

An Ecocritical Approach to Tourism in the
Writings of Kathleen Jamie

by

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Abstract

Kathleen Jamie is a Scottish author whose work often details her travels through both the “natural and unnatural world” (*Findings* 1). Previous criticism has examined her work in the context of nature writing and Jamie has suggested that she writes “‘toward’ the natural world” (“Author Statement”). Jamie also frequently represents herself as a tourist, travelling ‘toward’ different regions of the globe. I argue that Jamie’s writings as a tourist and as a naturalist are inextricably intertwined. The fusion of these two positions results in an approach that is self-reflexive and constantly reconsidering the limits of the human body in its connectedness to the world. Primarily, I examine the intersections between ecocriticism and tourism through an exploration of Jamie’s writings. I employ tourism theory, incorporating discourses of desire, imagination, and authentic connection, alongside ecological approaches that assess corporeal limits in the context of the natural world, and I do so to explore how the categorization of nature and culture affects our perceptions of other-than-human-world and the histories we write about it. I argue that her poetry and non-fiction map an ecocritical tourism that understands the complex dynamics of humanity’s failure to separate “the natural and unnatural world” as foundational to theories of ecotourism. This fusion of ecology and tourism maps an ecocritical form of tourism that reassesses the boundaries of culture and nature and, in doing so, emphasizes engagement, inquiry, and histories of shared vulnerability.

Lay Summary

This work examines the writings of Scottish author Kathleen Jamie in the context of ecotourism. Specifically, I analyze her recent writings through the theoretical frameworks of ecocriticism and tourism theory. In combining these approaches, I argue that Jamie's writing maps a form of ecocritical tourism that emphasizes the complex dynamics of failures in separating culture and nature as a starting point for examining how we travel through and engage with different ecosystems. This often takes the form of collaborating with other communities, such as those of scientists, and refocusing our attentions to the shifting boundaries between categories in order to broaden one's understanding of our relationship with and consider our impact on the other-than-human world.

Preface

This thesis is original, unpublished, independent work by the author, Corey Smith.

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I Introduction

Contemporary Scottish author Kathleen Jamie's writings detail her travels through the "natural and unnatural world" (*Findings* 1). Her most recent essays and poetry often depict her travels within Scotland and abroad, where she attends to both the 'natural' flora and fauna and the 'unnatural' apparatuses that facilitate her journeys. Previous criticism has examined her work in the context of women's writing, Scottish literature, as well as nature writing (Lilley 16; Marland 121), and Jamie has suggested she writes "'toward' the natural world" ("Author Statement"). I will argue that her poetry and non-fiction map an ecocritical tourism that understands the complex dynamics of humanity's failure to separate "the natural and unnatural world" (1) as foundational to theories of ecotourism. This fusion of ecology and tourism results in a self-reflexive tourist subject who is constantly reconsidering human limits in our connectedness to the "natural and unnatural world."

Ecotourism is one of the fastest growing sectors of the tourism industry (Fletcher 7). Its prominence and continuing growth invite not only a critical examination of how ecotourism affects communities and the environment, but also what ethical and philosophical considerations influence people to take part in ecotourism, as well as what epistemological shifts result from tourism and travel. In part, I assess Jamie's writing to develop an epistemological background to her form of ecocritical tourism that is sensitively attuned to the ethical dimensions of dividing human and non-human, as well as other dualisms, such as past and present, and home and away. I also look toward ecocritical discussions about "the end of nature" (Purdy 3) and the Anthropocene to contextualize Jamie's scrutinizing of the liminal spaces between the natural and unnatural. As contemporary ecocriticism, Jamie's writing and tourist activity involves querying

whether “there is no more nature that stands apart from human beings” and whether “there is no place or living thing that we haven’t changed” (Purdy 3). Jamie’s writings ask what it means to be an ecotourist, a “nature” poet, and a travel-writer in a “(post-) natural world” (Purdy 5) that is replete with “hybrids of nature and culture” (Latour 10). I also connect these forms of hybridity with disturbances of boundaries between success and failure with an ethics of “failing well” (Halberstam 24). Such combination raises questions such as how the tourist experience interrogates the authenticity of the natural or unnatural world as it is being experienced, as well as what ethical obligations one’s travels in these spaces calls for.

In terms of Jamie’s writing, ecotourism takes the general form of travelling to places away from one’s home and closely attending to the ecological relationships one can observe away from home. On the one side, ecotourism involves ecology, or the “study of biological interrelationships and the flow of energy through organisms and inorganic matter” (Snyder 5). But ecology also importantly extends to “other realms” (Snyder 9), such as those of language and technology, and an ecological framework that focuses on the interrelations between nature and culture is integral to studying Jamie’s work. One form of this interaction is literary ecocriticism, or “the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment” (Glotfelty xviii). Ecocriticism also involves an “interest in how the nonhuman interacts with human culture: how ecological conditions shape cultural expression and, conversely, how culture shapes the perception and uses of natural environments” (Heise 638). When combined with tourism, ecocriticism shifts into a consideration of how human’s travel and interact with the environment as well as with non-human others.

A working definition of ecotourism as well as a look into other existing definitions of ecotourism helps further contextualize my argument about Jamie’s writing and travel. Martha

Honey argues that since “no universally accepted definition exists” for ecotourism, “there is considerable overlap with nature, adventure, and cultural tourism” (76). An unsettled definition of ecotourism such as this suits the current project as it allows for an interrogation of where some of these demarcations between ecology, nature, and culture exist in the practice of tourism. One useful definition of ecotourism comes from The International Ecotourism Society (TIES). They suggest that ecotourism consists of “responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment, sustains the well-being of the local people, and involves interpretation and education” (“TIES Announces Ecotourism Principles Revision”). There are a number of salient features in terms of ethics and judgement in this definition and, although brief, it laudably proposes a consideration of people, places, and types of knowledge impacted by this form of tourism. However, there are also elements of this definition that deserve further scrutiny. How areas are designated as natural is a key concern for this kind of travel. Are natural areas merely those that are “fragile, pristine, and usually protected” (Honey 33), or should they encompass larger areas that may lack legislative protections? Should there be a consideration of migration routes of certain species that are prominent in the ecotourist imaginary, such as whales? Regardless of the many ways in which natural areas might be bounded, they are configured here as specific environments deserving of conservation and human care. This adds an ethical dimension to the discussion of ecotourism, and this aspect is furthered by considering the people who are affected by this form of tourism. The last section of the TIES definition addresses “interpretation and education,” and this is a key area for my study of Jamie’s ecocritical tourism. If ecotourism is based in hermeneutics, it is situated near literature and its analysis; and if it is based in education, it is fair to situate it in conversation with scientific perspectives on conservation and ecology, as Jamie does. At this point the TIES definition of ecotourism appears

increasingly indeterminate, but this broadening of scope is necessary to encompass the possibilities inherent in combining ecology and tourism. Ecotourism, then, is more of an orientation, one that bears responsibility and attentiveness towards the environment and humans' place within it, rather than a practice that can be narrowly defined. Jamie's travels and her documentation of them through inquisitive essays and poetry map and query the boundaries of this space. This perspective on the practice of ecotourism is instructive in discerning the ethical implications of tourism, whether it be formal or informal, but it primarily considers the side of the tourist as well as the other-than-human ecologies he interacts with rather than other human communities that are supported by ecotourism, although direct social impact is a vital consideration in many forms of ecotourism.

Ecotourism's ties to ideas about nature, wilderness, and authenticity also come under scrutiny throughout my exploration of Jamie's writings. Honey, analyzing contemporary ecotourism and sustainability, proposes that by the end of the twentieth century "nature had become a key ingredient in the tour industry, and ecotourism developed in part in response to demand for the kind of authentic experience that nature can provide" (Honey 11). This shift towards nature-based tourism is partly linked to claims of authenticity in tourism. Dean MacCannell argues that "in earlier times tourists may have gone in search of the authentic, but we are told that postmodern ("post-") tourists know better and delight in the inauthentic" (197). These two positions appear antithetical, with one suggesting that contemporary tourism has turned to nature and the authentic, while the other suggesting that postmodernism has inhibited tourists' ability to experience authenticity. With the addition of ideas of a post-natural world it appears that MacCannell's position is closer to the reality of tourist experience, yet Jamie's writing often stands between these two sides in its questioning of authentically experiencing

something that can be identified as nature.

Combining MacCannell's and Honey's positions is necessary when also considering formulations of a post-natural world. In *The End of Nature*, published in 1989, Bill McKibben argues that, through the massive changes in climate experienced due to increases in carbon dioxide as a result of human technology, "we are ending nature" (48). There have been numerous responses to arguments such as this in the following decades, and Steven Vogel strongly asserts that, in the wake of McKibben's work, "[n]ot only might nature the thing have ended, but the concept of 'nature' might be such an ambiguous and problematic one, so prone to misunderstanding and so riddled with pitfalls, that its usefulness for a coherent environmental philosophy will turn out to be small indeed" (96). The prominence of this idea of nature in ecotourism means the loss of the concept would surely alter any definition of ecotourism as a practice, yet questioning what exactly is 'natural' in studies of nature tourism and ecotourism remains unpronounced. In relation to ecotourism as something that directly engages with the natural world, ecotourism may appear as a parable of a return to wilderness, or 'getting back to nature.' However, William Cronon efficiently deconstructs humans' ability to exist in the wilderness, as our mere presence in such a place works to erode its definition, as both the wild (and frequently the natural) accrue meaning from the absence of human presence: "wilderness embodies a dualistic vision in which the human is entirely outside the natural" (17). Such contradictions become especially apparent in ecotourism, wherein an explicit goal of the tour is likely to involve escaping cycles of everyday, human-surrounded existence and entering into a wild or natural environment. Given the complexities of developing a tourist subject position that considers authenticity in relation to postmodernism and the natural world, a post-modern, post-natural ecotourist might question whether one should have left the house at all! While it is

fruitful to consider Jamie's tourism as straddling this dichotomy between the postmodern tourist who has given up on the possibility of authentic connection and the ecotourist who still finds a lone stand of authenticity in the natural world, to elucidate an ecotourist subject position it is more important to simply attend to the phenomenology of Jamie's travels. Her writing approaches her subjects with a degree of earnestness that often embraces the stochastic qualities of both nature and authenticity.

In order to examine conceptions of nature in ecotourist travel, Jamie offers a complex interpretation of the intertwined politics of nature and culture and re-envision some of the more quotidian experiences of ecotourism. It is also important to consider demography, and as the majority of ecotourists are typically "white, upper-middle-class, politically liberal/leftist members of postindustrial western societies" (Fletcher 3), Jamie's experience should be recognized as proximal to this sector of the industry. Such categorization is not to invalidate her experiences as somehow homogeneous, but rather to illustrate a possible caveat as well as to indicate how questioning this form of travel has implications for large sections of the tourist industry. Jamie's approach to ecotourism offers important insights into how one might engage in ecotourism while holding in mind the problematics of tourism as an industry, with its quest-like search for authenticity, as well as the issues of defining an authentic natural world. Studies from ecotourist host locations are also clearly important, especially in regard to the rights and treatment of the people who live and work in these places, and the intertwined state of the environment. Yet, rethinking the other end of ecotourist travel, that of the practitioner or tourist, is also important, and my study of Jamie's texts envisions an ecotourist gaze and its ethos from the perspective of the tourist that her writing and experience propagates.

Through my analysis of Jamie's travel writing, I argue ecotourism is a practice best

engaged in with a degree of failure in defining an authentic connection to the natural world. MacCannell suggests “the ethical demand, in part, is for tourists to discover ways to relate to their own subjective grasp of an attraction. Or, to their failures to understand” (7). In all forms of tourism in Jamie’s writing, she is attuned to the possibility of failing to understand or apprehend her subject. Rather than be wearied by such failures, acceptance of the inevitable failure of connection with the nonhuman precipitates Jamie’s writing about relationships between herself and her subjects, and in so doing, she explores the idea of “an ecological ethic” (Bate 11) through tourism. Through Jamie’s writings there is a way of viewing ecocritical tourism as a failure to return to an already undermined wilderness, and an acceptance of the provisionality of our place alongside the other-than-human. This is of vital importance important given the growth of ecotourism industries and developments in ecocritical theory. My research suggests a way of using Jamie’s writings to think about what is labeled as ‘ecotourism’ given how this wave of theory complicates questions of what constitutes nature and ecology.

Jamie’s writing maps a form of ecologically critical tourism that takes as its starting point a degree of failure in “authentically connecting” to the other-than-human world, and combines skepticism of the discursive solidity of the terms nature and ecology, with a place-based and pragmatic orientation towards sojourns into the world beyond one’s home. The possibility of failure meshes with the idea of Jamie’s writing straddling the ability to locate a true and authenticate wilderness via tourist experience and an inherent inability and failure to do so. Jamie’s ecotourism engages in experience of what is often a posthumous kind of nature, or something that is ideologically relegated to the realm of the natural, but that is continually pre-empted by human involvement. Throughout Jamie’s investigative essays and poetry, identifying wilderness or the natural always fails in creating separate categories, and this degree of failure

acts as an underlying ethos to her form ecotourism. However, this ethos does not necessarily relinquish the earnestness and care that can be evoked by conceptions of an unadulterated natural world.

My first chapter examines the foundational place of failure in attempts to tour the world in search of a nature, primarily one that is tied to ideas of spaces that are “truly wild or abandoned” (Jamie, *Sightlines* 134). Failure and obstruction appear as a repeated theme in these works, and I will begin this project by analyzing the essay “The Braan Salmon” and the poems “Blossom” and “Fianuis,” alongside conceptions of failure. If, “under certain circumstances failing ... may in fact offer more creative, more cooperative ... ways of being in the world” (Halberstam 2), it may also offer these benefits to ideas of ecology. With regard to ecotourism, one set of possible failures resides in whether personal experience can somehow connect humans to non-humans. Another related variety of failure arises in strictly denominating the natural and the cultural, as ecotourism involves encountering ecological webs that problematize these distinctions. In both essays, the original quest of locating a wild and remote ‘nature’ that is secluded from human civilization is destabilized by prior human involvement: the salmon’s attempts to climb the falls of the River Braan and a photographer’s attempt to represent their efforts as simply ‘natural’ have already been denatured, as the river serves as a hatchery and is actually impassable for the fish. Unlike the photographer who aims to capture the salmon in their ‘natural’ setting, Jamie asks what kind of poetics are necessary to observe the post-natural existence of the salmon, and not reductively depict them as a natural, wild alterity. Alongside “The Braan Salmon,” the poems “Blossom” and “Fianuis” produce a reading of failure that at once accepts insufficiency, foremost in defining and communicating with a non-human world, while aligning such failure with hope rather than despair.

What follows in section two is a consideration of the different phenomenological and technological responses to this acceptance of failure. What these kinds of failure entail is a slowing of pace and attending to phenomenological limits and where failures in connection, communication, and categorization occur. On the one hand, this slowing of pace takes the form of attending to the experience of perceptual limits. In “Aurora” the iceberg strewn waters of the Greenland’s fjords present a stymying of understanding and test the limitations of the bodies perceptual apparatus in their otherness. The response to this variety of failure is an engagement with scientific observation and its accompanying technologies. From the perspective of late twentieth-century ecocriticism, connecting ecology and poetry “usually leads to an indictment of an overtechnologized modern world” (Bryson, *Ecopoetry* 6). In contrast, Jamie’s writing engages scientific research as a form of inquiry into how we might incorporate scientific data and instruments into an ecological ethic. As a result of these interactions with science and technology, Jamie’s ‘nature writing’ becomes as much about the mediations that allow humans to come into contact with the other-than-human, as it is about the traditional subjects of the genre. “The Hvaalsalen” and “The Whale Watcher” further examine interactions between the ecotourist, scientists, and non-human animals, but they argue for the possibility of collaborative responses between researchers and the ecotourist in assessing shared vulnerabilities between humans and whales. “The Whale Watcher” continues to examine the precarious position of whale’s due to human’s actions, yet aims for an outlook of possible reparation rather than despair.

The final chapter of my project looks across a number of Jamie’s works to illustrate the diverse perspectives afforded by ecocritical tourism. “Wings Over New York” explores ecosystems that remain undisclosed to the tourist in an urban setting, as well as the uncanny

ability of ‘wild’ animals to make their home in such places. Together, these factors allow the ecotourist a different mode of perception even in the most traditional tourist environments. On the other hand, “Wings Over Scotland” looks towards ideas of home in formulating a political position for the ecotourist and examines ongoing collective failures in protecting species. Essays such as “Three Ways of Looking at Saint Kilda” and “Pathologies,” further destabilize the boundaries between wilderness and the domestic and enact a reversal of these two terms whereby the human body becomes an unfamiliar setting, while the Romantic wilderness of remote Scottish islands prove largely illusory. Lastly, a number of Jamie’s poems present the trope of the shoreline and the collection of “[m]aterials” (*Overhaul* 50) there to support a conception of the writer and the ecocritical tourist as a recorder of assemblages – one who sifts through the shoreline ecosystem, questioning steadfast categorizations that might separate humans from the other-than-human.

II An Ecotourist at Home: Wilderness, Tourism, and Metaphor in “The Braan Salmon,” “Blossom,” and “Fianuis”

In “The Braan Salmon,” Jamie visits the Braan River on her bicycle — this is not a far-flung tourist destination for Jamie, but something near her home. As such, it appears as somewhat removed from normalized beliefs about ecotourism, mainly that it takes place in another country, or somewhere foreign to the tourist. The proximity of this destination juxtaposes the role of metaphor in bringing ideas of the natural world closer to the ecotourist subject, and evokes a consistent trope that I explore through this essay, wherein metaphor repeatedly fails to domesticate the natural. In my analysis of this essay I look to define some of the philosophical considerations of how nature and culture are delineated in Jamie’s work, and how these relate to everyday experience and travel. I analyze “The Braan Salmon” so as to lay the groundwork for the ways in which the natural world both can and cannot be represented through writing in Jamie’s texts. Thus, the representational challenges of the ‘natural’ world comes to the fore in this essay.

“The Braan Salmon” also orients us to how Jamie confronts separations between ideas of culture and nature, or a lack of separation between the two, in ecotourist settings. This essay raises questions about what constitutes the ‘away’ of tourism, and points towards the paradoxical nature of ecotourism, insofar as the *oikos* or home of ecotourism must necessarily be a variable location that can be the river in one’s backyard, Nordic fjords, or a whale museum in Bergen, and that the necessary ‘tour’ can be a fairly local excursion. To constitute ecotourism otherwise sets a precedent that privileges energy rich modes of consumption in itself and impedes defining an ecology that one can interact with on a familiar basis.

“The Braan Salmon” presents a trope important to Jamie’s writings wherein the dividing line between nature and culture is revealed to be tenuous, and the incorporation of wilderness into everyday life through metaphor is problematized by this lack of distinction. Over the course of this section, I analyze the metaphors by which we understand the concept of wilderness in Jamie’s essay, as well as their repeated failure to accord to any binary conception of nature/culture. I also examine why the recurrence of metaphors that fail to work towards resemblance is important in shaping Jamie’s form of ecocritical tourism. Early on in her essay, Jamie attempts to identify the wild and natural through observation of salmon attempting to leap Black Linn waterfall on the River Braan, near Dunkeld, Scotland. In looking for a discrete separation between nature and culture, Jamie questions our ability to extrapolate life lessons from the nonhuman world. In this move towards personification and allegory, Jamie asks whether the salmon’s attempts consist of “technique, or pure ‘Ho!’” (*Findings* 62), and how these two forms of effort might translate to her own writing. The one form of endeavour here is technique or something aligned with craft and continued practice, while the exclamatory “Ho!” presents the converse, that is, inarticulate finesse unconcerned with strategy. While watching the salmon, she meets a photographer teaching a one-week photography class on “wildscapes” (62), and, with faint cynicism, ponders this concept:

Wildscapes. How to make a better photograph of the natural world. How to master all that technical stuff but make the image look fresh, natural, accidental even. How to employ all that technique expressly to make the result look natural, techniqueless. (62)

Such description readily carries over as comment, or more accurately, as precaution, on Jamie’s own practice of writing. Wild denotes its difference to human created “land” for the photographer, but such difference is figured ironically by Jamie. While the photographer’s

technical devices are effaced in images that appear ‘natural’ and unaccompanied by any instrumentation whatsoever, Jamie witnesses the mechanics of digitally capturing the fish. The mere presence of the camera means that “in that split instant of framing, the old culture-creatures re-emerge from their lair” (Schama 12) and any form of purely ‘natural’ photography begins to collapse. In the brief time that it takes to frame the photograph, the cultural frame creeps back into the equation, that is, and decisions of inclusion and exclusion undermine any ‘naturalness’ of representation, both at the level of technique and the representation of a world that is ostensibly removed from human culture.

Coextensive with this impossibility of natural representation in the photographer’s images of the salmon as well her own writing and teaching, any obscuration of human involvement around the habitat of the salmon also dissolves by the end of the essay. Jamie’s conversation with her neighbour about the salmon attempting the falls reveals her own investment in the heroic myth of the salmon and the human interventions that affect the fish and make such myths inaccurate: “It’s a wonder any of them manage it at all, I said. “They’re so . . . heroic. Do any of them just fail,” and her neighbour responds by informing her that, “none of them clear the falls. It’s deliberate. It’s not a natural salmon river” (64). With this revelation, the comparison of the salmon’s efforts to those of humans becomes fundamentally inaccurate, not due to a lack of resemblance, but due to prior human intervention that undermines the entire comparison — their practices and survival are more closely tied than any previous metaphorical connections suggested. This begins to establish a common practice in Jamie’s essays wherein metaphors are generated and then pushed to their representational limits, which leads to a focus on the aporia between referents rather than resemblance.

Returning to Jamie’s neighbour’s revelation, the salmon on the Braan become another

instance where the environments or animals “that we suppose to be most free of our culture may turn out, on closer inspection, to be its product” (Schama 9). For the salmon, it is not a matter of “technique or ‘ho!’ (63) that dictates whether or not they make it up the falls because their close ties to humans, due to the establishment of hatcheries upstream and the impasse of the falls, means that they already have a storied relationship to the human’s watching them. As such, any lesson for photographing or writing (or simply living as a human) fails to carry over information from a removed natural world to that of the cultural. The ostensibly wild is undercut by the realization that what initially appeared as separate from human involvement is actually deeply connected to it, and this realization facilitates the undermining of allegorical connection to nature. In “The Trouble with Wilderness,” William Cronon succinctly articulates this paradox wherein “wilderness embodies a dualistic vision in which the human is entirely outside the natural” (17). It follows that “if we allow ourselves to believe that nature, to be true, must also be wild, then our very presence in nature represents its fall” (Cronon 17). This directly relates to the irony of the “wildscape” that Jamie points out previously, where artistic representation means the natural and cultural become intertwined. In “The Braan Salmon” the idea of wilderness critiqued by Cronon is compromised at the level of representation, where human depiction means “wildscapes” are not so wild, and that of the salmon themselves, whose existence is one already in negotiation with humans through hatcheries, dams, and other human factors.

A major influence on the ‘wild’ connotations of the River Braan is that of Romanticism, and this historical lens inflects the way Jamie and those she encounters experience the river. The Romantic view is inscribed in the cultural imagination of the place, and just as Wordsworth found in nature the “the guide, the guardian of my heart, and soul” (Wordsworth 111), the photographer in “The Braan Salmon” asks if Jamie’s visit to the falls will “replenish the soul”

(61). Wordsworth's idea of nature as a sacred site remains prominent in the cultural landscape of ecotourism that Jamie travels. In this view, wilderness figures as a place removed from the city, and as a result of this separation, as a place of revitalization. In short, the Romantic view inscribes an environment that is dominated and thus degraded by the human, or a nature that is wholly removed from the human world and thereby rejuvenating.

In informational tourist guides to the River Braan there are similar allusions to the Romantics, and Jamie attempts to negotiate her experiences of the place with more sublime conceptions of nature. The Dunkeld and Birnam Tourist Association directs visitors to "follow in the footsteps of notable visitors of the past including Wordsworth, Mendelssohn and Turner as [they] wander around this magnificent designed landscape with it's [sic] dramatic natural features" (Dunkeld and Birnam Tourist Association). These more conventional tourist instructions combine the eighteenth-century tropes of the picturesque and the sublime to attract visitors. They also reinforce a traditional separation of nature and culture. The "magnificent designed landscape" beckons tourists to come and witness a moderately human-sculpted environment, which is sprinkled with "dramatic natural features." Further, their list of historical visitors constructs the site as one of cultural importance in relation to Western artistic tradition. Such cultural importance helps tame the wildness of the place, yet the suggested importance of the area to Wordsworth and Mendelssohn simultaneously argues for a sublime wilderness. Interspersing elements of the River Braan that go to support its wilderness with those that testify to its cultural capital may begin to disclose that "the concept of wilderness . . . is entirely a creation of the culture that holds it dear" (Cronon 79), but in Jamie's essays wilderness is not considered entirely illusory or merely a social construction.

In comparison to Cronon, Jamie asserts that there is some form of wilderness which does

indeed exist. Though “The Braan Salmon” focuses on revealing the implications of attempting to identify a wilderness that is wholly different from humans, it still suggests there are possible ethical benefits to retaining the concept of wilderness:

They say the day is coming — it may already be here — when there will be no wild creatures. That is, when no species on the planet will be able to further itself without reference or negotiation with us. (65)

While Cronon critiques the idea that there is a wilderness that stands apart from human culture, Jamie proposes that there are, or have been, wild creatures, and that all of wild-nature will come to refer to or negotiate with humans at some point. At least initially, one side of this is about aesthetics — representing other-than-human nature, and one is about ethics, “when our intervention or restraint will be a factor in their continued existence” (*Findings* 65). Jamie appears to believe in some form of wilderness due to the ethical dimensions it can encompass, and Cronon makes a similar concession, stating that “wilderness teaches us to ask whether the Other must always bend to our will, and, if not, under what circumstances it should be allowed to flourish without our intervention” (Cronon 23). For both, defining wilderness determines the timing and orientation of interventions in the other-than-human world. However, in Jamie’s formulation the day when wilderness disappears seems difficult, if not impossible, to determine, as the day of its arrival is uncertain, and it *may* have already occurred whilst we have no way of certainly knowing. For Jamie, the primary way of coming to understand where wilderness resides is in the scrutiny of an extant wilderness that is never locatable, or in the failed delineations of the domestic and wild.

Later in “The Braan Salmon” there is a re-uptake of the salmon’s inevitable failure as

another kind of allegory for the everyday, but this allegory of the salmon's failure is also a metaphor about the failure of allegory. Although this appears tautological, it is an important step in Jamie's acknowledgment of the failure of translating other-than-human lives into parables for humans. Although this instance is another attempt to extrapolate a life-lesson from the ostensibly natural salmon, here the metaphor is characterized by resignation:

Not survival of the fittest, as the photographer had thought, but the survival of the ones who give it up as a bad job and settle someplace quiet. A small life in the suburbs.
Salmon wisdom. (65)

Though the salmon are diverted from a metaphor of wilderness and evolution to one of domesticity and suburbia, the crux of Jamie's allegory is in the shared resignations between human and salmon. This form of resignation and failure also applies to the metaphor itself, where it is no longer positioned to answer the grand question of "technique or 'ho!'" (63). Instead, it settles on tentative and partial correspondence — not landing with hubristic precision at the urban epicentre, but accepting a degree of distance from its referent. Alongside the previous failure of linking humans to non-human animals, there comes a new lesson which carries a certain tentativeness and consideration of failure that accounts for the prior human involvement in the salmon's lives. If metaphor is "the place where words put their authority at risk, implicitly confessing their inadequacy to the task of re-presenting the world" (McKay 85), "The Braan Salmon," and many of Jamie's writings, ask what function their inadequacies play in our repeated return to them.

With mind to the previous failure of linking humans to non-human animals, there comes a new personifying lesson that carries a certain tentativeness and perspective on failure that

accounts for prior human involvement in the salmon's lives. At the end of the essay there is no closure as Jamie ponders the seals and the salmon's ability to locate the stream where they spawned, but notably, the essay does not end with allegory: seals make a "housewifely *wa-wa-wa*" (67), but they do not project any particular message at the end of an essay that repeatedly sought to allegorize the salmon's behaviour. There is personification employed here, but it is not interpreted — it is open-ended and allows for aspects of failure, rather than just resemblance, to inhere and come to the forefront of metaphor. Asserting "our inability to commune, to be a community with nature" (Mackay 90), the seals bear a resemblance to the sounds of maternity and domesticity, but any message or dicta is left hermeneutically unresolved. Instead, what we are left with is "an ongoing mortal collectivity, an unstable, disordered engagement with creatures who we cannot fully know" (Mackay 90). This form of chaotic engagement with an unknowable yet intimate other-than-human world is gestured at in "The Braan Salmon," but becomes a repeated theme throughout many of Jamie's texts, and I return to this formulation of connection later when analyzing Jamie's essay "The Hvalsalen."

To clarify the valence of failure in discussing ecotourism and metaphor, I next examine two of Jamie's poems that orient these kinds of failures towards a degree of hopefulness. "Blossom" and "Fianuis" are two poems from *The Bonniest Companie* and each addresses ideas of failure and insufficiency in measuring up to a formulation of the natural world that lies tenuously out of reach from humans. Though my project here is to problematize how we travel through ecologies and think about the natural world, I find that "Blossom" and "Fianuis" modulate failures in connecting to 'nature' with hope rather than despondency. This is to say that although my discussion of Jamie often focuses on elements of failure, I also identify a somewhat heterodox metric of failure that finds positivity in the transience and an ultimate inability to

communicate with an other-than-human world.

“Blossom” begins with a speaker who chastises themselves for their own lack of initiative in setting out to see the world, and this perspective is immediately at odds with tourism writing. It is a poem that ponders the impetus for travel rather than detailing any outer world. Midway through the poem, the speaker questions, “How many May dawns / have I slept through, / the trees courageous with blossom?” (6-8). Whereas with each year’s spring the trees are out in blossom, seemingly in celebration and unison with other plants and animals, the speaker and their “laggard soul” fails to “leap at the world’s touch” (5-6). Rather, with the assonance present in “many May dawns,” the speaker is portrayed as a slumbering figure who fails to embark on any kind of tour or experience the world around them. The speaker perceives a disconnect between the human soul and the rest of earth’s inhabitants which easily accord with seasonal rhythms, and there is no point in the poem, unlike some ecological poetry, where “the human speaker ... merges with the whole of nature to the extent that the speaker and her world are barely distinguishable” (Bryson, *The West Side* 90). Instead there is always a fractious contiguity that stresses dissimilarity rather than a human speaker who is able to speak from within or for the natural world. The poem ends with a reference to Daniel 5:27, wherein the speaker finds that:

I shall be weighed in the balance

and found wanting.

I shall reckon for less

than an apple pip. (10-13)

Though the poem ends with a message of want, lack, and insufficiency, with the first couplet

magnifying this deficiency to draw a comparison with King Belshazzar, the final couplet reframes this lack in terms of the natural world and emphasizes the comparison through the repetition of “I shall” and the repeated indentation in lines 11 and 13. The speaker’s lack appears as enduring and of biblical proportion, but it leads into a hopeful representation of the mundane vegetable realm: the speaker suggests the seeds of an apple tree will weigh more in the scales than themselves. There is an element of self-reprobatation here, yet it also accords with Judith Halberstam’s proposition that, “under certain circumstances failing, losing, forgetting, unmaking, undoing, unbecoming, not knowing may in fact offer more creative, more cooperative, more surprising ways of being in the world” (2-3). While the speaker fails to be as brave as the May blossom or the pip that leads to it, their lack is one that invests in the capability of the apple blossom and begins to establish a different metric of failure.

In “Blossom,” the failure of human will in comparison to even the smallest seeds aggrandizes the endurance of flora and the natural world, but “Fianuis” (38) counteracts this movement and further establishes that “this is not poetry as the song of the earth, or of a revelation of dwelling, but as a stymieing and troubling of communication” (Mackay 91). “Fianuis,” a poem named after a peninsula in the Hebrides, ends with lines that allude back to the previous poem: “Listen: a brief lull, / a rock pipit’s seed-small notes.” Both seeds and pipit are reminiscent of “Blossom”; however, these instructions come at the end of a poem about the transience of shoreline, “the land’s frayed end.” The “frayed end” of coast the speaker walks along establishes the liminality of the setting, and the rest of the poem focuses on the ephemerality of the place as well as the broader significance such settings might have on our lives:

Change, change — that’s what the terns scream

down at their seaward rocks

fleet clouds and salt kiss —

everything else is provisional,

us and all our works. (38)

While the speaker in “Blossom” is found wanting in the balance in comparison to an apple pip, “Fianuis” reclaims the small, quotidian, and ephemeral. It also returns to a “troubling of communication” (Mackay 91), where knocks on the bull seal’s skull go unanswered as “no-one’s home.” What is audible in the environment at the end of the poem is the “rock pipit’s seed small notes”— a small, fleeting piece of information. Returning to “Blossom,” being found to be wanting in the balance in comparison to an apple pip becomes not entirely about the speaker’s inadequacy in experiencing nature, but about a fleeting, not-entirely satisfying communication that is never commensurate with an other-than-human world— it always contains deficiency and a degree of failure. The terns decree of “change, change” presides over the contents of “us and all our works” (38), as much as over the other inhabitants of the peninsula, and any union between alterities is dictated by this overarching character of ephemerality. Although this perspective is derived from a closer trip than what is more readily identified as ecotourist travel, its proximity to home, as a physical place as well as a concept, is essential in examining Jamie’s tourism. To relate this back to the divide between wilderness and civilization, we can return to Cronon who suggests that “we need to discover a common middle ground in which all of these things, from the city to the wilderness, can somehow be encompassed in the word ‘home.’” Home, after all, is the place where finally we make our living” (Cronon 24). Home becomes slightly paradoxical in Jamie’s ecocritical tourism, as it involves taking ideas of home into the

world recognized as apart from it, but this is of vital importance when thinking about how humans engage and relate to the ecosystems we deem both home and away. Jamie cultivates a hopeful consideration of diverse and occluded perspectives in the strandlines and streams near her home, but she also transports this perspective into her more distant travels and her experiences with the technologies of international travel.

III The Ecotourist and the Whale: Perceptual Limits and Histories of Shared Vulnerability in “Aurora,” “The Hvalsalen,” and “The Whale Watcher”

In this section I look at two essays and a poem to explore embodiment, perceptual limitations, and articulating a shared history with non-human animals. In “Aurora” (Jamie, *Sightlines* 10) I examine the limitations imposed on the tourist by the human body itself. When wind and temperature inhibit experience of the surrounding environment the body becomes a site of investigation and also illuminates larger epistemic limitations. Here I discuss “Aurora” as an explicitly touristic trip, and look at how Jamie perceives the relationship between the body, technology, and the environment. In confronting the alien-appearing icebergs of Greenland, Jamie discusses the technologically and scientifically mediated experience of a tourist subject. This mediation involves relying on others, and this reliance is further examined in “The Hvalsalen” (Jamie, *Sightlines* 97). With a retreat indoors, the museum in “The Hvalsalen” acts as a site of ecotourist investigation and a place to consult scientist experts. In learning their stories and perspective on relationships with the other-than-human world, Jamie begins to craft a collaborative response to failures in conservation and experience, which involves an exchange of ideas about how refurbishing whale bones becomes a way of articulating their histories. Such articulation is set against the historical backdrop of whaling, and this is where the poem “The Whale Watcher” begins. I analyze this poem by explicating its relationship to precarity and the possibility of hope and reparation amidst the threat of extinction.

In the first essay of *Sightlines*, “Aurora,” Jamie travels through the fjords of Greenland. She recognizes herself and her shipmates as tourists, having left their everyday lives for an

excursion to view the extraordinary: “There’s about a dozen of us, from Europe and North America, tourists, ... getting to know the world a little, if that’s what we’re doing, such is our privilege” (12). Jamie is tentative in her evaluation of the tourist subject and questions whether this excursion is a viable way of coming to know the world. She is also upfront about the privileged character of such a voyage, and throughout the trip continually questions what might be learned on such an endeavour, or what kind of meaningful interaction might take place between tourist and environment here.

If a tourist’s travels are spurred by the desire to reach an imagined place, and the “other of tourism is the destination, an *other place*” (MacCannell 11), then the northern fjords indeed present an otherness of place for Jamie. For her it is “a whole new world, a world with ice” (10). The icebergs that dot the ocean are a large part of what creates this foreignness for Jamie, and to her their “shapes and forms are without purpose, adapted to no end. They are huge and utterly meaningless” (15). They appear bereft of any kind of human utility, and thus outside what characterizes humanness and even evolution. To bridge this disconnection, Jamie attempts to translate the icebergs into the realm of human experience: “They appear ahead, one after the next, conveyed from a great manufactory” (14), or as “a preposterous cake, with ink-blue shadows” (16). Both of these metaphors lend the icebergs utility, as any kind of utility would be more familiar than their perceived lack of purpose. In *Arctic Dreams: Imagination and Desire in a Northern Landscape*, Barry Lopez notes a similar account of the northern environment, where the “physical landscape is baffling in its ability to transcend whatever we would make of it” (Lopez, xix), and the “white nihilism” (16) Jamie sees correspondingly defies metaphorical relation. Despite Jamie’s attempts to incorporate them into a framework of the familiar, they are ultimately “preposterous,” and she detects “nothing but colossal, witless indifference” (18).

However, one connection Jamie does forge with the icebergs relates to climate science.

Although the icebergs appear impervious to human senses and technology through her senses, Jamie notes how she “float[s] on the surface of knowledge, too. Of climate science, for example,” and how scientists in Greenland are talking samples from deep inside glacial ice, “bringing the deep past out of its silence, waking it up to ask it about change.” Her knowledge of climate science merely floats on the surface, much like the icebergs themselves, and it is only through “people who crawl about on glaciers, measuring speeds and surges, and the calving of icebergs” (25) that she can begin to know them. This also relates to their preposterousness, where, etymologically, they contain a temporal paradox of both before and after, and, counter to their “lifeless,” “meaningless” appearance, their relation to deep time reveals much about the present and how, as a fellow traveler suggests, “[t]hey are changing without moving” (20). That is, through scientific research into the ice itself and mirroring the aurora, Jamie has glimmers of understanding about the ecology of the north. However, this also stresses the layperson aspect of Jamie’s role as tourist while on this trip, and, though privileged in her ability to travel here, she is not privy to in-depth information about the environment. This inhibition of knowledge is reinforced by the limitations of her body in such an environment.

When confronting the “mineral silence” (13) of the Greenland Sea, Jamie notes how “some people say you can never experience true silence, because you come to hear the high whine of your own nerves” (14). Rather than enable listening, the body’s sense organs are in conflict with their function and result in a failure to perceive the environment rather than facilitate perception. While “Jamie’s investigations are ... often either mediated through the body or use the body as the source of investigation itself” (Bell 131), the tourists embodied perspective is inherently limited, and, when “wind and cold become unbearable” (16), Jamie’s

observations centre on these retreats and limitations. In doing so, they also assess what Don Ihde refers to as “embodiment relations,” or perception that “may be materially extended through the ‘body’ of an artifact” (Ihde 40). In “Aurora,” the main forms of perceptual extension are through the ship, which protects the tourists in the cold climate, and the “glowing green instruments” (21) of the bridge that facilitate their navigation, and mirror the shades of the aurora borealis above. In terms of arctic voyage, such technologies of navigation and transportation “are the means by which the explorer-scientist extends the range and amplifies the sensitivity of his normal bodily perceptions” (Bryson, *Visions* 49). Yet Jamie emphasizes how she is not an “explorer-scientist.” Her role as ecotourist is important in how she absorbs and relays information in this setting. She works with the technologies of the ship and benefits from the crew’s understanding of GPS and other navigation systems, but she is not equipped with a thorough understanding of them. We can return to Jamie’s admission of her cursory understanding of climate science and see how there is a link between an ecotourist epistemology here that accepts a degree of unknowability in the comprehensibility of their subject. Jamie says she is “not necessarily comfortable with having a place, a vast new landscape, mediated by guides, but it’s how it is. I wouldn’t last five minutes alone here, in the cold and the ice” (24). Her experience of ecotourist travel in the north becomes a meditation on epistemological limitations more broadly, for instance in relation to global warming, where the “nonlocal” (Morton 47) character of the phenomenon ensure it is inherently difficult to pinpoint. Acknowledgment of such limitations gestures at vulnerability, to both the environment and to gaps in knowledge that are difficult to fill even with mediation, yet acknowledgement of limitation does not come to mean resignation. This theme of vulnerability also becomes a prominent in “The Hvalsalen,” wherein Jamie’s interaction with scientific experts begins creating a history of shared vulnerability between humans and whales.

The narrative of “The Hvalsalen” begins with an act of turning around and revisiting. This essay from *Sightlines* details a trip Jamie takes to the Hvalsalen, or whale hall, at the Natural History Collection in Bergen, Norway. The Hvalsalen houses a large collection of whale skeletons acquired throughout the nineteenth century during a boom in commercial whaling. The essay begins with Jamie’s initial visit to the Hvalsalen, where she peruses the whale skeletons by herself, noting that “[i]n the way of old-fashioned museums, there was next to nothing in the way of explanations or information” (99). Given this lack of information, the essay’s narrative unfolds only after Jamie finds that “the *presence* of all those whales’ bones ... had got under my skin, so to speak,” and she proclaims, “[t]o hang with it, turned and went back in” (100). The effect of the whales lingers for her and hint at an insufficiency in her first walkthrough of the whale hall. She signals these lingering effects by making a pair of puns that play on idioms, where the bones wryly ‘get under her skin’ and persist in her memory, while the fact that the skeletons actually hang in the museum doubles as a statement of her spontaneous decision to return. Her visit could have ended with a lack of information and connection to the community of whale bones and the people who work preserving them, but in revisiting, turning around with this pair of puns that begin to assert a humorous discordance of her presence as a writer among the whale skeletons and scientists who appear more at home here, Jamie embarks on a more replete experience of the Hvalsalen. This act of reconsideration leads to one of my central arguments concerning Jamie’s written account of the Hvalsalen: that it is an indoor counterpoint to outdoor ecotourism and gestures towards the possibility of the musty museum being as integral to ecotourism as outdoor activities such as whale watching. This more tame, curated, and contained experience of the whales appears removed from the kind of wilderness expressed in seeing whales “breach up out of the water, ‘spy-hop’ to see what’s going on in the upper world”

(110). In this departure from what is generally considered ‘ecotourism’ there may appear to be some kind of failure, something akin to what the speaker of “Blossom” asserts in failing to experience the outside world. However, with this apparent lack of information and knowledge there comes a proliferation of imaginative opportunity and on her return to the Hvalsalen Jamie encounters the head of osteology at the museum and another scientist who eventually invite her to come back the following spring to observe a group of conservationists work on the whales while the Hvalsalen closes for renovations.

In her return to the Hvalsalen there is a confrontation of previous failure in order to deepen one’s understanding of a particular relationship with the non-human world, and the narrative of the essay is built around this doubling back. This return attests to a certain kind of praxis that informs Jamie’s travel and writing: by returning, Jamie connects directly with the scientist-conservationists at the Hvalsalen and acquires a richer understanding of the efforts going on there. One perspective Jamie gains from the conservationists is their regard of whales: “Later, over tea, I asked the conservators if they thought of the objects they were working on as animals, or objects. ‘Animals,’ they said. They were all of a mind” (112). Though long dead and distanced from the height of industrial whaling, the bones of the whales have a lingering animal “presence” (100) in the whale hall.

Norway, a country central in industrial whaling of the nineteenth century as well as modern whaling after its rejection of the International Whaling Commission’s moratorium on whale hunting, is also a key destination for whale watching. While Norwegian tourist websites such as visitnorway.com suggest “the welfare of the whales is a top priority on our tours,” the site makes no mention of the history of whaling. This absence is comparable to greenwashing, or a misrepresentation of the practice as more environmentally responsible than it may be, and it

makes Jamie's essays that cover whale watching in the oceans and in the museum vital. In an examination of the connections between whale hunting and whale watching, anthropologist Katja Neves suggests that "while the potential damages of whale watching may seem trivial in comparison to the damages of whale hunting, the important issue it raises concerns the fetishization of ecotourism as conservation practice" (727, emphasis in original). Neves goes on to use the concept of metabolic rift, derived from Marx's *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, to trace the continuities between commercial whale hunting and whale watching; in Neves's usage, metabolic rifts in relation to cetourism (cetacean tourism) are the disruptions to dynamic ecosystems due to human investment. Certainly, hunting whales is not the only way to adversely affect their habitation of the oceans, and whale-watching clearly has the potential to disrupt many facets of a whale's life. For example, Neves also uses past research to argue that the concentration of vessels involved in certain whale-watching practices could involve enough auditory output to disrupt whales' echolocation abilities and thus interrupt their ability to procure food (730). Neves goes on to link the practice of whale-watching to a shift in market conditions when the petroleum industry replaced oil derived from whales, rather than just a shift to a more environmentally responsible understanding of the relationship between whales and humans. Jamie makes similar historical connections when she notes how "a century ago" the young men guiding their tour "would have been the very men putting out with the whalers, out of Stromness and Stornoway, to get themselves locked up in the Arctic ice. Now, for a fee, they were showing the whales to us" (*Findings* 146). Neither Neves nor Jamie is attempting to disparage cetourism outright in these instances, but rather to identify possible assumptions and over-estimation of ecological responsiveness that ecotourist business attaches to whale-watching. Overall, Neves points to a mainstream belief that whale watching equates with conservation

indubitably, while in reality this is not always the case. This lack of awareness results in the continued fetishization of whales as a specular commodity, and this is one of the primary links between whale-watching and whale hunting.

Each of these activities, though separated by time and degree of violence, both bring about “the conceptualization of ‘nature’ as a bountiful pool of resources that exist either in the form of material resources or, more recently, in the form of services that are meant to satisfy human needs” (Neves 726). These economic ties between whale hunting and cetourism strongly direct contemporary perspectives to consider the intertwined history of humans and whales even in seemingly benign activities such as whale-watching. A view of sperm whales from the deck of a boat in Norway may easily neglect to account for the degree of historical trauma humans have inflicted on nearly every species of cetacean over the past two-centuries, and effectively reduce them to an attraction who “visit the Norwegian coast every year, showing off for tourists and locals alike” (*Visit Norway*). Jamie’s writing is not devoid of an appreciation for watching whales at sea, and in order to account for different perspectives of cetourism, it is important to consider these kinds of experience before returning to the embedded histories of humans and whales in the Hvalsalen.

“Cetacean Disco” is a short-essay from Jamie’s collection *Findings* in which she describes going on a whale watching tour in Tobermory, Scotland. While on the ocean, the group sees a pod of white-sided dolphins, a first for this whale watching operation, and an unidentified whale — Jamie refers to the sight as a “cetacean disco,” and, once the engines on the ship are stopped, she writes how “a great silence fell, like the silence of the beginning of the world” (147-8). This experience of cetourism is here more aligned with the overtly positive and voyeuristic experiences promulgated in ecotourist advertising, yet the sublime grandeur of the whales

conjured in the “great silence,” like that of creation, is tempered by the phrase “cetacean disco” (147-8), which is nearly bathetic in its shift from erudite and taxonomic to the popular and colloquial. Bathos, however, is a fitting term as it etymologically relates to depths or sinking, and rather suits a discussion of the deep-diving, discoing whales. Kitschy descriptions of the whales like those found in advertisements for whale watching trips that speak of “life-altering experience[s]” and “reports of tourists leaving the scene in tears” (*Visit Norway*) are not entirely separate from Jamie’s accounts of whale-watching, and this overlap is a shared point of experience between Jamie’s practice and conventional, market-driven ecotourism. Although Jamie alludes to an unabashed grandeur of whales similarly to how ecotourist advertisements do, it is back at the Hvalsalen where her methodical interaction with whales and their history informs her understanding of whales and whale watching. Her experience with conservationists and researchers encompasses another side of her understanding of human-whale relationships. In the whale hall, the whales with their “lingering presence” (100), come into being as assemblages of human interaction with cetacea over the course of human history and as an inalienably non-human other whose history extends back into evolutionary time before recorded human histories.

One aspect of the whale-as-assemblage in the Hvalsalen is the re-articulation of their bones through human engineering and the synecdochic relationship this has with the history of whaling. Nearly as important to some of the researchers at the Hvalsalen as the whale bones themselves is the metalwork that holds the whales together. One conservationist, who first conveys his interest in bone by relating that “Bone is my passion, a beautiful material, a wonderful material” (107), goes on to speak about his excitement around the human-built components of the preserved whale skeletons:

Yes. I love metalwork, too. Archaeological metal, especially iron. And these chains –

look at them! It's part of the thing – it's like the whales were giants that had to be restrained. They're all handmade – all hand-forged. ... The way I see it, this Hvalsalen is a monument to the whales – their only monument – but it's testament to those working men, too. (111)

Firstly, the way the essay contains this conservationist's comments is important, as is the element of reportage the non-fiction format of Jamie's writing allows for. Through the essay form, we see the researchers' perspective and how it is informing Jamie's personal understanding of the whales and the Hvalsalen itself. This investigative essay format allows for Jamie to write about what the whale bones come to mean to her personally, as well as give voice to the researchers who work in this space. It also establishes an investigative and interpretive framework for the ecotourism Jamie undertakes here. Returning to this particular conversation, the conservationist's interest in the metalwork that now holds the whales' skeletons aloft gestures towards a long history of using whale products. At the height of whaling in the nineteenth century "whale oil was the petrol of its day, ... [and] whalebone was its plastic" (Hoare 206). The ubiquity and familiarity of whale products, something Jamie accidentally touches upon by suggesting the bones smell of "wax crayons," to which a researcher responds that they were "probably made of whale oil, ... [m]ost things were" (106), belies the whale's rather alien presence suspended in the museum. Both the human work that went into assembling the whale skeletons and the bones themselves reside in a liminal space between familiarity and foreignness — with "scant records" of how the whales arrived at the Hvalsalen, their presence here remains a "mystery" (110-1).

The conservator's concern for the working men that constructed the Hvalsalen at first reads as a possibly anthropocentric perspective, with its outlook focused on human ingenuity in the face of cetacean atrocity; yet, the clearly dedicated researcher elucidates a deep-seated

interest in human-whale interaction as opposed to adopting a one-sided view of this history. For the conservationist, it is through the study of materials that this relationship unfolds. Rather than vilify those who fitted the whale skeletons together into the Hvalsalen, the conservationist's profound interest in both bone and metal, joint materials in an industrial whaling enterprise that often mistreated both humans and whales, seeks to establish shared points for repair in the relationship between humans and whales. Anna Tsing writes of assemblages as "open-ended gatherings. They allow us to ask about communal effects without assuming them. They show us potential histories in the making" (Tsing 23). Her analysis of matsutake mushrooms and the complex ecological and economic webs they give rise to marks an excellent study of the way in which ecologies are sometimes counterintuitive (matsutake only grow in disturbed soil, and forests with human activity such as logging are places where they are most fecund), and how the relationships that grow out of them can be equally surprising. In "The Hvalsalen" the assemblage of whale and human, of bone and metal, raises just such questions about the effects of whaling on both communities and offers a glimpse of how conservators are in a position to mediate "potential histories in the making" (Tsing 23). In the space that Jamie and the researchers construct to literally repair the whale skeletons, there is care for the "animals," which the bones of the dead whales represent for the conservators, while also empathy for the humans that brought about "'waste' and 'slaughter' and 'holocaust'" (112) for most cetaceans.

Such connective work as Tsing's formulation of assemblages via the study of matsutake is reiterated by the perspective that Jamie forms in her work with the researchers at the Hvalsalen. The conservationists who spend their time at the whale hall use "the word 'sympathetic', too, as in 'a sympathetic repair'. They were concerned for the future, about carrying things into the future in a fit state" (113). Conservators and archaeologists at work in the

Hvalsalen have a difficult task set for themselves in their “repair” work. Part of the difficulty is evidenced by Jamie’s questions concerning conservation work generally: firstly, she asks a conservator whether “they think the whales will ever really recover?” (115) and, at the end of “The Hvalsalen,” asks another conservator, “[h]ow clean [do the bones] have to be ... ?” (120). Jamie notes the naiveté of the questions almost as soon as she asks them, but rather than excising the naivety from the story it is retained and instructive. Both questions centre on limitations: on the one hand, have whale populations been brought to a point below the limit of their sustainability and recovery? And on the other, when is conservation work ‘finished,’ when will the bones be in a ‘fit’ state? The naive position for both these questions is derived from the fact that there are no easy answers to either question, and Jamie’s guess is nearly as good as the researchers and conservators.

The whales' current state is distant from their previous life in the oceans as well as the museum of the nineteenth century. Their existence is entirely mediated here by their relationship (however unjust) with humans — the metalwork and plastics that fuse their bones together, and the cleaning of the conservators does not return the whales to any kind of previous state, but can only be an anthropically defined “fit state” (113). Determining what a fit state might refer to is another slippery slope that raises the question of whether this fitness is simply for voyeuristic consumption or some other metric. In its absolute construction, *fittest*, the phrasing recalls pseudo-Darwinian terms such as survival of the fittest, and indicates that discussions of ‘fitness’ can easily lapse into destructive programs rather than those of conservation. Yet Jamie attunes her writing to a message of hopefulness against the bleak backdrop of historical injustice: “Sympathy and future concern, up amongst the great dead whales” (113). She largely adopts the perspective of the scientists and researchers who are working in the Hvalsalen but tempers this

with a glance towards the possibly Sisyphean nature of the task. While the conservators must work with toothbrushes and other small, household instruments to clean the massive bones, any project that aims to protect whale numbers in the oceans will confront similar issues of scale.

Against such grim odds, signs that tell museum goers to “not touch the animals!” appear futile, and Jamie responds by noting how “[s]ometimes our species beggars belief” (120). Human hypocrisy is brought into focus here, as is a human desire to remove the traces of our violent interactions with whales and focus on the few who are left in the oceans that might superficially appear untouched by human violence. But this focus is a kind of myopia, one wherein a view of pristine wilderness greenwashes over violence and calamity. In the essay, it becomes largely left to the conservators working with their bones, rather than official historians, to weld together a potential history between whales and humans that accounts for atrocity and leaves the possibility of future remediation open. As “arbiters of so many fates,” the stories humans create out of the whale bones need to be attuned to the conservators’ ethos of “sympathetic repair” (113). It is this possibility of repairing a relationship while considering the shared vulnerabilities of human and non-human animals that this essay ends with and it is where “The Whale Watcher” begins.

The poem, “The Whale Watcher” (Jamie, *The Tree House* 25) directs us back to the perspective of the particular while suggesting a way of embedding some of the concerns of “Aurora” and “The Hvalsalen” into an ecotourist outlook. Primarily, “The Whale Watcher” presents a speaker who confronts the precarious existence of species, while still attending to the possibility of reparation. This is another shoreline poem, much like “Fianuis,” and I assess it while considering futural perspectives and skepticism. In “The Hvalsalen” the conservators are concerned with “sympathetic repair,” and “The Whale-watcher” orients itself similarly, where a

speaker looks outward for whales on the horizon:

having watched them

breach, breathe, and dive

far out in the glare,

like stitches sewn in a rent

almost beyond repair. (25)

While “The Hvalsalen” presents the conservator’s “sympathetic repair,” this poem transports us to a scene that is “almost beyond repair.” While it serves as counterpoint to the optimism found in the collaborative historicism and concern in “The Hvalsalen” and incorporates the possibility of failure to a greater degree than the essay, “The Whale Watcher” is not entirely pessimistic.

The poem begins “And when at last the / road gives out” and the ocean begins, but it also contains connotations of the end of civilization and something closer to apocalypse, which the last stanza revisits. The end point of road and a situation beyond repair both gesture at some sort of eco-apocalypse, and if this is only for whales in the poem, they can certainly be understood as a portent for human life as well. “Continuing mass extinctions, growing toxicity in many global systems, and intense pressure on habitat diversity,” and the whales’ imperilment here, serve as “reminders that environmental politics is as much an ongoing failure as it is a success” (Purdy 255). That is, any politics derived from interactions with whales certainly needs to acknowledge a large degree of ongoing failure in conservation and protection. Further, although cetacea serve as an excellent, if tragic, example of ocean toxicity and extinction, instead of merely symbolizing

failure in the poem, they also come to stand for a prospective vision that looks towards the possibility of repair on the horizon.

Beginning the poem with “And,” makes the conjunction indicative of events that preceded it, which, although absent from the poem, allow the history of what has come before to exist in the reader’s mind. However, this consideration of the past becomes important when examining the actions and future-directed outlook of the speaker. The speaker “holes up,” taking some refuge on the shore. Yet, instead of fragments shored against ruins, the speaker peers outward despite improbability and uncertainty. This uncertainty is conveyed by the speaker’s reluctant “willing[ness],” as well as the aleatory connotations of “deal[ing]” themselves in to return to gazing at the sea. It is also reinforced by the poem’s somewhat sporadic rhyme-scheme, where only three of the four the stanzas have rhymed lines. Nevertheless, such uncertainty is the normal mode for whale-watching, as sightings of whales are inevitably unpredictable and typically ephemeral when they do occur. In the past tense of “having watched them,” we are given a glimpse into previous sightings and the possibility that the whales may reappear. While their “breach, breathe, and dive” offers a window into the little we can see of them normally, the repetition of plosives gestures both at the auditory experience of witnessing the whales, and a repetitious and thereby continued past existence — their long period of dwelling in this place. Their existence “long before we appeared” (Jamie, *Sightlines* 120), is contrasted by the indefiniteness of their return: they are “far out in the glare,” near the limits of our perception, and have only been sighted in the past.

It is only in these past sightings that the whales appear “like stitches sewn in a rent / almost beyond repair,” and their present status is even more precarious. The simile at once conveys the uneven but essential role the whales have in a vision of remediation, as they

themselves are the stitches integral in repairing a connotatively violent “rent.” These factors emphasize the precarious position we exist in with other animals, wherein “[p]recarity is a state of acknowledgment of our vulnerability to others” (Tsing 29). “Aurora,” “The Hvalsalen,” and “The Whale-watcher” each stress human vulnerability as well as other-than-human vulnerabilities, and the need to work on the histories we develop with other species. “The Whale Watcher” focuses on precarious or uncertain vision, and uses the uncertainty of whale sightings as a metonym for the precarity of species more broadly. The poem suggests uncertain futures and, along with the previous essays, questions how to determine a just relationship with other beings when our past actions are unjust and when translating human ethics to the non-human world is inherently incomplete. From this perspective, the ecotourist’s outlook becomes inflected by “environmental imagination,” rather than just a desire to reach a place marked as other. Here, imagination can be understood as “how we see and how we learn to see, how we suppose the world works, how we suppose that it matters, and what we feel we have at stake in it” (Purdy 6-7). “The Whale-watcher” becomes about questioning how to remedy relationships that suffer from violent historical injustices and how to look towards collaboratively rewriting histories while defining what stakes or investments humans and other species share.

IV The Many Worlds of Ecocritical Tourism

Concepts developed throughout this project apply across a number of Jamie's poems and essays and illustrate the breadth of concerns embedded in Jamie's ecotourism. A nuanced and multi-perspectival view of ecocritical tourism becomes discernable throughout her writings and travels amidst this variety of environments. In this section, I look at essays and poems such as "Wings Over New York," "Wings Over Scotland," "Pathologies," and "Materials," from across Jamie's different collections, to suggest the range of ecotourist possibilities present in her work. I examine continuities in perception enabled by critical ecotourism across these different texts to suggest they refocus tourist attention to ecological elements of travel in places we might not expect and thereby suggest a shift toward political activism at home as well as epistemological changes towards collaborative histories.

"Wings Over New York" and "Wings Over Scotland" are a pair of poems twinned in name and both appearing in *The Bonniest Companie*. Unlike the typical tourist points of New York, "Wings Over New York" locates an ecotourist perspective within the most populous city in the United States. The poem is set in Central Park and depicts a Red-tailed Hawk first "pecking at a polythene bag," and then as it "plunges head down" after its talons becomes tangled in the plastic. Meanwhile, onlookers display their complacency in immediately shifting the "gasps" of the conversation about the bird's endangerment back to the normal register of migration and seasonality: "*Where they nestin'?*" / ... "*I heard on Dakota, this year,*" as if the bird had not just nearly fallen to death. From the free-fall terror of "— dreadful winged pendulum —", to the filmic redemption of "it frees itself and soars," to the common musings of "*Where they nestin'?*," the hawk's brief narrative mirrors reactions to environmental imperilment

more broadly. For instance, rapid transitions like these illustrate a tendency to revert back to undifferentiated perception and conversation rather than remaining focused on scenes of ecological destruction and violence. Pointing to such shortcomings is not necessarily a criticism of the conversation overheard, but serves as comment on difficulties we have in accurately capturing and attending to such scenes. Something uncanny also resides within the sidewalk conversation that Jamie relays: although Dakota might normally evoke the Dakota states or something more geographic, in the context of New York it refers to the heavily mediated Dakota building, which is notable as the home of John Lennon at the time of his murder and the building used in the 1968 film *Rosemary's Baby*. Contrary to the incongruences between nature-watching and ecotourism on one side, and cultural touchstones and urban areas on the other, the red-tailed hawk is a permanent resident of New York, and its ecosystem comes to include the human culture which surrounds it.

In a study of Red-tailed Hawks in central New York it was found that “Red-tailed Hawks can propagate under these human-made habitat conditions just as well as in non-urban habitats” (Minor 437). Further, certain Red-tailed Hawks are famous in this metropolis. Pale Male, named for his atypically white plumage, is a Red-tailed Hawk who has resided at 927 5th Avenue since the early 1990’s and has numerous books and documentaries on his life. In December 2004, Pale Male and a mate garnered “world fame and advocacy when their nest was unceremoniously dismantled by the building’s co-op board” (McCully 142). Research and activism of these kinds both suggest the close connections between Red-tailed Hawks of New York and the cultural landscape of city, and even tend towards acculturating them to the point where they resemble the celebrity citizens whose buildings they share. Withstanding this incorporation, Jamie depicts a hawk at a point of dire conflict with the city and its manufactured character, its polythene bags

and concrete structures. In the poem, the hawk's life is imperiled directly by the human elements of its environment, while, ironically, human structures literally support its nest and facilitate its propagation.

Above the "American Natural History Museum" is where the hawk's entanglement and fall occurs, and this setting introduces some of the different temporalities in the poem that depict the birds of Central Park as both integrated into the urban fabric of the city and at odds with it. While travel writings may "differ in the kinds of temporalities and time experiences they depict" (Korte 49), Jamie's poetry embeds several different temporalities, including evolutionary time, human history, as well as the futural, into its depiction of urban ecotourism and birdwatching. As the Red-tailed Hawk falls in real-time, the "American Natural History Museum" directs us towards the possibility of extinctions and threats to species along evolutionary timelines. The museum underneath the falling hawk ironically indicates the already precarious position for many species and for some their sole resting place. This is further emphasized by the troubled scene with the hawk. Issues with temporality and pollutants are also brought up by the "polythene" bag the hawk becomes entangled in. Plastics such as this bag present "very large finitudes" and like "[s]tyrofoam cup[s]" that will outlast any currently living human "by over four hundred years" (Morton 60), the bag that endangers the hawk serves as metonym for other human-created pollutants that will exist far into the future. With its plummet from the sky near Central Park and its outer environment of dense urban life, the hawk presents a number of environmental problems in relation to the time and space of the ecotourist.

There is a complex interplay between time and space in "Wings Over New York" wherein the Red-tailed hawk is both at home and an uncanny resident in the city. Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of the chronotope, "the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial

relationships that are artistically expressed in literature” (84), which he developed to talk about the novel, also applies to ecology, insofar as it may “direct our focus onto [the] environment, and in particular onto the concrete, physical spaces in which the action is situated” (Müller 98). In Jamie’s poem, the hawk exists on a different temporal scale than the urban space which it inhabits, and this separation, that between culture and nature, is signified by the natural history museum. The museum acts as an artificial temporal box which holds in suspension certain ideas about nature, mainly that it is removed from culture and the realm of the museum. Above the museum the ecological drama of the hawk’s current existence unfolds, and uncanny or *unheimlich* are apt words for describing its life here: it is a species that has become just as successful here as in any environment freer from the effects of humans, yet will inevitably appear as displaced from its ‘true’ home in the wilderness. However, there are clearly still hazards in the city, and the hawk becomes both at home and endangered in this ecosystem. Further, the different temporalities in which it is entangled also hint at a precariousness peculiar to wild animals who become permanent residents in cities. Like the removal of Pale Male’s nest in 2004 and subsequent inability to breed fledging hawks for a number of years, the hawk’s attunement to an urban environment may be quickly upended or sent into free-fall by an all too common polythene bag. The rapidity with which humans can alter their environments becomes of vital importance for non-human species who cohabitate with us.

A strange mix of urban environment and animal life is also conveyed in the last stanza of the poem and it suggests the impossibility of separating one from the other. This configuration stems from a conflation of the sounds of the city and bird sounds:

At the pond side hop hermit thrush,

fox- and swamp-sparrow

and elsewhere in the Ramble

sounds a tiny NYPD siren

— a starling, high in a red oak. (21)

At first, through the repetition of plosives ‘d’ and ‘b,’ and iambic meter, the visual of the “hermit thrush” hopping onomatopoeically mimics the sounds of a thrush. Here, the thrush appears settled in the environment without giving any indication of the urban surrounding of the poem. Yet, all this occurs in “the Ramble,” which is a primary feature of Central Park that consists of a woodland walking route through a variety of topographies. It acquired this name through the definition of ramble, which refers to a walk for pleasure and without set destination, but ramble, as a verb, also suggests unsystematized, digressive thought. Such digressive or excursive thought and movement accords with tropes of the birdwatcher’s walk where throughout a walk the speaker maintains their “desire to see (or hear) a bird while making the most of the experience and what the experience makes possible: a chance for introspection, ... an opportunity to reflect on such desires, a realization that there is more than one way of knowing, of being in the world” (Mason xiii). “Wings Over New York” makes accepting other ways of knowing somewhat inescapable, however. Sounds of a “NYPD siren” and “a starling” become indistinguishable by way of the poem’s lineation and a long dash in the final line of the poem, effectively blurring the natural and mechanical through the imitative voice of the starling, a bird who frequently mimics other sounds. Within this auditory ecosystem, the speaker’s experience is one of aural confusion and a thorough inter-splicing of the birds and the urban environment. The poem leads us to confront some other ways of being due to our inability to parse the cultural and the natural in our

aural environment.

The poem stresses this environmental focus and an inability to systematize the natural and the cultural even in a densely populated and highly touristic urban environment. In effect, the poem acts as something of an antidote for a particular kind of tourist attention — one that examines only the buildings, galleries, and the cultural touchstones of a city. It suggests the possibility that all the tourists in the city are in effect ecotourists, while some are merely less attentive to certain ecologies they are interacting with. As such, it proposes a less anthropocentric tourism and emphasizes how even in the places where non-human animals seem to have little import, their existences here are more replete than we may expect, and that a greater consideration of them requires attention given to different elements of complex ecosystems that include more than just humans.

While “Wings Over New York” examines the kinds of attentiveness that can create an ecotourist perspective in a markedly urban setting, “Wings Over Scotland” posits a political position for the ecotourist. “Wings Over Scotland” incorporates concerns from the previous poem but, in its integration into the concept of home, it becomes a resolute and acerbic rebuke to a collective failure to protect bird species or prosecute those who break laws meant to protect them. In this sense, it directly confronts our ongoing collective failures and resolutely aligns itself with a type of environmental politics.

As a response to the imperiled hawk in “Wings Over New York,” Jamie appears to take political action in this poem from the “Homespun” section of *The Bonniest Companie*. The title implies homely, rough-hewn, and simple qualities, but also shifts into a more tragic register when accounting for legal failures in the places we call home and where an individual might

have the greatest degree of judicial agency. The poem is a list of thirteen cases of either missing or killed birds on Scottish sporting estates with each adhering to the following format:

Glenogil Estate: poisoned buzzard (Carbofuran).

No prosecution. (51)

We are presented with the estate on which the bird was found, the cause of the bird's death, including the specific toxic agent in parentheses, and the outcome of the cases, with "No prosecution" appearing ten times throughout the poem and in bold font each time. The poem itself is a radical departure from the poetry Jamie normally writes in terms of both its overt politics and its eschewal of any kind of lyricism. It is also assembled from the reporting of a website on raptor persecution in Scotland, and narrative details are mostly replaced by a mimesis of raw data. In particular, the specific listing of each toxic agent, such as "(Carbofuran)," "(Chloralose)," and "(Alphachloralose)," starts to accumulate details with a pathologist's focus. Cataloguing an array of similar incidents while desisting from direct comment furthers this investigative approach and begins to assemble a collection that parallels that of a museum space similar to that discussed in "The Hvalsalen." However, such curatorial work is clearly politicized in the poem. Each bolded "[n]o prosecution" abandons impartiality and emphatically argues against the injustice of the hunting estates killing raptors to protect their game-bird interests, as well as a legal system that allows them to continue to do so without prosecution.

Nevertheless, this is a complicated and regionally specific issue that involves a long history of bird shooting in the United Kingdom. Raptors are seen by gamekeepers as a threat to the thousands of pheasant, partridge, grouse, and ptarmigan that create a lucrative shooting industry on such estates. There are also arguments from this side of the industry that suggest

field sports and the estates they occur on “conserve important habitats that are required by quarry species” (Oldfield et al. 531) by creating incentives for private landholders to maintain woodlands and prevent forest fragmentation. Jamie’s poem does not attempt to settle this complicated issue, but catalogues a series of illegal killings of raptors in the area and the persistent problem of their lack of legal consequences. In a sense, this poem proposes a form of environmentally active politics that takes as its starting point an engagement with and attention to ecotourism: while in “Wings Over New York” the speaker of the poem is largely a bystander who can merely attend to the ecological perils of human interaction with avians, in “Wings Over Scotland” the speaker has regionally specific knowledge and is able to advocate against unjust practices in the region. Yet in both instances it is an attentiveness to the often perilous interaction humans have with other animals that act as impetus for writing.

At the end of the poem we are left with one of the more ambiguous entries from the collection: “Glen Esk: / Disappearance of sat-tagged red kite. / No other transmissions or sightings of bird” (51). Technical language like “sat[ellite]-tagged” again suggests a kind of investigative detachment and a speaker who is reporting data rather than presenting a single narrative. This leaves open a number of possibilities for interpretation, but, the poem’s overall organization as a collection of findings means it “does not just solve problems or fail to do so: even in ‘failure,’ it is a forum for questions that we cannot yet resolve, but can at least give more definite shape” (Purdy 252). Correspondingly, the fact that this bird of prey has disappeared rather than been found dead makes the poem about a continued failure but not one without the possibility of change. It enables an articulation of our unjust interactions with nature, while also questioning how we define what the ‘natural’ elements of our environments are. It also questions the prioritization of some elements of ecosystems over others. As in “Wings Over New York”

this might take the form of an ironic yet tragic process of museumization, where non-human species are sequestered to another time and space removed from the contemporary while other forms of nature are still threatened in nearby environments. Reading the poems conjointly enacts both this series of questions about our shared failures, and the possibility for making juridical and attentional changes, both at home and away.

With an initial shift into another work of Jamie's with a pathologist's focus, I here analyze a number of Jamie's poems and essays to gesture at the variety of forms her ecocritical tourism takes. Her essays "Pathologies" and "Three Ways of Looking at St. Kilda" speak to the redirections of focus that an ecotourist perspective enables, and a number of her shoreline poems elucidate a concept of the assemblage, much like Anna Tsing's, that works against precise and stable categorizations in a way that resembles the liminal environments they depict.

Whereas the focus on pathology in "Wings Over Scotland" defines human damage inflicted upon non-humans in clear and mobilizing terms, in "Pathologies," Jamie's role as tourist and writer returns us to the importance of metaphor, but also to the instability of categories such as wild and domestic. After attending a conference "about humanity's relationship with other species," and hearing talks that exhort her to "reconnect with nature" (*Sightlines* 30), Jamie tours a hospital's pathology lab with a professor and asks questions about where exactly this 'natural' world can be found. When looking at a piece of someone's removed colon, she first sees the "surface was pale yellow-brown, and ribbed like a beach at low tide" (34), and concludes that, "[i]t was a natural artefact alright, but far from elegant, and if I hadn't been told I couldn't have said whether it belonged to an aquarium, a puppet theatre or a bicycle repair shop" (34). In this setting, our organs are relatively unknown to us as laypeople, and perhaps more foreign, defamiliarized, and uncanny than much of what we encounter when we

travel to see other places. They also become very difficult to categorize, and Jamie admits that based on sight alone she would not be able to place what environment this strange item belonged in. Further, like travel itself, the view when examining a sample of liver tissue under a microscope allows admittance into “another world, where everything was pink” (37). From this perspective Jamie is able to look “down from a great height upon a pink countryside, a landscape.” As a search for other worlds, Jamie’s ecotourism often aims at breaking down the borders between what might be normatively viewed as a wild place or, conversely, a domestic one. It is through such a lens that our human interior, our organs and most intimate spaces, becomes a veritable wilderness, “another world.” Reversals of wilderness and domesticity such as in “Pathologies” suggest the breadth of Jamie’s ecocritical tourism and also suggest how it is not beholden to ideas of nature that involve rugged, uninhabited landscapes – this form of ecotourism is critical in locating the ecosystems it explores and seeks to challenge how we locate and define wild and natural.

Certainly, Jamie’s writing responds to the idea that contemporary tourism drives the “traveller deeper and deeper into the wild, into extreme landscapes in which nature’s overwhelming power is on full display” (Zilcofsky 197). It is not that her writings fully disagree with such sentiments, but they often erode the idea that spaces “deeper into the wild” truly exist, at least insofar as these are defined as wilderness that stand apart from humanity. In “Three Ways of Looking at St Kilda,” Jamie’s travels to the remote Hebridean island of St. Kilda initially seeking something quite similar to what the aforementioned ecotourist seeks, somewhere “an adventure could unfold,” or an experience that enables one to “taste an untamed grandeur” (*Sightlines* 130). However, such guidebook rhetoric never lasts long for Jamie “because nowhere is truly wild or abandoned” (134), and she eventually finds the Romantic, deserted St. Kilda to

have a radar base on top of it and many researchers at work on the island, as well as a long history of human habitation. Eventually, she comes to view the island through a perspective derived from four archaeologist-surveyors as she helps them measure GPS coordinates of traditional stone structures on the island. This redirection of focus towards archaeology and “careful recording,” much like that of the scientist-directed microscopic perspective in “Pathologies,” produces “a wholly different way of looking at St Kilda.” Whereas “[a]lone, [she’d] have rushed around, thrilled but hampered by a kind of illiteracy, unable to read the land” (153), the researchers’ vision presents a different kind of reading and literacy that proposes an alternate way of coming to know a place, yet, it importantly is one that is also open to laypeople. As within “Pathologies” and “The Hvalsalen,” this redirection of focus is accessible, as Jamie does not have any particular scientific training, and is governed more by chance and openness to experience than cordoned off by scientific knowledge itself. This accessibility again returns to Jamie’s own mode of inquiry that often challenges divisions between the layperson and the scientist, and makes an argument that they can work in tandem to inform one another’s perspective.

Questioning and redefining such boundaries is at the centre of Jamie’s practice as a writer and as an ecotourist. The trope of the seashore, which appears in many of Jamie’s writings, is essential to this orientation. Many of her shoreline poems enact an ethos of the assemblage in defining their own ecopoetics. In assembling sets of “[m]aterials” (*Overhaul* 50) and “[f]indings” (*Findings* 1), her writings often alight from failures to discretely categorize different entities and move towards more expansive ontological categories as well as an acceptance of the ephemeral qualities of categorical distinctions themselves.

The poem “Materials,” which appears in *The Overhaul*, records an ecological narrative that is grounded in recycling. In the poem, “[s]craps of nylon fishing net” are looted from ocean waves by gannets and taken to “colonies so raucous and thief-ridden, each nest / winds up swagged to the next.” Eventually the birds depart, leaving the cliffs “swagged” or festooned in plastic waste, and “wearing naught but a shoddy, bird-knitted vest.” This is a narrative derived from the aggregate of shoreline trash, but also an ephemeral one. The poem negotiates a shoreline of contemporary garbage that is constituted of objects perceived to be transient and largely valueless to humans after their initial use. “[S]craps of nylon fishing net” are objects of modernity and of ubiquity: they have become devoid of unique narrative, all sharing similar properties and stories of production. However, the ostensibly worthless refuse of the waves is valued by the gannets as well as the speaker of the poem. In doing so, the speaker denies the possibility of uncovering single narratives in the shoreline landscape and deconstructs the binary of value between worthless refuse and valued artifact. With this revaluing, the poem depicts a continuous coastal assemblage where multiplicities of fragments are perpetually reworked. It is in such an ecosystem and ecologically oriented poem that we might see how, “[i]f categories are unstable, we must watch them emerge within encounters,” as well as how using “category names should be a commitment to tracing the assemblages in which these categories gain a momentary hold” (Tsing 29). Anna Tsing’s formulation of categories applies to much of Jamie’s writing, but “Materials” in particular stresses the momentariness of such encounters, where different entities interact and emerge as an identifiable ecosystem, as well as the shared histories that may be produced by way of attending to these productive encounters.

Such shoreline findings fundamentally inform Jamie’s poetics where there is an emphasis on ephemeral assemblages that cohere into categories only briefly. “Arbour” is set in “a garden

shanty, / knocked together out of driftwood and furnished / with a beat-up sofa” (*Bonniest Companie* 22). However, this human-crafted structure resembles Jamie’s own poetry and the poem self-reflexively comments on its own poetics, as it aims “to cultivate the strandline’s / take-it-or-leave-it attitude.” The poem examines its role in depicting a momentary selection of an ecosystem and its own place within it. “Fianuis” also has a speaker who is “sauntering the last half-mile to the land’s frayed end / to find what’s laid on for us, strewn across the turf” (38). Each of these poems emphasizes the stochastic character of the shoreline and suggests that categories might only be ephemerally useful as they are determined by what is found on a particular day: “gull feathers, bleached shells” (38), “a bit o’ bruck” (*Overhaul* 50). Chance findings that hover between intentionality and contingency go to determine categorization, and in such systematics even plastics might be a significant part of the ecosystem, as in “Materials.” Together, this collection of poems and essays questions how we travel through and interact with these other worlds, how we go about organizing them, as well as how we write their histories.

These hybrid portrayals, the assemblages of shoreline materials of which Jamie writes, accord with her idea that “the role of the poet is not to be political but shamanic (it’s the only word I can think of), mediating between various worlds and bringing messages back and forth between them” (*Dósa* 142). This position might read as contrary to the political stance she adopts in “Wings Over Scotland,” but even in such poems Jamie is always evaluating the shared vulnerabilities between ourselves and alterities, and re-adjusting our focus to locate other worlds that we may not normally attend to. Even her writings that take place near her home or that take the human body as its subject become a form of travel writing. More precisely, this form of travel writing is ecocritical tourism, as it examines the tenuous borders and liminal spaces

between nature and culture, wild and domestic, so as to locate unexpected ecosystems that often interweave the two in order to reveal unforeseen shared histories and vulnerabilities.

Each of these poems and essays take place at the junctures between nature and culture, understanding and inscrutability. They attempt to “let space open / between word and world” (*Bonniest Companie* 31) rather than adhere to a singular epistemic model; they aim to do this, in part, by emulating the world they depict, “striving to cultivate the strandline’s / take-it-or-leave-it attitude” (22) and accepting the ephemerality of category distinctions. However, the acknowledgment of striving rather than attaining, of a degree of failure, takes precedence here. For the ecocritical tourist, writing becomes a place to pause and consider difference, to record and reflect upon where our attention is focused, and to consider the intertwined nature of our histories with the other-than-human world as well as our shared vulnerabilities. At each of these steps, failure is a possibility. What Jamie’s ecocritical tourism asks for is a pause at these sites of disconnection, a consideration of responsibility, and an acceptance of the provisional.

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