process of the invisible cords that connect the heart and brain with emotional and imaginative realms in the generation of the poetic artform. Falconer (2015) sees each poem in *Jizzen* (1999) as parts of a consecutive series of the multiple roles of individual Scottish identities rather than a single identity. The first sequence starts with a soon-to-be-born Scottish child in *Ultrasound*. The child's birth and separation from his/her mother through the cutting of the embryonic cord is depicted in *Thaw*, *February* and *Sea Urchin*. In these poems, the process of the child's *Scottish* selfhood has begun prior to the social shaping and nurturing into other Scottish roles (Falconer, 2015).

The trait of Scottish flag-waving through her use of the Scottish language was addressed in Jamie's 2005 interview, *In the Nature of Things*, with *The Guardian*, in which the poet said, "I like the feel of it (Scottishness) and the texture of it in my mouth, just to keep it flavoursome" (Scott, 2005, para. 10). Jamie's affirmation of Scottishness has undoubtedly induced several observers to point to her use of sociocultural facets of Scottish nationhood and geography. Severin (2011) postulates her 'place-

sensitivity' and how the juxtaposition of the human and the non-human can evoke in readers a sense of nature and how it maintains a distance from humanity. Szuba (2019) interprets Jamie's *Surfacing* (2019) in terms of ecological loss emanating from irreversible changes in the light of solastalgic emergence. However, to my understanding, Jamie's collection, adorned with landscapes, humans, and animals, allows for some scope for ecological and feminist contemplation.

Although ecocriticism and ecofeminism first emerged in Western countries, they have since attained international prominence within literary criticism. Despite their Western origins, it is entirely plausible to examine and link a range of literary genres—including film, folklore, and the novel—to ecological concerns, even within the context of ASEAN literary studies. For instance, Boonpromkul (2019) revisits the storytelling of Nang Takhian, a lamenting female spirit associated with the ironwood tree, and the city pillar in Dan Aaran's *Sao Hai* (2010), employing an ecocritical lens to reveal how Thailand's natural resources have been exploited under the influence of social and religious-royalist hegemony. In a similar vein, Chaipanit (2022) combines hauntology and ecocriticism within an EcoGothic framework to explore metaphorical representations of deforested landscapes and climate-related spectres in Apichatpong Weerasethakul's *Cemetery of Splendour* (2015) and Pitchaya Sudbanthad's *Bangkok Wakes to Rain* (2019), examining how these texts engage with Thai sociocultural norms and dominant political structures.

Nevertheless, considering ecocriticism's roots in Western discourse, the relative lack of ecocritical or ecofeminist engagement with Jamie's early work remains a curious phenomenon. It is arguable that Jamie's writings of that time were still very much experimental, and that she was reluctant to display her political stance or advance any agenda in her works (Gairn, 2007). In addition, her collection *Jizzen* (1994), is thought to be ecologically elusive, an environmental abstraction (Gairn, 2007). Jamie's maverick mind is evident in her claim that "The role of the poet is not to be political but shamanic (it's the only word I can think of)" (Dósa, 2009, p. 142).

However, thinking of the year *Jizzen* was published (1999) and examining the growth of ecofeminist literature in the pre-2000s, they are well-matched in the sense that they both represent a phase of 'struggle': Jamie is in her exploratory and probing period, while ecofeminist supposition is still ambivalent. Carlassare (2000) posits that ecofeminism at the time was not mature enough to be applied in political science and sociology as it is "irrational" and "regressive" (p. 95). It was also not

sufficiently developed to be established in the literary pedagogical curriculum until the 21st century (Yu, 2021).

I concur with the viewpoint that ecofeminist theory in the pre-2000s was undeveloped, rendering it "incoherent and dismissed out of hand" (Carlassare, 2000, p. 95). Besides, Jamie affirms that her works are non-polemical, making several critics point to a lack of feminist and ecofeminist criticism in Jamie's works. These points make it challenging for the researcher to read *Jizzen* in a way which unearths its ecofeminist elements.

The term ecofeminism itself concerns environmental justice, debunking patriarchal culture and hierarchical domination and oppression in terms of race, gender, animals and non-human entities. As proposed by Mary Mellow, "Ecofeminism is a movement that sees a connection between the exploitation and degradation of the natural world and the subordination and oppression of women" (Sturgeon, 1997, p. 23). The prominent features at the root of all immanent subjugation comprise a varied and interlinked series of dichotomies, such as masculinity versus femininity, nature versus culture and humans versus non-humans. Diverse struggles are linked in the sense that, as Plumwood (2003) argues, women are associated with nature and with the environment, and both of them are given the choice "to challenge the dualistic definition of women and nature and/or the inferior status of nature" (p. 39). Forms of dualism exclude women from culture as well (Plumwood, 2003). For Groz (1999), binary oppositions divide the world into two realms, one of the mind and one of the body. The realm of the mind is the non-natural and non-physical world that is linked with reason, knowledge, civilisation and masculinity; in contrast, the domain of the body equates with the world of nature and is linked with emotion, passion, savagery and femininity. In this respect, women are deemed to be more in tune with nature than men are.

Nevertheless, ecofeminism has encountered varied opposition and criticisms. One such criticism is a lack of theoretical development, an argument which proposes "belief in the interconnectedness of all living things [and hence] since all life is nature, neither gender… can be closer than the other to 'nature'" (Gates, 1996, p. 13). Still, attempting to further my research in order to transcend prevailing gender prejudice, I will leverage Stacy Alaimo's (2010) notion of transcorporeality and integrate it with recent data from the biological and environmental sciences. In this sense, transcorporeality also highlights the interdependent, consubstantial relationship between equal power of men and women residing in the

planet, Earth and of other more-than-human entities, reenforcing the notion of ecofeminism without any gendered segregation.

Transcorporeality, as it appears in Stacy Alaimo's *Bodily Nature: Science, Environment, and the Material Self* (2010), posits an interdependence between human physical bodies, animate and inanimate objects, and between human and non-human entities. Alaimo (2010) views this entanglement as an existent amalgamation of human, inhuman and strange things, "with modes of knowing and being so different from ours" (Kuznetski, 2020, p. 143). Defining and describing transcorporeality is not straightforward since it cuts across many disciplines; like a spider's web, it is not easily grasped from a single perspective. Green (2020) invites us to think of ecology as a 'constellation' of several branches of knowledge. My analysis echoes these sentiments, coinciding with Alaimo's (2010) *deviant agencies* and "chemical sensitivity as a mode of trans-corporeality" (p. 10), which I also deploy to explore non-human entities as well as to underline the reciprocal correlation of human and more-than-human agencies in the selected poems of Jamie. In doing so, I will rely primarily on Tom Oliver's *The Self Delusion: The Surprising Science of Our Connection to Each Other and the Natural World* (2020), Marchus Crown's *Infinity in the Palm of Your Hand* (2020), and other related scientific studies.

Transcorporeality has scarcely been optimised in literature studies. De Vos (2023), reviewing Thilde Jensen's *The Canaries* (2013), employs the term to show how environmental illnesses such as arthritis, cardiovascular disease, and lung cancer are caused by everyday life materials and chemical toxins used in cleaning products, perfumes, furniture and fuels. Transcorporeality is also used, through dialogic exchange, to represent in photography the ecological destruction in Alberta's *Tar Sands* (2022), with the conclusion that art-based embodiment can build the pathways toward ecologically restorative futures (Eppert & Conrad, 2024). Kuznetski (2023) seeks to show how, in Emma Donoghue's novel *The Pull of the Stars* (2020), female bodies in 1918 encountered trauma and vulnerability to disease and military and political oppression. In this sense, then, previous studies on transcorporeality in literary writings have paved the way for this present study to draw on the notion to explore *Jizzen* through the lens of material ecocriticism.

This study revolves around the ways in which the poetic narratives in Jamie's *Jizzen* represent aspect of ecofeminism, resulting from dualism. In the first analysis part, I place the texts in the context of ecofeminist theory as currently conceived in literary circles (i.e. still associated with

the contradiction of gendered bias in terms of an intimacy with the environment and nature). As the ecofeminist approach is thought by some to solidify gender dichotomies, the second part leverages Alaimo's (2010) notion of transcorporeality to analyse *Jizzen* to transcend these incessant issues. Lastly, I postulate that, in order to explain the complex webs of poetic narratives with the world we inhabit, hermeneutics and contextualisation need to be applied to the analysis.

Rationale for Selecting Kathleen Jamie's *Jizzen* (1999)

The chosen poems, *Ultrasound*, *Forget it*, *Sea Urchin*, *Prayer*, *Crossing the Loch*, and *Meadowsweet* in Kathleen Jamie's *Jizzen* (1999), are a clear and detailed presentation of Scotland's natural scenery with hints of supernatural tales about animals, inanimate objects, and maternity. Jamie's voice in these poems is concerned more with non-human entities. In certain poems humans provide a backdrop to allow the reader to appraise the significance of non-human entities. Previous studies have centred on Jamie's attachment to Scottish places and her sense of nationhood. However, all the selected poems in Jamie's collection, *Jizzen* (1999), may be deeply explored through the lens of transcorporeal ecofeminism, particularly in relation to how poetic aesthetics intertwine with themes of gender, environment, and scientific knowledge. The concept of transcorporeality invites us to reconsider our own complex, embodied, and situated identities as material beings, intricately interconnected with substances, chemicals, and the world around us (Kuznetski, 2020). In addition, there is no distinction between imagination—literature, film, and visual arts—when it comes to "enliven and contextualise scientific information that discloses otherwise invisible processes and effects" (Kuznetski, 2020, p. 140).

Thus, it is possible to dig deeper into the poems to reveal their—perhaps unwitting or inadvertent—engagement with transcorporeality and ecofeminism, allowing us to use these lenses to consider Jamie's allusions to biblical and Catholic legends (due to space limitations, not all the poems in *Jizzen* can be considered). Although poetry in general might be less wordy than other genres of literature, it is packed with powerful meanings, for as Philip et al. (2022) note, "There is no end to understanding (poetry), and different individuals make different interpretations" (p. 9).

Textual Analysis

From Dualism to the Subjugation of Nature and Women

In *Ultrasound,* Jamie points to the ramifications of systematic binary opposition as it is practiced by the privileged others in the world (Plumwood, 2003). She does so by writing about Pandora's Box (Jamie, 1999). According to Greek myth, Pandora was the first woman to be created after a command from the male god Zeus. To create Pandora, the gods used earthly elements, including clay and water. After being endowed with a beautiful appearance, the gods gave Pandora earthly gifts like flowers and a crown of gold. By the will of Zeus, Pandora was sent to earth to seduce Epimetheus, Prometheus' brother. In Epimetheus' house, there was a locked box which he warned his wife never to open. Yet her curiosity got the better of her and she opened the box, releasing a host of miseries and commencing the beginning of human beings' torment from toil and evil on earth.

To place the myth of Pandora in the context of ecofeminism by means of dualism, Jamie's use of it in *Ultrasound* reveals her envisioning of the world in a non-dualistic way. To begin with, the gods' creation of Pandora's body from earthly elements emphasises the predominant tradition of women's connectedness with nature and men's separation from it, linked instead as they are with reason and knowledge. Pandora is directed by and submissive to Zeus' will. As a god, Zeus maintains a supreme sense of identity and dominance over Pandora and the earthly world by diminishing Pandora's value and binding her with the materially mundane earth. Specifically, Zeus reduces nature by using its elements as an instrument to create Pandora, who is employed as a tool to disseminate of all the wretchedness on earth upon opening the box. By presenting the act as inherently womanly, the male god Zeus defames both the femininity and the nature embodied in the character of Pandora. At the same time, this act praises all that is masculine and non-natural. Accordingly, Zeus preserves his control over nature and femininity as such spheres are divergent from his idealised world, his heaven, which is regarded as the unseen world of non-materiality (Plumwood, 2003).

In the fourth stanza of *Ultrasound*, the speaker states: "If Pandora/ could have scanned/her dark box" (Jamie, 1999, p. 11, lines 10–12). The "if" uttered by the speaker signifies that Pandora could not scan the box as she lacked the required knowledge and skills to do so. Lacking foresight, she thus opens the "dark box" (line 12) out of child-like curiosity, because Zeus, the male controller of the dualistic realm, created Pandora, a representative of all women, only as a body and not as a mind. In this dichotomous world, Pandora is excluded from the scope of knowing, the world of reason, non-corporeality and masculinity (Grosz, 1994). As

knowledge is beyond Pandora, existing in the mind of Zeus in heaven, below on earth she is unable to leave the box locked. Consequently, humankind's future in the poem is seen by "a seer's mothy flicker/an inner sprite" (lines 10–11). "This ghoul's skull, punched eyes" (line 14) are a part of the miseries that Pandora unleashes (Jamie, 1999, p. 11), the result of the systematic distancing of the sphere of non-corporeality, reason, from that of materiality, the body and nature.

The superior counterpart of dualism, subjugating both female and nature, seeks to tame the wilderness, with its ghostly and savage traits, by de-feminizing it. The binary oppositions governing the world imply that all that is natural or non-human is feminine, yet we perceive life through hegemonic masculinity. In *Forget It* (Jamie, 1999, p. 5–7), Jamie sheds light on how nature is rationalised, or masculinised. In the fifth stanza of this poem, the speaker asks:

> Who were the disappeared? Whose [is]
> the cut-throat
> razor on mantelpiece what man's
> coat hung thick with town gas, coal
> in the lobby press? (lines 30–34)

The speaker implicitly conjures images of bloodshed, aggression and violence towards the physical body through the question about the razor. In addition, this line shows that the gas and coal on the man's coat are dualistically linked with the reasoning of nature, that the environment is controlled and exploited by men. This reasoning process takes place in the form of disrupting the reproductive essence characterising nature by substituting it with productive elements like coal and gas. It is the result of men's alliance with what is considered mere rational knowledge like science and technology. Destroying the natural world by using non-sustainable energy such as coal and gas is how the privileged others in the realm of binary opposition express their virility (Plumwood, 2003). Thus, dominant masculinity seeks to tame nature in order to domesticate what is correlated with it: women.

In the ninth stanza of the same poem, the speaker says:

> turning tenements outside-in,
> exposing gas pipes, hearths
> in damaged gables, wallpaper
> hanging limp and stained
> in the shaming rain. (lines 77–81)

Tenements are an embodiment of the humanisation of the natural world. In other words, they are the places where nature loses its savage characteristics and is tamed by civilised human ideals. Within the dualistic spheres that men have created, they need to magnify the difference between themselves and the natural world by excluding it from their lives. This utilitarianism of the masculine domain, by making use of natural resources and excluding nature, causes the dominant superior ones to lose any sense of empathy towards the wilderness. This absence of sympathy allows them to unthinkingly harm nature with their manufactured gas pipes and hearths. However, the speaker in *Forget It* (Jamie, 1999, p. 7) shows that the forcefulness of the natural world exceeds the rules set by reason. Mere rationality towards nature backfires on human beings in the form of the pouring "shaming rain" (Jamie, 1999, p. 7, line 82), and, as a result of man's exploitation of gas and coal, the "damaged gables" (line 80). The portrayal of these earthly elements (fossil fuels) being exploited alongside the oppression of femininity through the 'male gaze' is vividly illustrated in *Forget it*.

Transcorporeal Ecofeminism in Poetic Narratives

As noted, ecofeminism has not been fully acknowledged, or is even denied, by some who regard it as likely to exacerbate gendered superiority. I will thus draw here on Alaimo's (2010) notion of transcorporeality, which is built upon the ecofeminist and ecocritical concept of the entanglement of humans and non-humans, to discuss further the selected poems. The apparent cynicism shown towards civilisation and urbanization in the form of the exploitation of Earth's resources we see in *Forget it* in the previous part will also be reassessed in light of the consideration of Alaimo's (2010) transcorporeality. This is followed by an ecofeminist and transcorporeal scrutiny of other selected poems in *Jizzen*.

Jamie's poem *Ultrasound* resurrects Homer's tale of Pandora. In my interpretation of Homeric narratives, these ancient tales are not nonsensical fantasy but reflect deeper implications of the real world. Suffice to say that Greek mythology explores natural phenomena in juxtaposition to human life. In contrast, Jamie's aim in her depiction of Pandora in *Ultrasound* is to exculpate her from being martyred. Likewise, the narratives of Hesoid, Homer and Jamie are agents (narrative agencies) that perform aesthetic representations. Like the Homeric poets, Jamie's words are a medium, introducing the everyday sublimity of natural phenomena and the existing inferiority of the environment and women, and by way of narrative agencies (mediums), they contribute to a "transformation of the real"

(James & Morel, 2018, pp. 357–358). This transformation can reshape individuals and the collective eco-social imagination concerning materiality, environment and scientific studies (James & Morel, 2018).

Rethinking the tale of Pandora as Jamie does by asking why Pandora must be a woman may well have stirred up a degree of resentment among some feminist readers. Nevertheless, today this can be scientifically and biologically explained—something the ancients, lacking the technological means, could not do so. Sickness, sadness, ailments, and pains lie in Pandora's Box. First of all, feeling pain relies on the bodily functions of the brain, cognition, and nerves. At this point, selecting Pandora as a female figure is biologically sensible, since it shows that women, due to their innate maternal instinct, have a sensory nervous system that is more hypersensitive and responsive than men (Shults, 2018). According to the aforementioned evidence regarding neurological characteristics devoid of any sexual bias, women, including the mythological figure of Pandora, manifest a heightened sensitivity to both mental and physical pain compared to men.

In relation to forensic autopsy, it can be claimed that we all are Pandora. If we dissect the body of Pandora, we see that she was molded out of earthly elements (earth, clay and water) and chemically comprised of calcium, microscopic organisms and so forth (Oliver, 2020). These earthly constituents are synonymous to all males and females, who are physically compounded by water and a cocktail of other natural elements and nutrients (Oliver, 2020). More interestingly, with Pandora being the first woman, we are all her offspring, not in terms of human pregnancy but in terms of our inherent chemistry and biology. We all have in our bodies these invisible elements that have been circulated and recycled in the atmosphere and on earth since the beginning of time. Molecules have passed between innumerable bodies and other living and non-living things, including plants, insects, corpses, and fossils, before entering our bodies (Oliver, 2020). These elements were "produced as a result of the 'Big Bang' at the origin of the universe" (Oliver, 2020, p. 22).

Since Pandora and her offspring are made from the same earthly elements, all of us, irrespective of gender, have to congenitally grin and bear all entities, both visible and invisible. These entities include undesirable non-human things such as germs, bacteria, and viruses (Oliver, 2020). For me, biologically speaking, the "ghoul's skull, punched eyes" (Jamie, 1999, p. 11, line 14) inside Pandora's cursed box are actually these germs and microorganisms. Fully denying the existence of distasteful entities, without truly understanding the root causes of physical illnesses and miseries, is

anthropocentrically blinkered. In reality, physical illness and disease are interwoven with microbiotic communities and the external unhygienic environment. Failing to live harmoniously with the natural environment can lead to a condition of dysbiosis and diseases, triggering physical ailments.

In *Ultrasound*, Jamie invites us to reevaluate Pandora: "If Pandora could have scanned her dark box" (Jamie, 1999, p. 11, lines 10–12). With Pandora being denigrated by misogynists as the female originator unleashing all manner of misfortune and misery that befall the world—seen in Jamie's words "ghoul's skull, punched eyes" (line 14)—Jamie asks readers to reevaluate Pandora with the mere word "if". Jamie here is seeking to vindicate Pandora's unintentional mistake and, in doing so, remove the deep-seated misogyny associated with Pandora's act. In accordance with her anti-misogyny, it is open to readers to wonder what would have been if Pandora had known what lay inside the box. Pandora, as a woman, has a sympathetic mind, since women, neurologically, have a more efficient activation of the sympathetic nervous system (SNS) than males (Hinojosa-Laborde et al., 1999). Pandora, a representative of women, who have the property of sympathy, would surely not harm all humankind by opening the cursed box if she had been able to gain access to knowledge such as our modern technology of ultrasound scanning. In parallel, in the world of phallocentrism in Greek times, devoid of sufficient scientific explanation, the tale of Pandora is a way to induce people in the real world to shoulder the unwished events of life (from the opening of the cursed box). In this sense, condemning Pandora appears blatantly unfair; Jamie hence seeks to absolve Pandora of any blame for what follows.

In *Forget it* (Jamie, 1999, pp. 5–7), the interconnectedness of humans and nature is vividly depicted through the consumption of natural resources. Viewing the world through the lens of ecofeminism has the potential to challenge patriarchy and the man-made systems of culture, civilisation, and technology that accompany it. These systems are often implicated in the subjugation of both feminine values and the natural environment. However, it is indisputable that all human beings—regardless of gender—must equally depend on natural resources and earthly elements for their survival and advancement. As Kuznetski (2020) writes:

> Indeed, women in industrialised western culture are consumers and are just as culpable in environmental destruction on a day-to-day basis as are men—we are all living in the same culture doing similar things; there is no innocence there.
>
> (Kuznetski, 2020, p. 142)

In *Forget It* (Jamie, 1999, pp. 5–7), Jamie interweaves images of urban life with elements of the natural climate. The female speaker narrates her everyday experiences in the city, referencing a range of domestic objects and spaces. These include commonplace items and locations such as "the lobby" (line 34), "the mantelpiece" (line 32), "the kitchen" (line 45), "the oven" (line 13), "the kettle" (line 37), and the "sink" (line 38).

The poem then extends its scope to incorporate more substantial aspects of urban infrastructure, including "gutters" (line 17), "tenements" (line 77), "streets" (line 71), and "the garden" (line 83). These domestic and architectural details are set against a backdrop of the city's external atmosphere, characterised by mist and a grey, rainy sky. Jamie evokes this setting through visual imagery such as "rain" (lines 18, 81) and "winter" (line 83).

At this point in the poem, a sense of harmony between human life, the constructed environment, and the natural world becomes apparent. The earth, the rain, the sky, and the sea are all represented as integral to this interconnection. Such a portrayal aligns with the principles of eco-cosmopolitanism, offering a vision of contemporary life defined by the intricate interdependence of ecological and human-made systems (Schliephake, 2015). These bordered but interwoven spheres of the human-built ecology (civilisation and culture) and the natural environment are reciprocally infiltrated through the process of mutual contact between material non-visible entities and humans.

The details in *Forget it* affirm the inseparability of human-built objects and the natural environment, which together constitute an indivisable circulation of natural and cultural elements, evident in the speaker's consumption of "/coal/gas/gas pipes/oven/hearths" (Jamie, 1999, pp. 6–7). At the same time, the speaker experiences the chill of the rain outside the building. The utilisation of fossil energies echoes the material processes in the forms of toxics that are porous and dynamically unstable (Schliephake, 2015). The material processes, in the forms of inanimate objects, travel back and forth between the natural environment and the human-built ecology. Finally, these two bordered realms become one indivisible realm.

The unseen messages lurking in the poem are a complex cycle and chain of ecology in the form of the use of energy that is exploited to support all forms of life on Earth, both human and other living beings. Firstly, fossil fuels like gas, coal, and oil from the non-human realm are excavated from the seabed and land to serve human needs after millions of years of sedimentation (Dincer, 2018). Then, human consumption of fossil energy instigates heat on earth, releasing gases which form raindrops. The rain then falls to the earth, the streets, and the gardens, generating rivers and seas that will in turn accumulate as the anerobic decomposition of organic matter to be exploited as energy resources again millions of years

into the future (Dincer, 2018), forming an infinite loop of ecological interconnectedness between humans and non-humans. Eventually, the two spheres fuse together: human built (civilisation) and wilderness (non-human entities) into oneness.

In the poems *Prayer* and *Sea Urchin* (Jamie, 1999, pp. 17–18), Jamie emphasises how rational human beings cannot separate themselves from the wilderness merely by inhabiting civilized places because nature always pervades and inhabits our human-built world. This is embodied in the speaker's reference to the "baby's heart" (line 1) in *Prayer* (Jamie, 1999, p. 18). The speaker says:

> Our baby's heart, on the sixteen-week scan
> Was a fluttering bird, held in cupped hands.
> I thought of St Kevin, hands opened in prayer
> and a bird of hedgerow nesting there, (lines 1–4)

At the surface of the dualistic concept, the heart is associated with feminine emotions. By extension, the heart is correlated with wilderness as nature is inseparable from femininity. The speaker expresses this undivided linkage between all humans (men and women) and nature by stating that it "was a fluttering bird, held in cupped hands" (line 1). Metaphorically put, the relationship between nature, femininity, humanity, and the more-than-human realm is elucidated through the juxtaposition of the heartbeat of a sixteen-week-old fetus—a developmental stage at which the heartbeat is usually discernible—with the image of a fluttering bird cradled within cupped hands. In this poem, *Prayer*, Jamie employs kinesthetic and auditory imagery, including onomatopoeia, to implicitly convey how a baby, humans, and a bird are equally and unconditionally embraced, cherished, and safeguarded by Mother Nature.

Jamie uses the same expression of cupped hand [s] in *Sea Urchin*, when the speaker describes how her baby's head is between her "breast and cupped hand" (Jamie, 1999, p. 17, lines 1–3). The speaker compares cradling the baby's head to lifting a sea urchin from a sea rockpool. To put this in the context of human inseparability from nature, the metaphor is first used to illustrate the mother-baby relationship in reality. The fact that the baby "rests" (line 4) between his/her mother's cupped hand and breast "tenderly" (line 4) makes readers understand that the baby is in the suckling phase. Babies in this stage of their lives do not distinguish between themselves as separate entities from their mothers; they are in harmonious oneness.

This mother-baby oneness symbolises the unity of nature and human without regard to gender. Even though, scientifically, new-born babies have a gender identification, they do not yet have consciousness of sexual

recognition. Babies, Grosz (1994) adds, see no limits between themselves and their mothers. In these two poems, where the phrase "cupped hand [s]" is used to depict the bird-nature and the mother-baby relationships, Jamie attempts to alter human beings' perception of nature to one which should be perceived as a mother-baby relation, one of unity and indistinctiveness. Cupped hands reappear in *Frogs* in her 2004 collection *The Tree House*, in which, after some frogs are squashed by a car, a female passenger cups her hands in a state of shock. Jamie's recurrent image of cupped hands induces readers to ponder the interplay between the human act of cupping hands, nature, and the non-human.

Gillis (2020) suggests that the cupped hands are "a faint gestural echo of the Eucharist" (p. 246). However, I consider them to be a depiction of the interrelationship of the human and the non-human. Interpreting the imagery of cupped hands in the context of ecology, of women and earth, invites readers to visualise the clichéd image of cupped hands holding Earth, our mutual home (see Figure 1). To elaborate, the environment, nature and Earth, which are related to femininity and the non-civilised world, also rely on human hands (both men and women's actions) to help, protect and revive them. In parallel, humans depend on natural and non-human entities. The posture of cradling a baby, along with recurring images of a cupped hand in Jamie's works, including *Frogs*, *Prayer*, and *Sea Urchin*, symbolises both the hands of a man (St. Kevin) and the hand of a woman (a mother). This reflects their shared roles in protecting and nurturing not only humans themselves but also animals and other non-human entities.

Figure 1

Protecting the Planet while Holding a Globe Surrounded by Lush Green Plants

Note. From Gapeenko (n.d.), *Vecteezy*. (https://www.vecteezy.com/photo/56527463-protecting-the-planet-while-holding-a-globe-surrounded-by-lush-green-plants). Copyright by Oleg Gapeenko.

Jamie structures our wholeness with nature in *Prayer* by referring to St Kevin praying where "a bird of the hedgerow [is] nesting" (line 4) on his palm. St Kevin's performance of his prayer in the wilderness symbolises that nature, along with its feminine correlation, are not sacrilegious. This fact suggests that there is no reason for humans to be distanced from nature. This reciprocal connection between humans, animals and non-humans is not limited to women. In fact, the male, depicted in the form of the benevolent St. Kevin, can be a link with the unity of the human and non-human others. Nature is only as sacred as civilised places, which the privileged individuals align themselves with. In the last verse of *Prayer*, Jamie reveals why human beings should not conceive of themselves as independent and disconnected from the wilderness. Simultaneously, "St. Kevin, hands opened in prayer with a bird of hedgerow nesting there" (lines 3–4), implies that nature and the non-human depend on human attentiveness for them not to be obliterated.

In *Crossing the Loch* (Jamie, 1999, p. 1), Jamie elaborates on why human beings are dependent on nature to learn about life. The speaker in the poem asks:

> Who rowed, and who kept their peace?
> Who hauled salt-air and stars
> deep into their lungs, were not reassured;
> and who first noticed the loch's
> phosphorescence, so, like a twittering nest (lines 15–19)

Although Jamie does not explicitly refer to the sea in this poem, readers can presume, from the phrase "intake of salt-air" (Jamie, 1999, p. 1, line 16), that the place where the speaker and the loch are located are not far from the sea. Jamie implicitly tells readers that no matter how much distance exists between geographic features (the sea and the hills) and humans and an inanimate object like "a boat" (line 7), it is not an insurmountable obstacle to unite these entities into oneness. In response to the oneness of human and inanimate objects, the force of the wind blowing the salt-air functions as a medium to interlink the loch, the people, and "the pub" (line 3), and all are deemed part of the nature-civilisation nexus.

My own analysis seeks to unearth the unseen images concealed in the poem from other material agencies, including invisible entities such as the "salt air", that the speaker refers to. The researcher needs to biologically and chemically dissect elements of the "salt-air" and the "stars/deep into their lungs" (lines 16–17). The air we breathe has 78% nitrogen, 17% oxygen, 4% carbon dioxide, and 1% other gases, but there is no salt, (sodium choride) in the air (Chown, 2020). Possibly, the salt carried by sea

breezes can mix with the regular air that we breathe. This underscores the interdependence of all entities seen in *Ultrasound* and *Forget It*, the notion that humans are not detached entities but are compounded earthly components.

Moreover, "stars deep into their lungs" (lines 16–17) not only refer to the earthly dust; they are also truly cosmic elements as the dust and particles on earth are chemically similar to the cosmic dust, known as "micrometeorites" (Wozniakiewicz, 2017, p. 37). The outward-inward process of human learning through the physical senses, as represented in the imagery evoked in *Crossing the Loch*, is seen more obviously through the sensual perceptions the speaker mentions. In this process, the oneness of all invisible entities, from the micro-level of the inner physical body to the macro-level of Earth and cosmic space, is chemically formulated through material agencies such as the air and wind, converging with the sensory organs.

In the third stanza, the speaker asks: "And who first noticed the Loch's/phosphorescence" (lines 18–19). The answer is that what first observes the loch's phosphorescence are human eyes, not their minds. In the act of observing, the speaker's eyes open up a world of co-present modalities existing in intra-and-outer spaces, the loch and the phosphorescence, implying a combination of technological innovation (civilisation) and the loch (nature). Jamie enlarges the speaker's physically-gained knowledge by blending sight with touch. In the poem, the speaker describes the journey in the loch, saying: "We watched water shine/on our fingers" (Jamie, 1999, p. 1, lines 21–22). Here, both sight and touch simultaneously join the formulation of information about the shiny splash of water from the loch sprinkled on the speaker's and his/her companion's fingers. Through his/her fingers and eyes, the speaker gains two-fold knowledge, what Grosz calls a "double sensation" (Grosz, 1994, p. 100).

The first kind of knowledge in light of this double sensation is the speaker's experience as a subject touching the water. The second one is experiencing how to be an object touched by the water of the loch. The same notion of double sensation applies to the visualisation process. In the first stanza, the speaker states:

> Remember how we rowed toward the cottage
> on the sickle-shaped bay,
> that one night after the pub
> loosed us through its swinging doors (lines 1–4)

This sense of visibility is realised by the corporeal presence of the speaker in that bay. Jamie insists on the role of nature in expanding the speaker's knowledge by having the loch as the main setting in the poem; both touch and sight operate more spatially than other senses.

In *Meadowsweet* (Jamie, 1999, p. 49), Jamie again invites human beings to consider the significance of the material and bodily contact with nature to renew their physical and spiritual lives. In this poem, Jamie tackles the burial tradition of female poets in Gaelic culture. This tradition requires women poets to be buried with their faces down. In the first line, the speaker says, "So they buried her, and turned home" (line 1). In light of binary oppositions, hierarchical supremacy is represented through the pronoun "they", the majority centre, versus the outcast periphery, represented by the pronoun "her", indicating a dead female poet in a male-dominated society, a society which seeks to monopolise the production of culture and civilisation as one subject to male desires and demands. This marginalisation is undertaken by edging the female poet in the poem outside the centre of so-called civilisation as dictated by masculinity. The periphery is the tomb where her body is laid to rest. The grave is a place empty of human existence and of sponsorship as well as of culture, situated in the wilderness.

Nonetheless, amid the absolute loneliness and desolation of her grave, the female poet in *Meadowsweet* finds a sense of solace. The act of abandonment of the female poet performed by "they [them]" forces her to find a common bond with nature. Her deserted tomb, far from civilisation, exhibits a fusion of dead poet and nature: the soils mix with the organic matter of her body. This sense of commonality triggers a bond with nature. In other words, the remoteness of the female poet from everything civilised brings her closer to nature. The proximity of the poet to nature is seen in her somatic experience with it.

This experience starts with the female poet's face touching the ground when it is placed down. This act triggers the metamorphosis from dead female corpse into a sweet-scented flower, "meadowsweet" (Jamie, 1999, p. 49, line 10). The process of porous interpenetration between the non-human entities such as, invisible live cultures, inside the dead female's corpse and external ones is visualised through the process of decay. With death, the compounded elements once enclosed in a live female body return to nature, reflecting the transcorpreal concept that "it is more truthful to say that you are born 100 percent human but die 99.75 percent alien" (Chown, 2020, p. 20). Initially, after birth, humans acquire foreign microorganisms—species of bacteria, fungi, and so on—from the mother's milk and from the environment (Chown, 2020).

Through death and decay, not only a dead female poet, but all beings, including males, will finally belong to nature and be ingested and altered into other earthly elements by non-human entities.

The speaker reveals that death in this sense is not eternal bereavement; it is a victorious resurrection. Accordingly, the speaker's tone is not one of sorrow. Instead, he or she announces that the death of the poet receives an ovation because the natural world converts her from a passive object into an active subject. Her "trickling lips" (line 5) and the "unraveling plait of grey hair" (line 8) causes the "meadowsweet, bastard balm" (line 10) to blossom. The skin, blood, hair, bones and other nutrients from her dead body transform into fertiliser and then into a blooming flower. Gradually, "when the time came" (line 14) she started to "dig herself out" (line 15) of the grave "they" (line 1) once buried her in when she was a passive subject. She is no longer inactive; instead, she actively has flourished and is now able to "greet them" (line 16) and express herself as a meadowsweet with "young mouth, full of dirt, and spit, and poetry" (lines 17-18), as she emerges, from her communion with nature.

Nature summons both the inner mode of her body, the psyche, as well as the outer one (Grosz, 1994). The rejuvenation of her outer body is embodied in the organic alteration seen in her young mouth as well as in her act of resurrection to the surface of the soil after she had been buried underneath it. It is clear that the exclusion of nature and the body and the correlation of women with both wilderness and physical body disrupt the configuration of culture and knowledge. In fact, Jamie's speaker in *Meadowsweet* (Jamie, 1999, p. 49) shows how Gaelic culture was regenerated through the poetry of a female poet. This regeneration is portrayed as taking place only after the mingling of the female poet's dead body with nature, eventually transforming her into a flower, inspires the poet to write "poetry" (line 18).

Extratextual World: Hermeneutic Contextualisation and Paratextual Interpretation

Poetic works and practices offer a rich resource: a complex and vibrant terrain for what Gillis (2020, p. 240) refers to as the "inescapable triangulation of mind, language and the Real." While *mind* and *language* are primarily employed within literary criticism, *the Real* also plays a significant role in the interpretation of poetic narratives—particularly when drawing on ecofeminism and transcorporeality to read *Jizzen* (1999). Perhaps the *Real* entails not only textual, semantic, and linguistic interpretation, but also encompasses entities external to the text itself: paratexts, social contexts,

and biblical or mythological allusions. Such an approach underscores the value of ecocriticism in embracing and cherishing all forms of existence equally. in embracing and cherishing all forms of existence equally.

The term *paratext* was coined by Gérard Genette in 1991. It combines material elements outside the main body of the text and the tools that authors, book designers and publishers use to produce works and generate readers' interest (Genette, 1991). For example, prior to reading the poems in *Jizze*n, Jamie and the book's publishers communicate imagery and messages to potential readers via the book cover, with its depictions of the female, of nature and of other inanimate objects. Both the front and back covers are richly imbued with natural tones (see https://www.panmacmillan.com/authors/kathleen-jamie/jizzen/9781447218234). Shades of savanna, sand, and plaster brown adorn the woman's face, her upper body, and the entirety of the back cover, while hues of azure and bungalow blue trace the spine. The trees behind her are rendered in fern and olive greens, which also embellish the crown of flowers atop her head. Intriguingly, the background features a series of buildings and structures painted in bleached clay brown and weathered blue—echoing the colours of the woman's dress and skin. This chromatic mirroring suggests an interdependence between nature and culture: earthy tones, typically associated with the natural world, are extended to elements of civilisation, including architecture and clothing. Notably, there is no deviation from the earth-toned palette across the visual composition. By employing the same range of muted, organic colours across human, nonhuman, and cultural forms, the design evokes a sense of continuity and interconnectedness—a visual representation of the entanglement between human and more-than-human agencies, blurring traditional boundaries.

The crown of flowers may symbolically refer to ceremonies and funerals or even allude to pagan marks of honour and veneration to heroes and gods (Seaton, 1989). It is possible that placing an image of a woman with a crown of flowers on the front cover might spur readers to think either of the glorification of a heroic female figure or of a memorial to a dead woman. Both Pandora in *Ultrasound*, and the dead female poet in *Meadowsweet*, possess a crown, and in both cases, flowers are seen on the front cover. These poems likely share such similarities in terms of physical appearance and spiritual attributes as the woman from the front cover of *Jizzen.*

Within the framework of hermeneutics, Pandora is not only collectively memorised as either as Hesiodic misogyny or the first female deity, who triggers the good and evil that afflicts the world, but she also denotes the mother-child bond, as a caretaker for family and for

the Earth itself (Kirk, 2013). Kirk (2012) adds that, by comparing her to Gaia, Pandora is also an Earth goddess with an accountability for animal and vegetative fertility. Equally, the meadowsweet is picked to decorate bridal wedding ceremonies in Gaelic tradition and, moreover, alludes to the Irish goddess Áine, the land-goddess, a guardian of animals and the environment (Kelly, 2023).

In terms of transcorporeality, nature itself has no gender segregation or sexual consciousness. A male human like St Kevin can also be intimately affiliated with nature, forest and animals, as exemplified in the poem *Prayer*. In Irish Catholic legend, St Kevin performs meritorious acts by stretching his arms and opening out his palms with "a bird of the hedgerow nesting there" (Jamie, 1999, p. 18, line 4) on his right palm and with the bird's eggs laid on his left palm (see Figure 3). Alluding to Irish Catholic belief, St Kevin symbolises the protector of animals and the image of opened hands brings to mind the recurring image of cupped hands explored above. In this sense, the hands of men in taking action to protect the earth and environment are indistinguishable from those of women.

Figure 2

St. Kevin Sculpture with Outstretched Arms and a Blackbird Perched on His Hand

Note. Sculpture by Timothy P. Schmalz (2020). Photograph retrieved from *Sculpture by TPS* website. (https://www.sculpturebytps.com/portfolio_page/st-kevin/). Copyright 2020 by Timothy P. Schmalz.

My underlying presumption from the design of the book cover is that the retelling of the story of Pandora, the picture of a dead poet reincarnated in the form of meadowsweet, with its Gaelic cultural context, and the citing of St Kevin are intimately linked together by Kathleen Jamie. She is seeking to echo the notion of transcorporeal interconnectedness between female and male human beings and other more-than-humans. This is reflected in the words in her diary in *London Review of Books* (2002):

> 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.
>
> (Jamie, 2002, para. 26)

Jamie's accentuation of Pantheism here is linked with the ancient epic narratives and the poetry in *Jizzen* acts as *an agentive force*. An agentive force of narratives does not only portray the realities of social injustice and environmental depredation, but also provides readers with a picture of the complex realities of nature-cultures and their networks (James & Morel, 2018). Drawing upon the idea of the turn of narrative into an agentive force, I propose that poetic narratives, akin to a prophesy, do not merely mirror reality, but are also able to predict ecological catastrophe and warn against it; the reality is that the loss of living species, uprooted trees, degraded and polluted lands, do happen before our eyes.

Jamie's resurrection of ancient narratives and creation of a dead female poet forecasts today's environmental crisis, a crisis shown clearly through the work of science. The data reveals that Human capital (HC) negatively affects natural resources in the form of fossil fuel rents, mineral rents, forest rents, and so on (Amoako et al., 2023). The excessive use of renewable, and even some non-renewable energies, can lead to depleted soils and a high rate of carbon dioxide emissions (Amoako et al., 2023; Güney, 2019). Anthropogenic environmental disturbance will lead to mass extinctions over the coming generations (Kaiho, 2023). The scientific data affirm the need for the existence of narrative agency to simulate *the Real* of environmental crisis.

Conclusion

The poetry in *Jizzen* (1999) must not only be read as a heart-warming recreation, but is also to be devoured as Romanticism in accordance with Jamie's Scottish ancestry and her motherhood. This paper has explored how

prevailing social norms and a specific cultural hegemony serve to subjugate both women and nature. While the analysis, drawing on ecofeminism, celebrates women's innate links with corporeality and nature, further investigation also renegotiated the movement by emphasising that ecological devastation and care of our planet are not necessarily gender-specific.

Alaimo's transcorporeality, coupled with the natural sciences, can supplement ecofeminism to provide more profound insights into the human relationship with the non-human. All things on Earth are inseparably and ineluctably codependent. This is what we can take from Jamie's words about salt-air and stars (micrometeorites) in *Crossing the Loch*, the human exploitation of natural resources in *Forget it*, and the indispensable function of microorganic cultures in all living beings in *Meadowsweet*. Finally, drawing on hermeneutics to show the social and cultural contextualisation of Pandora, St. Kevin, and other symbols represented in Jamie's selected poems, paves the way towards novel insights of biological and environmental truth that transcend the binary oppositions of male versus female, culture versus nature, and, especially, imagination versus reality. Pandora, St. Kevin, and the Irish goddess Áine take on the role of shaman, an agentive force, able to mediate between scientific reality and the imagination. These tales expose the undesirable fact that all mankind encounters environmental urgency in our contemporary times, underlining why ancient narratives about the human relationship with nature continue to echo into the present.

This paper, finally, affirms that Kathleen Jamie, in the collection of poems *Jizzen*, magically invites readers to recognise the equal role we all play in building a harmonious relationship with our home, Planet Earth.

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