

Spring 5-2014

# Scottish Nostalgias: Evocations of Home in the 1990s Poetry of Carol Ann Duffy, Jackie Kay, and Kathleen Jamie

Kathryn A. Ailes

Bates College, [kathryn.a.iles@gmail.com](mailto:kathryn.a.iles@gmail.com)

Follow this and additional works at: <http://scarab.bates.edu/honorsthesis>

---

## Recommended Citation

Ailes, Kathryn A., "Scottish Nostalgias: Evocations of Home in the 1990s Poetry of Carol Ann Duffy, Jackie Kay, and Kathleen Jamie" (2014). *Honors Theses*. 105.

<http://scarab.bates.edu/honorsthesis/105>

This Open Access is brought to you for free and open access by the Capstone Projects at SCARAB. It has been accepted for inclusion in Honors Theses by an authorized administrator of SCARAB. For more information, please contact [cbell@bates.edu](mailto:cbell@bates.edu).

**Scottish Nostalgias: Evocations of Home in the 1990s Poetry of  
Carol Ann Duffy, Jackie Kay, and Kathleen Jamie**

An Honors Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of English

Bates College

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

Degree of Bachelor of Arts

By

Kathryn A. Ailes

Lewiston, Maine

March 21, 2014



## Table of Contents

Acknowledgements.....	ii
Abstract.....	iv
Preface.....	v
Introduction.....	1
Chapter I: The Limitations of Language to Describe Homesickness in Carol Ann Duffy’s Poetry .....	17
Chapter II: Imagining Biological and Cultural Origins in Jackie Kay’s Poetry, Fiction, and Memoir.....	62
Chapter III: To Cherish or Dump the Relics in our Land? The Poems of Kathleen Jamie.....	101
Conclusion .....	136
Bibliography .....	141
Appendix A: Poems Referenced.....	157
Appendix B: Further Reading.....	161

## Acknowledgements

First, I owe sincere thanks to my advisor, Rob Farnsworth. Rob, you have been so supportive throughout this entire process, nudging me along when I needed to be pushed and challenging me to perform at the highest level. I am so grateful for your support and for the faith you placed in me. Your passion and curiosity for poetry have inspired me to delve deep into poems, and your classes taught me how to truly read a poem on multiple levels. Thank you so much for guiding me through the thesis process and for reading the pages I sent your way and providing helpful feedback.

Thank you to Lauren Vedal and Misty Beck. Lauren, your critical eye and articulate advice on my drafts helped me to see the big picture. Misty, your calm presence and encouraging words at Thesis Café were wonderfully reassuring.

Thank you so much to the professors and poets on my Honors Defense panel, Betsy Sholl, Robert Strong, and Laurie O'Higgins. I truly appreciate your reading this thesis critically and convening to discuss it with me.

A special thank you to Joanne Cole and Therí Pickens. Joanne, thank you for the invaluable writing training I've received through you as a Peer Writing Assistant; your cheery encouragement and clear advice often came to mind as I wrote and edited. Dr. Pickens, thank you for taking me on as a Research Assistant last summer; the skills I learned from you were very helpful as I took on the massive endeavor of researching these poets, and the high standard you set for my work helped me take it to the next level.

I owe a huge thanks to my wonderful parents, Shirley Dodson and Rich Ailes. Mom and Dad, your steady, loving support and guidance has boosted me; you always made me believe I

could achieve anything. Thank you for reading to me as a kid, supporting my travel to Scotland, and always being by my side for the adventures I take on. Mom, thank you for your eagle-eyed proofreading of this thesis. Dad, sorry again for taking over your napping couch with mountains of thesis books over breaks—thank you for graciously allowing me to camp out there.

Finally, thank you to my friends for your camaraderie and encouragement. And a special thank you to Conor Smith: I couldn't have done it without your patient, kind, and generous support.

## Abstract

This thesis examines the themes of nostalgia, memory, and displacement in the 1990s work of Scottish poets Carol Ann Duffy, Jackie Kay, and Kathleen Jamie. Each of these poets has emigrated from Scotland—Duffy and Kay permanently, Jamie temporarily—and consequently they associate Scotland with the past and childhood and express displacement from a sense of cultural belonging. Their poetry presents Scotland dually, juxtaposing idealized, clichéd memories and traditions with the physical reality of Scotland’s geographical space and material artifacts. They negotiate the double estrangement of female Scottishness, partially due to their shared experience of maturing during the rise of feminism and the movement towards devolution culminating in the establishment of the Scottish Parliament in 1999. Their poems test the capacity of language(s), including English and Scots, to embody the intense experience of both personal and national nostalgias. Duffy, who moved to England in childhood, portrays Scotland—and the notion of “home” itself—as intangible, dreamlike, and lost. Kay’s genre-bending, autobiographically-generated work painfully grasps for biological, cultural, and national origins, and emphasizes the Othering power of racism. Jamie’s writing inquires whether Scottish culture should submit to nostalgia and hoard its relics, or cut tethers and dispose of outdated customs, traditions, and objects. Drawing from poetry collections as well as novels, essays, and memoirs, this thesis undertakes a comprehensive analysis of these writers’ meditations on Scotland as “home” and provides a timely study of Scottish cultural identity given the current movement for Scottish national independence.

## Preface

As children, many of us have a firm and rooted sense of “home.” It is our house, our family, our sense of comfort. But the inevitable process of leaving this place and progressing through the world estranges us from this sense of belonging. Emigrating away, be it twelve minutes or twelve thousand miles, often provokes in us nostalgia and a sense of conflicted identity. This narrative is simple and virtually universal. However, for many, the concept of home is complicated by political crises and deeper issues of exile. What happens when one’s childhood home is not safe, or never existed as one physical space? What happens when one is forced from her land, rejected by her government; or, conversely, compelled to remain in that place for longer than she desires? What happens when a person is not recognized as a legitimate native of her country?

The concepts of home and identity are intimately connected: the act of claiming a place as one’s home carries with it cultural, political, and historical baggage that one must either assume or reject. The poets I discuss in this thesis all have contentious relationships with their homes due to emigration, estrangement, frustration, and love. They defend their identities as Scottish women while critiquing that nation’s culture, politics, and social norms, and illustrating the complexities of their claim to Scotland as a country of origin. Reading their work, one feels the pain of displacement and the sting of nostalgia coexisting with pride, joy, and curiosity around the very idea of home.

I came to this thesis through a similar experience of displacement, origin-searching, and exploration. In my junior year at Bates, I studied for a term in Edinburgh, Scotland. In the four months I spent there, I grew fascinated with Scottish culture; or rather, the multiplicity of its



cultures. Shortbread and whisky, haggis and heroin, tartan galore, legendary loch monsters, and William Wallace (or a blue-faced Mel Gibson): it is a nation that has been romanticized to a caricature, and I as an outsider was trying to find the genuine within it. Like Kathleen Jamie, I was a traveler exploring, shaping, and claiming my personal identity as it butted up against a foreign culture; I was suddenly the Other and found myself needing to articulate my identity as an American citizen. For me, this meant trying to explain the 2012 Sandy Hook shootings to my friends from Scotland, where the police do not carry firearms, and attempting to rationalize U.S. foreign policy that I often wasn't comfortable with myself.

Upon returning to the United States, I experienced contradictory sensations of nostalgia. I found myself distractedly saying "I want to go home" and then not knowing where I meant: my childhood house in Pennsylvania? my dorm room in Lewiston, Maine? or the flat I'd come to adore in Edinburgh? This multi-directional homesickness attuned me to how nostalgia is not a longing for one physical place; rather, it is the desire to return to that existential sense of comfort Carol Ann Duffy so beautifully describes in her poems. She masterfully articulates the sense of nostalgia for a state which can never be returned to and is inarticulable because it exists only as an emotion, a longing. We pine for a sense of first understanding, a sense of comfort, of being found.

Several months before I left for Scotland, my parents revealed to me that my biological history was more complicated than I had assumed. Like Jackie Kay, I began to question the complexities of nature and nurture which have shaped me, and I am still in the process (I expect it never ends) of wondering at how much of myself is constructed by genetics and how much exists because of my loving parents' care and environmental factors. I will likely never fully know the facts of my biological history, but, as Kay keenly observes, only the spark of

imagination is needed to conjure one's personal past, inaccurate and idealistic as that conjuring that may be. Our origin stories are shaped as much by our memories and imaginations as they are by biology, events, and environment.

In writing this thesis, I fully acknowledge my status as an American scholar. I am still, in many ways, a tourist in Scotland's culture, history, and literature, and I do not pretend to have any native knowledge of her people, language, or customs. But the notions expressed in her poetry are deeply familiar to me, as they express a sense of estrangement, alienation, and hunger for true home. Studying the writing of Duffy, Kay, and Jamie reminds us that the desire for home is perhaps the deepest and most universal of human sentiments, even while it is colored by regional cultures and has caused some of the most intense wars in history. The desire for a distinct and unique home has led to the current independence movement in Scotland, which will culminate in the September 2014 referendum. It is an exciting time to be studying Scottish poetry concerning identity and origin, and I have made every attempt in this thesis to do justice to the powerful emotions, arguments, and claims which shape these poets' work.

## Introduction

Some writers leave home, others enjoy the sensation of being a big fish in a small pond, and still others nurture a curious love-hate relationship with their muse, a muse they sometimes want to kick in the balls, if I may gender Scotland as masculine for a moment.

— Zoë Strachan (“Is that a Scot or am Ah Wrang?” 51)

This thesis examines the work of three writers who left home and explore a love-hate relationship with Scotland, fraught with both frustration and longing. Carol Ann Duffy, Jackie Kay, and Kathleen Jamie are female Scottish poets born in the mid-1950s through early 1960s who were driven to leave their home country for varying reasons, and whose poetry reflects on the experience of displacement with pain and pride. By traveling away, they gained the fresh perspective endowed by distance but consequently found their thoughts of Scotland colored by nostalgia and longing, as well as anger. Their work from the 1990s—the decade leading up to the successful establishment of Scottish Parliament in 1999—expresses the complications of claiming female Scottish identity, particularly when Scotland has been colonized, repressed, and romanticized, and has rejected elements of these poets’ identities (including Kay’s blackness and Kay’s and Duffy’s homosexuality).

In this thesis, I analyze Duffy’s, Kay’s, and Jamie’s poetry collections, novels, essays, and memoirs from the late 1980s through the early 2000s, paying particular attention to their more political material. By closely reading their work through a critical lens, I undertake a comprehensive analysis of the varying ways in which they define “home” and how they navigate the stereotypes and realities of being modern Scottish women in the age of devolution and the dawn of the new millennium. Duffy, Kay, and Jamie are distinct writers with different styles and

means of broaching political subjects, but throughout their work runs the common thread of retrospection as they associate Scotland with the past and childhood and express displacement from a sense of cultural belonging. In order to discuss these writers, it is important first to contextualize their work within the Scottish political, cultural, and literary movements of the twentieth century.

Scottish history is characterized by turbulent, impassioned attempts for political independence. With the Acts of Union of 1706 and 1707, Scotland and England were united into Great Britain, but this legislation was somewhat paradoxical: sometimes it manifested itself in a sharing of sovereignty, but often “Scotland was ignored in the decisions made by an emergent British polity which presumed a union which did not in fact exist” (Pittock 12). Because of the lack of representation of Scottish citizens in the British government and the grip of English control over the British Isles, Scotland has been for 300 years, in many senses, a colonized state (Reizbaum 166). This political situation has in turn led to the Othering of the Scottish people; critic Sean O’Brien argues that “the Scot in English company [is] burdened with the role of the excluded, the subject, the *described*, the inherently proletarian race” (O’Brien 264, emphasis his). Many Scottish campaigns for representation, devolution, and independence have been waged, and in 1979 a referendum was issued to Scottish citizens proposing devolution (the transfer of power from the central British Parliament to the localized Scottish Parliament) (Craig 348). The vote yielded majority support but failed to pass, so Scotland’s sense of self-identity was again thrown into flux. Without the ability to self-govern or sufficient nationalism to devolve, there was concern that Scotland’s unique culture would be quashed and swept into the one-Britain homogeneity of Thatcherism.

However, instead of being culturally depressed by the failure of the 1979 devolution vote, Scotland experienced a sort of cultural blossoming in the 1980s, a celebration of Scottish cultural identity through art and literature. Cairns Craig observes that the 1980s in Scotland was a decade of deepening and intensifying awareness of the difference of Scottish culture from English: in art, in music, in philosophy, in literature, a wide range of works appeared asserting that there exists a powerful and very separate tradition in Scotland, one that provided the contemporary creative artist with a strong native resource for the creation of new works. (Craig 1996, 349)

This sense of Scottish pride renewed the movement for devolution, which gained momentum throughout the 1990s. It was an exciting political and cultural period, inspiring writing that directly discussed Scottish identity and politics. Kathleen Jamie reflected in 2000 on the imperative in the 1990s for Scottish poets to write about issues of nation and culture: “There was a short term task to do, it had to be done, a political task” (Jamie qtd. in Fraser 15). In her later work Jamie has turned away from direct discussion of politics, but in the 1990s it seemed almost a responsibility for her, and for many Scottish artists, to respond to and drive political thought and discussion. In 1997, Scotland’s citizens were issued another devolution referendum, and this time the motion passed: the Scottish Parliament was established in 1999 (Pittock 16).

Scottish culture has often been framed as retrospective, and this new devolutionary action ignited a stimulating mix of past-searching and future-planning. The 1997 “Yes” vote called forth the rhetoric of awakening, particularly as it coincided with the new millennium. This spirit of rebirth can be traced through much late 1990s and early 2000s Scottish poetry and is evident in the scholarship as well. Critic Joanne Winning wrote in 2000 of “the awakening of a Scotland posited now at the edge of a new, stronger sense of selfhood and identity; looking for its

coordinates both backwards into the past, and forwards into the future” (Winning 226). In addition to the glory and hope present in Winning’s tone, her statement reflects the tendency of Scottish culture to constantly rummage in the attic for cultural self-image. The poets examined in this thesis reflect this sentiment: they are strongly, assertively Scottish, and all define their connection to that nation in their own terms. However, they share a sense of retrospection and dive into Scotland’s past to seek answers and roots.

In addition to the shifts in Scotland’s politics and culture induced by devolutionary action, the forces of globalization and immigration have also acted upon modern Scotland, changing the face of today’s Scottish citizenry. The influx of immigrants from former British colonies has altered the makeup of the British Isles and added diverse new voices to their literary discourses. It has also, as Kinnahan notes, “complicated notions of national identity,” in that the twenty-first century Scottish citizen may love shawarma as much as shortbread or know Hindi better than Gaelic (Kinnahan 183). Political movements of the late twentieth century spurred debates over diversification, globalization, and what constitutes a “legitimate” or “native” Scottish citizen. In his discussion of race in post-devolution Scottish novels, Graeme Macdonald argues that “devolution *has* fostered an intensive inquiry into the historical and contemporary specifics of Scottish identity, particularly as it is predominantly (and falsely) perceived as emanating from a settled, common ethnic heritage” (Macdonald 84, emphasis his). As Scotland edges towards independence, its introspection into its cultural identity has been carried out by diverse writers and artists, each questioning how they fit into their nation’s history and future.

The increasing awareness of the differences between Scottish and English cultures fed by the Scottish devolutionary process in the late twentieth century has contributed to a more unique sense of Scottish identity, distinct from a pan-British identity. In a 2006 sociological study, Abell

et al. found that British citizens living outside of England are “generally inclined to distinguish their British *citizenship* status from their (Welsh, Scottish, etc.) *national* identity” (Abell et al. 209, emphasis theirs). While British citizens acknowledge their inclusion in the larger community of the United Kingdom, they may place more value in the distinct regional character of their individual nations. Poets across Britain have multiple identities to express: the pan-British identity of the U.K. citizen, the regional identities of their specific nations, and their personal lived experience within these various intersecting identities. Duffy’s, Kay’s, and Jamie’s narrations of their individual lived experiences negotiate all of these national and regional identities and explore how they sometimes clash, particularly when one person can legitimately claim origins in multiple regions of Britain and the world.

How did literature respond to and prompt the diversifying, introspective Scottish culture in the late twentieth century? As art does in all societies, the poetry and prose of Scottish writers both reflect and affect Scottish national sentiment and identity. Angelica Michelis argues that “the development of British poetry as a genre has been inextricably linked to feelings of national belonging,” and this is especially true in Scotland (Michelis 2003, 77). From the legacy of eighteenth-century poet Robert Burns to quintessentially Scottish nineteenth-century novels such as *Kidnapped* by Robert Louis Stevenson and the Waverley novels by Walter Scott, Scottish culture has been defined and shaped by its literature. This is a country peppered with statues of poets and writers, that even has a national holiday dedicated to its beloved Rabbin Burns. As Scottish culture has become decentralized from London and asserted its singularity throughout the twentieth century, its poetry has reflected a new, powerful sense of distinct Scottishness. Michelis argues that

by transforming the political concept of alienation [from England] into a discursive poetic strategy, many [Scottish] poetic works were able to critically comment on the extent to which British poetry - generically and thematically - has always been intertwined with ideas of Englishness. (Michelis 2003, 80)

*Why is the term “British” used synonymously with the term “English”?* these poets asked, and they took on the challenge of writing a uniquely Scottish modern verse.

As Britain diversified, its historically homogenous community of white, male writers had to make room for new voices as women, immigrants, and other previously marginalized individuals asserted the legitimacy of their British poetry. Sarah Broom charts the progression of the British poetic community from being “overwhelmingly white, male, middle-class and centered around Oxbridge and London” in the 1950s to including “women poets, poets from working-class, rural and non-metropolitan background, and poets from ethnic minorities [who] have become prominent and recognised figures within the poetry world” today (Broom 1). The traditional marginalization of female British writers is illustrated in Alexander Moffat’s infamous 1980 painting *Poets’ Pub*, which depicts an imaginary meeting of all the major Scottish writers of the twentieth century, including Hugh MacDiarmid, Edwin Morgan, and George Mackay Brown (Moffat). The fact that all are elderly white men, and the only women depicted are literally in the margins of the canvas (one half-naked), reflects poorly on the representation of women and non-white poets in Scotland until recently.

However, in the late twentieth century, women powerfully asserted their role in British poetry, and finally their voices began to be recognized. Margaret Elphinstone, writing in 1999, heralded the increasing prominence of women in the British poetry scene:



[I]n the 1980s and 1990s Scottish women poets have been unprecedentedly conspicuous by their presence. In terms of publications, anthology inclusions, and increasingly of critical attention, one could optimistically (if not entirely correctly) argue that the issue of marginalisation has been successfully addressed.

(Elphinstone 65)

Duffy, Kay, Jamie, and their contemporaries, including Liz Lochhead and Kate Clanchy, thundered onto the literary scene and strongly asserted the legitimacy of their voices. The increasing recognition of women in British writing is also marked by Duffy's ascension to the post of Poet Laureate of the United Kingdom in 2009, as she is Britain's first female Laureate in addition to being the first Scot and the first openly bisexual person to be appointed (Patterson, n.p.).

Progress towards a more diverse British poetic expression was not smooth, however, and certain groups experienced marginalization as others progressed. Kinnahan observes that "the feminist 1970s also marginalized women of color, centering the expressive lyric upon the experiences of white women," a trend which promoted the myth of the always-white Scottish woman over the experiences of immigrants and Scottish citizens from other heritages (Kinnahan 183). Throughout the latter half of the twentieth century, and still today, female Scottish poets are sorting through their nation's politics and traditions to assert their experiences of female Scottishness; specifically, what they are "now addressing within their struggle to emerge is the relationship between their national and sexual identities" (Reizbaum 172). The confluence and conflict between gender and nation can be seen throughout Duffy, Kay, and Jamie's work. A particularly clear example is Jamie's 1999 collection *Jizzen*, which uses the female experiences

of childbirth and motherhood to symbolize the painful yet joyous rebirth of Scotland after the devolution vote of 1997.

Although the female Scottish poets of the latter half of the twentieth century broke boundaries, they were not the first of their kind. Margery Palmer McCulloch points out the simultaneous lack of women in the Scottish literary canon and the richness of the female poetic tradition there: when a woman sets out to join the Scottish poetic community, “what language is she to use; whose tradition is she to follow? Such questions have been prominent in feminist literary discourse from the 1970s onwards and in Scotland they are complicated by the fact that there are at least three literary traditions to be considered” (McCulloch 11). There is the white male British poetic canon, yes, but in Scotland there is also the female oral poetic tradition, as well as the wealth of Celtic myth and folklore. Helen Kidd observes that, “given the historically important role of women within Scottish communities as balladeers and bearers of the cultural continuum, no wonder there is an acute awareness of the limitations of official, and traditionally male, discourses” (Kidd 105). Frustrated by the constraints of this “official” poetry, “women writers are still strenuously drawing on the ballad tradition and re-imbuing it with the political and sexual energy that it earlier embraced” (Kidd 105). This can be seen through the diverse media employed by Kay, who writes poetry for television and radio in addition to her more conventional page work. Although Celtic culture is classically associated with the feminine, and thus seen as weaker and available for subjugation (as observed by Reizbaum), modern Scottish female poets are twisting and subverting this narrative to assert the power of the vocal female Scot (for a clear example, see Jamie’s “Meadowsweet”).

Furthermore, multilingual poets in Scotland have linguistic options: they can choose to write in English, Scots, Gaelic, or a combination of languages. This decision can be politically

loaded: should one write in Gaelic in order to save a dying language, even though few will be able to read it? If using Scots, is it as a light, cheeky reference to the poet's cultural heritage or as a political statement on the distinctness of Scottish and English cultures? In the 1970s, Scottish poetry experienced a "liberation of the voice, an acceptance (even if the poet was writing in English) that the medium of the poetry was Scottish *speech* rather than written English or Scots" (Craig 346, emphasis his). This surge in pride for the distinct Scottish voice was likely supported by the recent trend of live poetry readings, so that even if a poet appears to have written in standard English, her live performance colors the poem with the realization of its author's national identity. Fiona Stafford observes that

contemporary poets have developed ways of suggesting Scottish speech even though their written language is English. Reading their work can thus involve a kind of mental translation, as a printed word is transformed in the acoustic imagination to conjure up a voice from Fife, Glasgow, or Dundee. (Stafford 2007, 235)

This technique can be observed in much of Kay's and Jamie's work, where Scots words and slang are peppered throughout poems which do not directly otherwise comment on Scottish identity. This casual use of dialect reminds the reader that poetry does not exist in a vacuum, and gives depth to the poem's speaker by lending her an accent and cultural context.

How did Duffy, Kay, and Jamie negotiate their female Scottish identities in the politically and culturally charged 1990s through their poetry? One of the chief ways in which these poets express the complications of that identity is by engaging with the clichés of Scottish history and culture: in order to see beyond the caricatures and find the genuine, Duffy, Kay, and Jamie tell their individual experiences of Scotland by subverting its cultural self-image. In Scotland, it is

relatively easy to identify cultural stereotypes. The nation's self-branding, through castles, Braveheart, shortbread, whisky, kilts, bagpipes, and of course Nessie, has coined an exaggerated, clichéd image of a country stuck in the past. Macdonald warns that "Celticity and Tartantry continue to retain their strength as global commodities exploiting the cultural fetish of Scottish genealogy and its international branding" (Macdonald 87). These traditional images have served a political purpose, but in the dawning era of a devolved Scotland, these poets re-envision them to fit a new Scottish cultural identity. Scottish culture has traditionally valued homogeneity: a united vision of that tartan-kilted white Scottish citizenry. However, due to the forces of immigration and globalization, the Scottish populace simply isn't that homogenous anymore, and the cultural fantasy of the white, male Scot is no longer (if it ever was) representative of the entire population. But even while globalization inevitably diversifies cultures, nationalist movements tend to cling to cultural artifacts and stereotypes to assert their traditional, unique identities. Helen Boden has written extensively on how this stymies Scottish culture, yet how retaining some connection to the past is vital for an emerging independent state:

Scottish identity is often defined in terms of the country's pasts (of romance, defeat, industrialization). A new present does not, however, need to reject older definitions entirely: to do so would mean a loss of defining continuity with the past that has shaped this present. (Boden 31)

A healthy mix, then, of past reflection and future vision seems necessary, and Duffy's, Kay's, and Jamie's poetry skillfully balances and bridges those spaces to usher Scotland forward into a new era, potentially one of independent self-governance.

Another way in which these poets recycle tired stereotypes to craft a poetry for the new Scottish citizen is by juxtaposing traditional Scottish images with foreign elements. Robert

Maccubbin proposes two ways of “infusing a sense of the non-present into perceptions of present-day Scotland and thereby refocusing them”: the first is “by inviting the philosophy, religion, and literary art of foreign cultures vicariously into the houses of Scottish poetry,” and the second is “by revisiting the past - its myths, histories, and traditions” (Maccubbin 18). Duffy, Kay, and Jamie perform both techniques in varying ways in order to nudge backwards-looking Scottish culture into a modern age, though these methods are most pronounced in Jamie’s work. Several of Jamie’s poems situate famous Asian figures in the Scottish landscape in order to juxtapose and compare these cultures (see “The Queen of Sheba” and “A Dream of the Dalai Lama on Skye,” Ch. III), and Jamie also intensely studies Scotland’s artifacts and history to find actual fact and to contrast them with Scotland’s romanticized self-image today. Furthermore, David Borthwick observes that Jamie and other Scottish poets engage in “reappropriating settings, tales, and cultural practices which in their distance from a contemporary, urban, consumer worldview have precisely the ability to unsettle: not only to challenge what many consider home; rather, to provide a renegotiated depiction of it” (Borthwick 145). ‘Renegotiation’ is an excellent term for the work of Duffy, Kay, and Jamie, who each unpack the cultural norms of their home country to dispense with the rotten and salvage the genuine.

The personal, individual lens through which these three poets discuss Scottish history, politics, and culture gives a more honest, legitimate sense of the nation than the tourist books can convey. Kimpel discusses how, rather than reiterating tradition, Scottish poets “tend to express their sense of Scotland through an exploration of the landscapes, the history, the traditions, the languages of those Scottish regions and places *which more immediately belong to their own personal background*” (Kimpel 145, emphasis mine). Duffy, Kay, and Jamie speak from their positions as Scottish women using the powerful lyric *I* to assert their distinct identities. In

Duffy's poetry particularly, the use of the lyric *I* and the dramatic monologue form is linked to her experience of womanhood and what she perceives as a responsibility to tell the female side of history. Boden argues that "an important conceptual parallel between work on women's writing and feminist theory and that on national identity is an interest in multiplicity and pluralism rather than dualism (and this of course has very special ramifications for Scottish writing)" (Boden 28). Duality is a central concept in Scottish culture and literature—consider Stevenson's Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde—and so exploring identity beyond binaries is somewhat radical in Scottish poetry. The three poets discussed here are not interested in telling a black-and-white story of Scottish experience; rather, through dramatic monologue, autobiographical accounts, and subversion of stereotypes, they imagine a Scotland interested in the voices of all of its citizens and their individual histories. Both Kay and Duffy have written dramatic monologues from the perspective of the immigrant to the United Kingdom, exploring the prohibitive power of language barriers and the political intimidation of Othering (see discussions of Duffy's "Foreign," "Deportation," and "Yes, Officer" in Ch. I and Kay's "Gastarbeiter" in Ch. II).

Duffy, Kay, and Jamie have all left Scotland, but they each experience displacement differently and their poetry reflects their varying relationships with their shared "mother" country. Duffy's family moved south when she was a child due to economic circumstances, Kay moved to London after university partially due to experiencing racism in Scotland, and Jamie traveled extensively in her youth but has now returned to settle in Scotland with her family. Their travel experiences are consistent with "Scotland's long and distinct history of migrant arrival and diasporic experience" (Macdonald 94). A useful guide to themes of cultural estrangement in modern Scottish poetry is Maccubbin's categorization of contemporary Scottish poets based on their emigration patterns. He bases his system on James McGonigal's

categorization of late twentieth-century Scottish poets into the ‘Informationists,’ ‘Exiles,’ ‘Urbane and Electronic Ruralists,’ ‘New women,’ ‘New Gaels,’ ‘East and West Coast individualists,’ and ‘Gatekeepers and Activists’ (McGonigal 780-793). Maccubbin takes interest in the ‘Exiles,’ and widens the term:

I would prefer to enlarge the category of those who employ osmosis across the Scottish-foreign membrane to include Scots who have left the country but who have retained a substantive connection with Scotland and Scottishness, residents of Scotland although not of Scottish birth or background, and those who have traveled widely or taught abroad and have incorporated the effects of those experiences in their poetry. (Maccubbin 14)

Those poets who moved away include Duffy, Kay, Kate Clanchy, and others, while Jamie is included in a group of poets who “have either traveled, worked, or been educated outside Scotland, but then returned and have remained” (Maccubbin 15). This thesis explores how Duffy, Kay, and Jamie negotiate this experience of exile and how it affects and feeds their differing senses of Scottish identity.

The terms “displacement” and “exile” deserve more discussion here. I use them to refer to the experiences of Duffy, Kay, and Jamie even though their emigrations were relatively voluntary; none of them was forced out of Scotland at gunpoint or as a refugee, for example. Stan Smith observes that discussing this less severe experience of estrangement is a trend in contemporary poetry: he comments that “displacement, for contemporary poets, has not always or even most frequently been imposed by force of circumstance and the brutality of the external world” and argues that the term “displaced person” has been “appropriated by writers and artists . . . to describe a metaphysical condition, the characteristic condition of twentieth-century living”

(S. Smith 2). Duffy, Kay, and Jamie describe their displacement in the latter sense: not only as a physical separation from their birthplace, but also as a distancing from childhood and from the traditions of their country's past. They are not exiles in any life-threatening sense, but the lack of violent or forcible expulsion does not lessen the intensity with which they describe their metaphysical estrangement from Scotland.

Perhaps the best term to describe their condition can be borrowed from Seamus Heaney's poem "Exposure," written upon his move from Northern Ireland to the Republic and published in *North* (1975). In it he asserts, "I am neither internée nor informer; / *An inner émigré*, grown long-haired / And thoughtful" (30-32, emphasis mine). Duffy's, Kay's, and Jamie's sense of inner estrangement from Scotland's culture is more important than their physical separation from the land. This concept of "inner émigré" is perhaps best illustrated by Jamie, who has returned to live in Scotland yet expresses some of the most intense nostalgia for her country's ancestral past, which she cannot find a way to sustainably connect with. The combination of these poets' physical separation from Scotland, their attempts to reconcile Scotland's romanticized culture with its reality, and the unwillingness of others to accept them as Scottish (particularly in Kay's case) adds to a deeper, more internal sense of estrangement from their "mother" country.

In poetry today, the question of homing and exploration of one's origins is becoming increasingly important. Robert Crawford argues that "'Where do you come from?' is one of the most important questions in contemporary poetry—where's home?" and notes that this question is particularly important for Scottish poets, for whom the concept of home is entangled with empire, colonization, and the movement for independence (Crawford 144). Jahan Ramazani observes that "in modern and contemporary poetry studies, place is often conceived of as either indefinite and abstract, or determinate and highly particularised" (Ramazani 200). In Duffy, Kay,



and Jamie's poems on Scottish identity, place is generally viewed through the lens of nostalgia and history, so it is generally more of an abstraction than an indication of physical location. Of course, the concept of place is inherently unstable and shifts with new experiences and fresh perspective, particularly when the place is a childhood home which grows increasingly strange and foreign with each adult visit. Multiple poems by these three writers explore the strange disillusionment of homecoming (see discussions of Kay's "Colouring In," Ch. II, and Jamie's "School Reunion," Ch. III).

For the British nations, the concept of place is entangled with assertions of identity through history: Ian Davidson argues that "the national and regional poetries of Wales, Scotland, Ireland, and England often refer to the idea of 'place' as a way of authenticating a local identity discovered via historical processes" (Davidson 59). This is often the task of Jamie's work, which seeks to uncover origins by delving into the Scottish landscape and its cultural artifacts. There is also an element of alienation from nature which drives some of these poets, particularly Jamie, to attempt to reconnect with a sense of place. Writing of Jamie, John Burnside, and Robin Robertson, Borthwick argues that "their emphasis is not simply upon cultural renewal or the retention of communal culture; rather . . . [they] are responding to contemporary alienation from place and disconnection from nature" (Borthwick 135). Finally, the experience of being female and Scottish, with its double exclusion from the male English cultural ideal, also contributes to Duffy's, Kay's, and Jamie's estrangement from their "mother" land and culture. Lee Jenkins observes that "in the lived experience, as in the poetics, of many women, 'home' is a condition of 'dwelling-in-displacement'" (Jenkins 119). The estranged condition of Heaney's "inner émigré," is heightened in Duffy, Kay, and Jamie's work by their femaleness and the marginalization that accompanies it.

In the next three chapters, I introduce Duffy, Kay, and Jamie individually, examine the way in which each poet's work negotiates female Scottish identity and themes of exile and nostalgia, and perform close readings on her poems and other works, moving chronologically through her writing. In my chapter on Duffy, I draw out how her experience of emigration to England as a child causes her to portray Scotland—and the notion of “home” itself—as intangible, dreamlike, and lost. Chapter II explores how Kay's genre-bending, autobiographically-generated work painfully grasps for biological, cultural, and national origins, and emphasizes the Othering power of racism. Finally, in Chapter III, I show how Jamie's writing inquires whether Scottish culture should submit to nostalgia and hoard its relics, or cut tethers and dispose of outdated customs, traditions, and objects. These three poets' differing experiences of displacement give them unique perspectives on the country they left, and with this clarity they are able to juxtapose idealized, clichéd memories and traditions with the physical reality of Scotland's geographical space and material artifacts.

**Chapter I:**  
**The Limitations of Language to Describe Homesickness**  
**in Carol Ann Duffy's Poetry**

it was a strange language,  
spoken only yards away,  
which turned the night into a dream

although they told themselves  
there must be a word for home,  
if only they knew it.

—“Strange Language in Night Fog,” *Selling Manhattan* (17-22)

Carol Ann Duffy's poetry is marked by the effects of her “exile”: uprooted from Scotland in a move to England during childhood, she often discusses Scotland in terms of nostalgia and hazy memory. A sense of loss—of childhood, cultural identity, language, and sense of self—pervades much of her poetry, even when the “other country” of origin is not directly identified as or intended to be Scotland. Born in 1955 in the Gorbals, an impoverished area of Glasgow, Duffy is the oldest of five children of Roman Catholic socialist parents (Preston, n.p.; Ross, n.p.). When Duffy was a child, her parents relocated the family from Glasgow to the northern industrial center of Staffordshire, England in the early 1960s in order to find employment, one of the many Scottish families to do so at that time (O'Brien 160; Porter 77). Duffy's mother was Irish, and Duffy has spoken of feeling dual belonging, stating that “when I go to Scotland I feel Scottish and when I go to Ireland I feel Irish. I suppose the one thing I don't feel is English,” which situates her as an outsider in her current country of residence (Duffy qtd. in Ross, n.p.). Through the rest of her life Duffy has continued to move around Britain, attending university in

Liverpool, moving to London, and currently residing in Manchester. In the 1990s she was in a long-term relationship with Jackie Kay; their children were raised together and the families remain close (H. Brown, n.p.). The influence of Duffy and Kay's personal relationship on their writing is revealed through common themes and metaphors, although the two write in quite different styles.

First, I want to acknowledge critics who may disagree with placing Duffy in a thesis concerning Scottish poets. Because of her early emigration to England and her Irish heritage, some critics do not consider her claim to Scottishness to be legitimate, including Christopher Whyte:

Carol Ann Duffy's Scottishness remains problematic. . . . If her poetry breathes any landscape, it is that of Midlands England, and her origins within the Catholic Irish immigration suggest that, even if her family had not moved south when she was nine, questions might still be raised in certain quarters about her belonging to Scotland in terms of both race and religion. (Whyte 2004, 221)

Caroline Gonda is more forgiving, perceiving Duffy as straddling multiple identities: "Duffy's status as a transplanted Scot and long-term resident in England places her on the boundary between assimilation and difference, belonging and exclusion, familiarity and alienation" (Gonda 18). First, this thesis focuses on Scottish poets who have left their home country and examines their contentious relationships with that soil, and thus Duffy is a perfect candidate for study. But furthermore, it is because of this sense of flux that Duffy writes as compellingly as she does on the concepts of home, belonging, and identity. The physical displacement of her family's emigration caused Duffy to feel a sense of estrangement from Scotland which she expresses through her poems of nostalgia and longing. Thus, her simultaneous rootedness in Scotland and

estrangement from that country is a driving force behind her work. In interviews she has discussed the trauma of being uprooted:

It felt weird, distressing, to move. England was a foreign country. The accent! The condescension! . . . We kids were teased for about three years because of our Scottish accents. Eventually, we all developed English accents for outside and kept the Scottish ones for home—my father would shout at us if we talked with English accents! I still have a little Scots girl trapped in my head. (Duffy qtd. in Watson 314)

While the pressure to assimilate forced young Duffy to assume English qualities, much of her work reflects this inner sense of Scottishness and a sense of cultural estrangement. It also gives her a unique perspective on the national and cultural politics of Britain in the tumultuous second half of the 20th century; as O'Brien argues, "the condition of being in but not entirely of England is certainly useful for the poet [Duffy] who in early adulthood will witness the dismantling of the nation's hitherto (at any rate apparently) broad consensual understanding of itself" (O'Brien 161). Thus, this thesis includes her in the community of Scottish poets, as do many anthologies and collections.

Duffy's experience of migration and displacement in Britain also makes her accessible to modern British readers. S. Smith observes that "in its casual displacements, dictated by the accidents of employment opportunities, Duffy's life can be seen as both exemplary and unexceptional in registering the pattern of living in the mobile and expanding economy of postwar and contemporary Britain" (S. Smith 101). Duffy is not a poet sitting in an ivory tower; rather, she has felt the effects of political and economic policy and writes boldly of their impact on the average British citizen.

Duffy was recognized early in her career for her formidable literary talent, and in 2009 was named the Poet Laureate of Britain, becoming not only the first female poet to hold the post but also the first openly bisexual poet and the first Scot; however, as Preston aptly comments, “anyone inclined to dismiss her appointment as tokenism clearly hasn’t read her work” (Patterson, n.p.; Preston, n.p.). As Laureate she ostensibly speaks for all of Britain, an interesting duty given how her early poetry fractures the nation into pockets of language, culture, and belonging and how her biography and writing thwart notions of singular national identity or even the possibility of belonging wholly to one place. Duffy is the rare poet who enjoys considerable public acclaim, measured both by high book sales and by the British education system placing her poems in the GCSE exams and A-level syllabi; it has been quipped that she is the second most popular poet in Britain after Shakespeare (Michelis & Rowland 1).

This acclaim is partially due to the accessibility of her poetry: Duffy generally uses standard language and explores subjects relatable to the common citizen. This is consistent with the 1990s trend of reinventing the Scottish citizen and writing work she or he would be interested in reading: Eleanor Porter observes that Duffy’s voice is typical of “contemporary British poetry’s celebration of the vernacular, its interest in narrative and drama and its investigation of relations between language and the exercise of power” (Porter 79). Deryn Rees-Jones agrees, and cautions against thinking of accessibility as synonymous with simplicity: she argues that Duffy’s “snappy sentences, and apparent simplicity of her work . . . do not prevent Duffy from addressing complex philosophical issues about the function of language and the construction of the self, or from dealing with a wide range of issues” (Rees-Jones 2010, 1). This is true for Duffy and for Kay as well; both have faced ill-deserved criticism for their perceived simplicity.

Duffy's persona and poetry both resist singular categorization. The diversity of her life extends from her sense of national identity (Scottish birth, Irish blood, England residence) to her sexuality (she identifies as bisexual and had long-term relationships with male poet Adrian Henri as well as Kay, and has a daughter with poet Peter Benson) to her politics (a leftist with socialist parents, yet she enjoys a positive relationship with the Queen) (Ross, n.p.). Partially because of this, Duffy's poems treat identity as fluid, capable of transcending culturally defined binaries. Elphinstone observes that in Duffy's work, "national and cultural identities cannot be certain, nor, one realises, should they be" (Elphinstone 68). She never relies on clichés or stereotypes—rather, she enjoys subverting them—and tells personal, complex narratives of citizens who defy any singular notion of Britishness.

Duffy's poetry is similarly difficult to categorize: she has experimented with many poetic forms, including a tendency towards the dramatic monologue, and she also writes children's poetry and plays. Michelis & Rowland include in a list of her wide-ranging interests "feminism, myth-making, postmodernism, post-structuralism, masculinity, children's verse, love poetry, identity politics, poetic form, philosophy, translation, and fairy tales" (Michelis & Rowland 5). It is also impossible to situate Duffy neatly in any one group of writers; she makes use of traditional forms, particularly dramatic monologues but also sonnets and other metrical forms, but her subject matter embraces more typically postmodern themes. This "tension . . . between the conservative form and politicised content" produces vibrant poetry which does not constrain Duffy either as a late-modernist or a post-modernist (Michelis & Rowland 4). Furthermore, she combines, meddles with, and subverts multiple styles to create new literary structures; as Brian Caraher writes, "Duffy's lyric 'mean time' plays lines and rhythms against the metronome of received tradition and expectation in order to destabilize 'our stiff geometries' and to retune the

line, to sense the possibilities of line, rhythm, stanza, and refashioned lyric form” (Caraher 184). Duffy enjoys fiddling with the phrases we think we know best in order to squeeze fresh life from them, and she is particularly interested in clichés. She has stated that

I like to use simple words but in a complicated way so that you can see the lies and truths within the poem. . . . You can put little spotlights on phrases, like clichés, that will show how although they look like a plastic rose in fact they’ve got roots underneath. They have meaning. (Duffy qtd. in S. Smith 103)

Her manipulation of clichés to reveal deeper meaning is especially evident in the whimsical poem “The Cliché Kid,” from *Mean Time* (1993), in which the speaker mixes up clichés to surreal and riotous effect: “I need help, Doc, and bad; I can’t forget / the rustle of my father’s ballgown as he bent / to say goodnight to me, his kiss, his French scent” (1-3). The poem not only re-energizes clichés by placing them in bizarre contexts, but also comments on gender norms and how our language limits the definitions of gender through its idioms.

While her life and work defy neat categorization, Duffy’s poetry does follow several trends, including a commitment to expressing voices which have been culturally marginalized in Britain, especially those of women. McCulloch notes that Duffy’s work “offers themes and forms of expression which record women’s experiences from the inside, often speaking what previously has been unspeakable in poetry from a female point of view” (McCulloch 19). Her dramatic monologues are generally, though not exclusively, voiced by women, most notably in her collection *The World’s Wife* (1999), which consists of dramatic monologues from the perspective of famous men’s wives (including Mrs. Sisyphus and Mrs. Faust). The effect of these female-voiced poems is to highlight and mitigate the marginalization of women in literary communities; as O’Brien observes, Duffy’s poems “testify that until recently women have



largely had to go without history in the official record” (O’Brien 161). Duffy’s use of the dramatic monologue is “subtly subversive of the unspoken assumptions implicit in the first person ‘I’ (male and heterosexual) of traditional lyric poetry” (F. Wilson 25). As aforementioned, Duffy uses traditional poetic forms but imbues them with politicized, sometimes radical content, thus subverting the form to use it for more democratic purposes. Rees-Jones theorizes that “the dramatic monologue has perhaps appealed to women because of the way it emphasizes an artificiality that women already sense in constructions of their own subjectivity” (Rees-Jones, 2005, 158). Duffy may have felt this pull towards the form, but more important is the way in which she uses the dramatic monologue to speak in diverse voices which have been historically denied expression, notably in the poems from the immigrant perspective “Foreign,” “Deportation,” and “Yes, Officer,” which will be discussed in depth later. In her book on Duffy, Rees-Jones suggests that using the dramatic monologue is also a way for the poet to protect herself from assumptions of autobiography while pursuing fantasies in her poems:

Duffy’s use of the dramatic monologue allows a socialization of the self, enabled by the projected fantastic self who carries utterance without fear of censorship. In doing this it offers a double release: not only does it provide a way of negotiating the construction of subjectivity in a poem, but for the poet, safely dissociated from the person who speaks, it offers another way of projecting a fantasy not obviously or directly emanating from her own life experience. (Rees-Jones 2010, 50)

Duffy’s contemporary Kay has been criticized for what critics consider her overly confessional style of writing which indulges in personal revelation. Perhaps Duffy’s use of the dramatic monologue is a way of expressing her own ideas through other voices to avoid this criticism, but

it more likely reflects her desire to speak from multiple voices and express diverse perspectives than any fear of critical retaliation.

Duffy's writing is fascinated with the past, but rather than chronicling British history, she uses her poems to tell individual, personal narratives. While many of Duffy's poems—including "Translating The English, 1989," "Poet for Our Times," and "Making Money" (all from *The Other Country* (1990))—do concern political events, O'Brien observes that Duffy "rarely steps back for a direct attempt on the long perspective by which numerous male poets, including Larkin, Hughes, Hill, Harrison, and Dunn, have been in their various ways concerned" (O'Brien 161). Rather than giving a grand overview of world history, Duffy prefers to convey personal histories through narrative and anecdote (which, arguably, gives a more true account of the sense of history than sweeping generalizations of the times). All three poets explored in this thesis prefer to use the personal lens, although Jamie's poems are less narrative and more fleeting than Duffy's or Kay's.

One of the most deeply personal yet universal themes explored in Duffy's work is homesickness. In her poems, home is not a tangible, physical place to be plotted on a map; rather, the term "home" suggests a sensation, an existential state which cannot be permanently linked to any actual location. In "Strange Place," from her 1987 collection *Selling Manhattan*, Duffy describes a quiet, intimate evening scene with a lover, and concludes, "Love, later, / I will feel homesick for this strange place" (8-9). The "place" is less the physical environment than the emotional landscape created by the lovers: as Porter puts it, "the coming together of the lovers is translated into a place as much as it is an event" (Porter 81). This place/time synesthesia is a major theme in Duffy's work, evidenced by her use of terms such as "somewhen" and "nowhen" (from "Homesick," "Room," and "Never Go Back"; more on these terms later). The reader is not

given the literal location of the “strange place,” so the poem is open to the reader’s imagination of his or her own intimate experiences of home. The ability of emotion to shape a landscape is made more explicit in “By Heart,” also from *Selling Manhattan*, in which the speaker simply states, “Love makes buildings home” (14). However, the connection of strong emotions with home can also yield pain: Porter observes that in Duffy’s poems, “love registers the loss of home, the distance which permits freedom but also need” (Porter 79). This tension between the freedom granted by leaving home and the tug of nostalgia to return is explored in “The Way My Mother Speaks,” from *The Other Country*, which will be explored in depth later.

One generally associates home with the location of one’s childhood, and Duffy takes that a step further by conceptualizing youth itself as a kind of existential place for which one can experience homesickness. In “North West,” from her 2003 collection *Feminine Gospels*, Duffy explains that “this is where we were young, the place no map / or heritage guide can reveal” (6-7). The past cannot be fully divined from physical location alone: the childhood experience itself shapes the concept of home. Porter comments that in Duffy’s poetry, “since experience binds time and place together, home is to some extent always elsewhere” (Porter 86). It is thus impossible to truly return home, although it is a natural part of human nature to continue yearning for the sense of return. The disillusionment of returning to a childhood home to find it (and oneself) altered is explored further in Duffy’s “Never Go Back,” which will be discussed later, and in several of Kay’s and Jamie’s poems.

Duffy’s 1987 collection *Selling Manhattan* introduced this conceptualization of nostalgia and contains several of the dramatic monologues which have come to characterize Duffy’s work, as well as political commentaries and love poems. It explores how language is used and abused: Michelis argues that *Selling Manhattan* has a “tentative tone, resulting in a body of poetic works

whose common feature consists of a probing of the possibilities and limitations of language” (Michelis 2003, 83). The collection subverts the traditional use of the dramatic monologue by using the voices of “radically estranged and alienated speakers” (F. Wilson 26). The title poem concerns the sale of Manhattan from the Native Americans to the white colonizers, and is written both in the condescending voice of the buyer— “All yours, Injun, twenty-four bucks worth of glass beads / . . . / Now get your red ass out of here”—and the mournful voice of a Native American (1, 4). The poem draws attention to how fluid and arbitrary the notion of “inherent” national identity can be, since the people now inhabiting the land are white colonizers who, from the perspective of the Native Americans, have no legitimate right to it. Michelis observes that “by commenting on the transition of America from Native American country into the home of the colonizer, and by structuring it poetically as a discursive dialogue between appropriator and displaced, the poem comments on the fictionality of such a version of national identity” (Michelis 2003, 84). As a British poet concerned with the U.K.’s xenophobic and racist attitudes towards immigrants, Duffy uses this poem to question how we use the terms “native” and “legitimate,” and to illustrate how certain stories are omitted from or glossed over in national histories.

The poem “Homesick,” from *Selling Manhattan*, exhibits how Duffy’s concept of home is not rooted in physical location, but in recalled sensation. The speaker defines homesickness as a longing to relive the first experience of a sensation. She explores this concept through love, light, and music, explaining that “when we love, when we tell ourselves we do, / we are pining for first love, somethen, / before we thought of wanting it” (1-3), with light “we are looking / for first light . . . before we knew to call it light” (4-6), and that with music “we are straining / for first sound, what we heard once” (9-10). The poem implies that humans are not inherently

constant innovators; rather, we seek to recreate the conditions of our youths in order to return to simpler, more perfect times. S. Smith argues that “Homesick” “confirms explicitly” how “homesickness is an ontological and not contingent condition in Duffy’s poetry” (S. Smith 119). Rather than describing homesickness as an emotion that varies with location and distance, Duffy’s poems portray it as a constant malady, a driving force of human existence.

The nature of the connection humans hold to their countries of origin is also called into question in “Homesick”:

What country do we come from? This one?  
The one where the sun burns  
when we have night? The one  
the moon chills; elsewhere, possible? (12-15)

The pronoun “we” in the poem had previously been broad enough to encompass all humanity, and if we assume that this term remains constant, then Duffy is referring not only to her personal nationality, but rather to a universal sense of confusion over and displacement from one’s origins.

The poem concludes by connecting a sense of homesickness with the literary tradition: “We scratch in the dust with sticks / dying of homesickness / for when, where, what” (19-21). First, the use of “when, where, what” reinforces Duffy’s point that homesickness is not necessarily linked to physical location and is rather a state shaped by multiple times, places, and senses. Second, the poem portrays writing as an almost futile action: although the figures are forming some kind of written language, they are still unable to effectively conjure the sense of “home” they crave. This concept is described by Rees-Jones as “the desire to place the unplaceable, to recapture the prelinguistic, the country which is other, because we can never

speak or reclaim it” (Rees-Jones 2010, 42). I would argue that Duffy is not attempting to “recapture the prelinguistic,” but rather describing the current—and constant—limitations of writing. Porter believes this final stanza defies the wave of literary criticism beginning with Derrida in that it rejects the notion that human experience is constructed in and through language. Rather, in “Homesick” it is human experience which comes first, and which is unable to be adequately depicted through language. However, I disagree with Porter’s contention that “Homesick” rebuts the theory of “language consisting of a shifting set of signifiers with arbitrary incomplete correspondence to the phenomenal world” (Porter 79). Rather, that seems to be exactly what “Homesick” claims: that our signs are arbitrary and ineffective at perfectly capturing original sensation.

To what extent is Duffy claiming that writing is incapable of conjuring these sensations? She is not stating that language in and of itself is completely ineffective; if that were true, it is hard to imagine why she would choose poetry as her vocation. As Rees-Jones keenly notes, “[Duffy’s] nostalgia for an unremembered Imaginary identity depends only on her ability to express its absence: without language, it seems important to remember, Duffy would have no medium through which to either celebrate or denigrate” (Rees-Jones 2010, 44). Rather than flatly condemning the arbitrariness of language, in poems such as “Homesick” Duffy acknowledges the impossibility of returning fully to any past state simply by writing (or singing, dancing, etc.) about it. Her recognition of the inability of language to conjure exact sensations does not indicate, however, a weakness in Duffy’s poetic abilities. Rather, it is a strength since it forces her to perform a sort of circumlocution: she must find a way to describe a sensation which is a constant feature in the human condition but lacks an adequate name. Duffy and other poets consider the terms “homesickness” and “nostalgia” too weak for the strong feelings they

represent. For instance, in “Away from Home,” from *The Other Country*, rather than simply using the term “homesick” Duffy forces herself to describe the sensation, declaring it “a blurred longing / [that] sharpens like a headache” (4-5). Justin Quinn’s comments on poets who attempt to translate foreign cultural experiences into their own words are useful here: he says of Wordsworth’s “To a Highland Girl” that the subject of the poem “is saying something [the speaker/poet] cannot know, and thus cannot express. *He generates his own poem out of his inability to say what is happening*” (Quinn 193, emphasis mine). Acknowledgement of this inability is a common motif in Duffy’s work. In “Dies Natalis,” from *Selling Manhattan*, the speaker (who is reincarnated multiple times, transitioning from cat to sea bird to lover to baby) says of the new rebirth that “I will lose my memory, learn words / which barely stretch to cover what remains unsaid” (93-94). Mere words, like memory, are incapable of conjuring up the past.

Figuratively embodying sensations which cannot be fully depicted in words is, perhaps, the chief duty of the poet, and Duffy incorporates this inability to translate into her writing. S. Smith observes that “reticence, or withholding, is a key trope of Duffy’s poetry, which regularly appears to mediate events, stories, experiences it refuses fully to translate, make transparent, withholding the total interpretive content” (S. Smith 107). McCulloch agrees that this intentional omission of details is characteristic of Duffy’s work: “Duffy’s narratives are ambiguous, elliptical, leaving the reader to piece together scraps of information, things left unsaid or not properly understood by their speakers” (McCulloch 19). In Duffy’s work, this is a way of poetically acknowledging the limitations of language. In “Homesick,” this habit is evident through the term “someday” (2), which, although present in dictionaries, is not used in standard English. The term also appears in “Room” from *Mean Time*: “One second-hand bed / to remind of a death, someday” (8-9). A variation appears in “Never Go Back,” also from *Mean Time*,

when the figure departs after a visit to her childhood hometown and the poem describes her as “released by a journey into nowhere, nowhen, / and all the way home you forget” (46-47).

Duffy’s use of these terms in poems with otherwise accessible, modern language marks them as unusual, yet essential to the poems’ meanings: the conventional terms “somewhere” and “nowhere” are not appropriate for a nostalgia that transcends location to include time, light, music, and myriad other sensations.

The uses of “somewhen” and “nowhen” also reflect Duffy’s habit to use vague terms, especially “something,” in her poetry, which S. Smith argues “communicates a particular kind of indeterminacy to her texts, representing a refusal to come straight out and say just what she means, whether from fear, anxiety, discretion, reticence, or, most usually, because that meaning is undefined, not known” (S. Smith 110). As Duffy’s poetry is certainly not shy, I would agree that the motivation is not so much fear, anxiety, or any other timidity, but rather that “the meaning is undefined” and Duffy acknowledges her individual inability to directly define it, other than by evoking its sense. Additionally, stopping short of giving a full definition is one of the duties of poetry in that it relinquishes some imaginative control to the reader; as the French Symbolist poet Stéphane Mallarmé wrote, “to name an object is to destroy its poetic enjoyment; the aim is to suggest the object” (Mallarmé qtd. in Wright 322). Duffy’s work is more rich because of her intentional non-definition of terms.

*Selling Manhattan* includes several politically charged poems concerning the experience of immigrating to Britain and being subjected to xenophobia and racism. The powerful poem “Foreign,” told in second-person voice, associates language loss and acquisition with migration. Linda Kinnahan’s observation that “many of Duffy’s poems ask that the reader imagine how a particular “self” comes to understand him or herself through encounters with language naming



him/her as “other”” is particularly true for this poem (Kinnahan 2009, 195). In “Foreign,” the reader is not given the name of the immigrant’s country of origin, but we are told that “a hate name” for the immigrant is “sprayed in red / against a brick wall” (12-13). She or he (gender is not specified, although Duffy has a tendency to write from the female perspective) has lived in the “strange, dark city for twenty years” and is capable of speaking English, but still “think[s] / in a language of [his/her] own” (1, 4). Language is the connection with the home country:

Then you are writing home. The voice in your head  
recites the letter in a local dialect; behind that  
is the sound of your mother singing to you,  
all that time ago, and now you do not know  
why your eyes are watering and what’s the word for this. (6-10)

Again language proves incapable of fully capturing sensation: the word the figure is grasping for is likely “homesick,” but Duffy’s withholding of the term emphasizes how it is inadequate for the feeling it supposedly represents. This is not because of any language barrier—the figure is comfortably writing in his/her native language—but because no language can translate the feeling of homesickness into words.

Perhaps the most striking element of “Foreign” is the way in which the figure identifies him/herself as the Other: he/she “hear[s] / [his/her] foreign accent echo down the stairs” (3-4). Kinnahan observes that “to hear oneself as foreign accompanies the apprehension of the self through words naming it as other, alien, undesirable” (Kinnahan 2000, p. 213). The immigrant has internalized the notion that he/she is the Other in this country, and this inner estrangement has further limited his/her already constrained ability to speak and express his/herself. In the concluding stanza, the figure finds him/herself unable to conduct daily transactions:

“Inarticulate, / because this is not home, you point at fruit” (17-18). It is not an inability to speak English but rather an emotional sense of being choked off from the home country that hampers him/her.

As we have seen, a prevalent theme in Duffy’s poems of migration is how any language or aspect of language—accents, word choice, language loss and acquisition—is incapable of describing one’s relationship to one’s home. Porter observes that Duffy “investigat[es] relations between language and the exercise of power” in these poems by writing in various tongues, emphasizing the use of the authority language to colonize or repress, and by showing how language—even voice—is fluid and can be easily lost or altered in periods of transition (Porter 79). Duffy also reveals how language feeds into political undercurrents denying and granting power: Kinnahan argues that Duffy’s poems “often insist upon the contextuality of meaning, exploring language’s role in the production and maintenance of dominant ideologies and charting the complex interdependence of signs and structures of authority linked to regulatory practices of race, gender, class, and nationalistic or religious belief” (Kinnahan 1996, 249). Duffy’s poems indicate how, although language may be used as a tool of colonizers to conquer other cultures, language is limited by its own arbitrariness and inability to truly capture and recreate experiences and sensations. Language is powerful, certainly, but also inherently flawed.

The tension between these elements is explored in “Yes, Officer” from *Selling Manhattan*, a dramatic monologue voiced by an immigrant unfamiliar with the English language who is interrogated and coerced into signing a confession despite his innocence. Explaining his alibi, the man pays attention to language in an attempt to prove his legitimacy and innocence: “I saw some birds. I knew the words for them / and their collective noun. A skein of geese” (4-5). The final two stanzas reveal both the necessity and arbitrariness of language:

Without my own language, I am a blind man  
in the wrong house. Here come the fists, the boots.  
I curl in a corner, uttering empty vowels until  
  
they have their truth. That is my full name.  
With my good arm I sign a forgery. Yes, Officer,  
I did. I did and these, your words, admit it. (13-18)

Unable to speak in his native language, the speaker feels “blind,” synaesthetically associating a lack of verbal expression with an inability to visually perceive the world. Language is vital for him; however, the poem also acknowledges how meaningless it can be. The speaker’s “empty vowels” could be cries or lies (empty of meaning or empty of truth), and in the end the speaker “signs a forgery”: a signature devoid of any actual admittance of guilt. The authority figure, the “Officer,” controls the language in the concluding line with the emphasis on “these, your words,” although in the tone of this line there is an element of resistance and anger: the man being condemned is not entirely passive. “Yes, Officer” simultaneously emphasizes the expressive value of language and its susceptibility to manipulation.

Language is also depicted as a tool of the authority culture used to marginalize minorities in “Deportation,” also from *Selling Manhattan*. This dramatic monologue is voiced by an immigrant being deported from Britain. Duffy denounces British immigration policies in “Deportation” by describing the U.K. as cold and unwelcoming: “They have not been kind here” (1). The speaker identifies himself in the xenophobic majority culture terminology—“Now I am *Alien*”—just as the speaker of “Foreign” names him/herself as foreign (9, emphasis Duffy’s). Kinnahan has observed Duffy’s tendency to manipulate these and other “terms central to a discourse of ethnic nationalism”—including ‘alien,’ ‘British,’ and ‘home’—in order to reveal

them as unstable and contingent on perspective (Kinnahan 2000, 210). By italicizing and capitalizing the term “*Alien*,” Duffy sets it off from the rest of the text and urges the reader to consider it as a culturally constructed term that needs to be reconsidered. While the speaker does identify himself as “*Alien*,” he recognizes the strangeness of this category. In the previous stanza the speaker discusses his childhood concept of the world—“I used to think the world was where we lived / in space, one country shining in big dark” (6-7)—and in light of that image of the earth as a unified entity, using the term “*Alien*” to describe a human being is highlighted as ridiculous.

The speaker of “Deportation” has attempted to assimilate into British culture by learning English, but now “the words I’ve learned for supplication, / gratitude, will go unused,” implying that in his short time in Britain, the speaker was not able to dialogue with others; he was linguistically and culturally isolated (2-3). The speaker’s attempts at even meekly making use of the majority language—not using it to colonize, but to appease—are rejected. The poem depicts how language can be used to drown sense: the deportation officials “recite official jargon endlessly” (16). The speaker is situated in what Michelis terms the “in-between space” where he “cannot be where ‘they’ are, and the place where he is does not exist, which effectively produces the position of the foreigner as an empty space” (Michelis 2003, 86). Duffy uses dramatic monologue here to speak in the voice of another, but the sensation of being “in between” cultures would certainly be familiar to her; it is not difficult to leap between the linguistic isolation of a foreigner from a place where “there are fewer jobs, / the young are sullen and do not dream” and the cultural isolation of a Scottish woman living in England (9-10). Finally, even universal signs are apparently absent from British communication for the speaker of “Deportation”: “Love is a look / in the eyes in any language, but not here, / not this year” (3-5). Language, then, is revealed

to be a tool for authorities to turn people away, and a broken communication system which segregates rather than connects.

However, certain lines in “Deportation” indicate the speaker’s resistance to this linguistic supremacy. Referring to his wife and baby, the speaker dreams that “We will tire each other out, making our homes / in one another’s arms” (14-15). This reflects Duffy’s recurring theme that home is an existential state created by people, love, and memory. In the final stanza of “Deportation,” the speaker recalls that in the official paperwork, “there was a space to write / the colour of her eyes. They have an apple here, / a bitter-sweet, which matches them exactly” (23-25). The requirement to list even this minute detail about his lover seems an overreach of authority, but the speaker is able to grasp control of the moment by creatively comparing her eyes to the apple. The immigration authorities may be able to physically deport him and nullify his attempts to learn the dominant language, but he retains some creative license and connection with his lover, and by extension with his home.

“Strange Language in Night Fog” from *Selling Manhattan* (excerpted in the epigraph to this chapter) is emblematic of the way that Duffy describes home as an existential, fantastical state. In the poem, several people walk through an environment that appears unfamiliar: “not only the dark, / but a sudden mist also, / made where they walked an alien place” (1-3). Elements of the environment play tricks on their senses, but what truly makes the place seem foreign is “a strange language, / spoken only yards away” (17-18). Michael Woods argues that the poem is “an acknowledgement of what a poet faces in attempting to make meaning,” since “language is a sealed system that can refer only to its own interiority; unmeaning is only a short distance away and any certainty in naming is unstable and precarious” (Woods 180). The fog, which Woods believes represents the instability between signifier and signified, disorients the figures enough

that they doubt the reliability of the connection between the term “home” and the actual thing: “they told themselves / there must be a word for home, / if they only knew it” (20-22). While language as a whole is unstable throughout Duffy’s work, the word “home” is particularly shifty. “Strange Language in Night Fog” captures the sense of grasping for an all-encompassing term to accurately contain the sense of being home.

The two poems which conclude *Selling Manhattan*, “Plainsong” and “Miles Away,” are gentle, emotional reflections on love, language, and home. “Plainsong” imagines a return to this theoretical home that Duffy has been fantasizing about throughout the collection. It acknowledges the virtual inability to return, however: “This is your homeland, / Lost One, Stranger who speaks with tears. // It is almost impossible to be here and yet / you kneel” (9-12). The poem is written in the second person, its addressee likely an older person, as evidenced by references to his/her forgetfulness and description as “no one’s child” (12). Although the poem can be interpreted in multiple ways, it is most likely that the figure has returned (literally or imaginatively) to his/her hometown and is attempting to re-experience the sensation of youth.

In the speaker’s fleeting experience of this origin location in “Plainsong,” language is useless because it is arbitrary, and the environment refuses to be signified:

Listening. The words you have for things die  
in your heart, but grasses are plainsong,  
patiently chanting the circles you cannot repeat  
or understand. (6-9)

The speaker cannot remain in this ideal space forever, and the poem concludes with the environment insistently reminding him/her of the temporality of the experience: “distantly / the evening bell reminding you, *Home, Home, / Home*, and the stone in your palm telling the time”

(13-15). Literally, “plainsong” is a monophonic chant used in Western religions, so the evening bell may refer to vespers, one of multiple religious references in the poem. As Gonda puts it, “it’s not so much that there’s no place like home but that there’s no such thing as home—only the word itself, echoing itself again and again” (Gonda 18). One cannot ever truly re-enter childhood, nor can one bask forever in an illusion of being at home without reality intervening. “Plainsong” recounts not only the experience of an elderly person trying to recapture his/her youth, but also the sensation of almost being able to relive an experience but just falling short. Returning to one’s childhood home approximates the experience of youth and conjures up memories, but it is not equivalent to actually returning.

“Miles Away” is one of Duffy’s most poignant love poems, perhaps because the lover is not physically present in the poem and must be imagined by the speaker. In the two-stanza poem with seven lines per stanza (a variation on the sonnet, though lacking rhyme or the concluding couplet), the speaker imagines her lover, who is “miles away,” through “mak[ing] you up,” “inventing love” (11, 6, 12). While language is still inadequate to fully depict experience, the act of conjuring up, of representing experience through words and images, is recognized. The speaker acknowledges the inability of language to summon the lover—“I want you and you are not here”—but accepts an act of the imagination as temporary substitute (1). The speaker “breath[es] the colour thought is / before language,” which in Duffy’s poetry has proven to be the purest form of experience since it is unmuddled by our representative signs (2-3). The speaker claims to “imagine you, your movements clearer / than the words I have you say you said before,” reinforcing that imagining a situation is more possible—and perhaps feels more accurate—than reverting to memory (6-7).

“Miles Away” also plays with time and tenses, stating that when birdsong interrupts the speaker’s act of imagining, it “turn[s] what was to come, was certain, / into memory” (13-14). The speaker feels that his/her fantasizing ensures certainty, but reality intervenes and reverts his/her imaginings back to their foundations in memory, as well as reminding him/her of the current passage of time. The poem concludes with the brilliant line “The stars are filming us for no one,” implying that the couple’s life is a movie no one will ever see and mirroring how the speaker is playing a sort of film reel of memories of the lover in her head (14). Their passion is deep, but not exhibitionist. “Miles Away” is a fitting final poem for *Selling Manhattan*, as it ties together home, love, language, and nostalgia in an evocative poem of longing.

Duffy’s discussion of how language and power interrelate is particularly clear in her 1990 collection *The Other Country*, which explores relationships with other places, times, and emotions which are now lost and beyond accurate remembrance without the aid of imagination. The collection focuses on home (sometimes explicitly Scotland), and includes political poems (most aimed at the British government and society in the 1980s) as well as love poems. This collection vaulted Duffy to acclaim and established her as a serious poet in the U.K. (Michelis & Rowland 19). The broadening of the definition of “homesickness” to include “when, where, what” (21) from “Homesick” in *Selling Manhattan* is further explored in *The Other Country* through more sensory experiences of nostalgia. Kinnahan argues that “positionality in language becomes more explicitly explored in *The Other Country* through poems asserting an increasingly self-conscious linkage between acts of language and operations of power within authoritative structures” (Kinnahan 1996, 261). This is evidenced by how Duffy plays with form, voice, and direct reference to language usage in such poems as “Translating the English, 1989,” “River,” and “The Way My Mother Speaks.” Many of the poems from *The Other Country* convey anger



and passion: they express the frustration of a displaced person dissatisfied with her current home and seeking a sense of true belonging.

In *The Other Country*, Duffy lends unique insight into English politics and culture through her perspective as a Scottish immigrant. Throughout the collection, “Duffy plays on the theme of displacement, the experience of being an outsider in your own country and culture, presenting alienation as an integral part of lived subjectivity” (Michelis & Rowland 18). These poems reveal “the creative but painful privileges accorded to the outsider” (Elphinstone 68). The experience of being the Other is painful, but it does endow a clear perspective on the society in which one lives, and in Duffy’s case it has inspired many brilliant, emotional poems. Displacement is, to some extent, essential for this creativity: in this collection “exilic loss is figured as painful and yet intrinsic to desire and imagination” (F. Wilson 26). Duffy’s situation is particularly unique: as O’Brien phrases it, “Neither uprooted or rootless, but not having taken root, Duffy can stand as an emigrant in the country of which she is technically a citizen” (O’Brien 160). As an “inner émigré,” in Heaney’s terms, she can draw on her own alienation for inspiration.

However, *The Other Country* is not an autobiographical collection; it offers few to no personal details and Duffy often uses the dramatic monologue form to depict the exiles of others. Many of the poems in the collection refer to Duffy’s childhood emigration from Scotland to England and describe childhood itself as a center of powerful nostalgia and vivid, fractured memory. McCulloch notes that

Duffy transforms her own childhood emigration into words and images which speak more widely of the experience of displacement, chosen or forced. In showing how impossible it is to reconcile what is remembered with what now is,

she also shows how fragile our personal memories of our past are, how difficult it is for *our* certainty of our childhood experience to be reconciled with what those who were then the adults tell us that experience was. (McCulloch 21)

McCulloch is referring to “We Remember Your Childhood Well,” but the concept of memory as unstable and manipulable runs throughout *The Other Country*.

Critics disagree over the exact meaning of the title of *The Other Country*. Some believe it refers directly to Scotland, since certain poems in the collection, including the opening poem “Originally,” refer directly to Duffy’s childhood emigration from Scotland. Some, however, perceive the “other country” to be England or Britain. Michelis claims that England is the other country, defining “other” as the country to which the person has immigrated and feels that he/she is the Other. Alternately, she also claims that the “other country” could refer to the country of origin from which the speaker has become estranged: “the home country is exposed as the Other Country in which we are foreigners and have lost our bearings” (Michelis 2003, 96). This second viewpoint is more in line with S. Smith’s argument, which posits that “the true location of Duffy’s 1990 collection *The Other Country* is an intercalated ‘otherwhere,’ not simply the Scotland which she had to leave as a child to live in an alien England, but an existential space in the interstices of many places” (S. Smith 101). I agree with both aspects of this statement: first that the other country literally refers to Scotland in several instances throughout the collection, and second that the other country is not necessarily a literal location but rather an imagined or remembered space or feeling. This is consistent with the definition of homesickness throughout Duffy’s work, since Duffy’s speakers rarely long to return to a physical place but rather to reclaim a feeling. Smith continues:

at the core of the self there is another. For Duffy this otherness can sometimes be figured as the truly authentic, that reality which was forfeit when the self was uprooted from its true home, in the other country of the Imaginary, and translated, which is to say displaced, into the particular places, things, words of one's actual, contingent identity. (S. Smith 116)

O'Brien takes a simpler view, considering the "other country" to merely be the past (O'Brien 160). In my view, the term does not, and need not, have a singular, fixed definition in the context of this collection. However, some combination of Smith's and O'Brien's views seem most apt: "the other country" refers directly to Scotland at times, but for the most part refers to our memories and creative re-imaginings of the past. The term is not isolated to Duffy's collection, either, but echoes the oft-quoted line from Christopher Marlowe's play *The Jew of Malta*: "Thou hast committed — / Fornication: but that was in *another country*, / And besides, the wench is dead" (Marlowe, IV.I.40-43, emphasis mine). T.S. Eliot (whom Duffy reveres) uses this line as epigraph to "The Portrait of a Lady," and many other writers, including Ernest Hemingway, have excerpted this line in their works (Eliot). In the sense of Marlowe's play, the "other country" is used to relieve guilt and indicate how the character has changed since sinning, and to some extent this sense of distancing is also present in Duffy's use of the term.

"Originally," the opening poem in *The Other Country* and one of Duffy's most acclaimed poems, explores the relationship between origins, emigration, and language, and comes to no simple conclusions. In three octaves, the speaker describes moving from "our own country" to a new place, one which is unfamiliar and uncomfortable (1). The poem, while sophisticated, evokes the viewpoint of a child and thus uses fairly simple structures comparably to Elizabeth Bishop's "In the Waiting Room." It is written in a combination of first-person and second-person

voice, which creates an interesting tonal combination of relating personal narrative and sharing wisdom. The first lines of “Originally” comment on how absurd family moves seem from the child’s perspective by playing on how the tornado transplants Dorothy’s house in *The Wizard of Oz*: “We came from our own country in a red room / which fell through the fields” (1-2). The anxiety of leaving the place which the speaker had established as home is reflected by the crying of her brothers, “one of them bawling *Home, / Home,*” in an echo of the conclusion of “Plainsong” (4-5). The child projects her inability to perceive future life in a new context onto a stuffed animal: she “stared / at the eyes of a blind toy, holding its paw” (7-8). Despite this anxiety, through, the speaker acknowledges in the first line of the second stanza that this displacement is a universal experience by claiming that “All childhood is an emigration” (9). The poem simultaneously emphasizes the sudden exile of moving and recognizes the process of growing up as a sort of emigration: “Some are slow, / leaving you standing, resigned, up an avenue / where no one you know stays” (9-11). This notion of growing up from childhood as a sort of physical and existential displacement is a constant theme in Duffy’s work, and particularly in *The Other Country*.

Language loss and acquisition mark the emigration in “Originally.” The speaker’s native accent marks her as an outsider, but her subsequent assimilation into the new culture and acquisition of a new voice cause just as much distress because of her perceived loss of the original culture. In the second stanza the speaker explains that, upon arrival in the new setting, “your accent [is] wrong,” and that “my parents’ anxiety stirred like a loose tooth / in my head” (12, 15-16). Not only does the accent sound foreign in the new culture, but the familial anxiety over moving contributes to a metaphorical sense of impaired ability to speak. Language is a tool used by the authority figures; in this case, “big boys / eating worms and shouting words you

don't understand" (13-14). As time passes, the speaker becomes increasingly assimilated into the new culture, and the climax of this cultural transition is her loss of the native voice: "I remember my tongue / shedding its skin like a snake, my voice / in the classroom sounding just like the rest" (19-21). Here, language loss is associated with lack of not only cultural identity but also individual identity, and framed negatively in terms of loss rather than celebrating the gain of a new mode of speech (likely because one language is not added to another; rather, the new speech overrides the old accent, erasing it). Wilson adds that "below this new 'self' remains the resistant tug of the Scots word 'skelf' (meaning splinter), a discomfort that produces difficult feelings, like shame, but also a consciousness, an openness, to her ways of being, that may, in fact, be crucial to the creative imagination" (F. Wilson 26). Again, homesickness and cultural transition are painful but provoke creativity and new perspective. Kay's poem "Old Tongue" also explores the sensation of losing language after migrating, although her poem makes explicit that the speaker is moving from Scotland to England (this poem will be analyzed in depth in Ch. II). If we take "Originally" to be autobiographical for Duffy, and the migration to occur from Scotland to England, then this sense of cultural erasure following emigration is consistent with the tendency to view Scotland as richly cultured while England is monocultural. It's easy to conjure up stereotypes of the Scots—whisky-drinking, kilt-wearing folks with thick brogues—but the English are harder to place.

The speaker's turmoil over experiencing involuntary changes both of context and of her own speech patterns prompts her to question what exactly has shifted in the aftermath of the migration:

Do I only think

I lost a river, culture, speech, sense of first space

And the right place? Now, *Where do you come from?*

strangers ask. *Originally?* And I hesitate. (21-24)

The use of “only” and the framing of the statement as a question add depth to these final lines. The speaker asserts that she lost these listed items, but implies through using the word “only” that the cost of moving may have been even higher. She has no way to fully know how many aspects of self and identity were erased or eroded in her shift from childhood and the original home to maturity in a new location and culture. Kinnahan offers a possible explanation for the speaker’s confusion:

In part, the hesitation suggests the varying cultural resonances with which the phrase ‘our own country’ becomes invested in post-colonial Britain. While the claim to ‘my country’ echoes through the mainstream discourse as a way of identifying a British identity that is ‘native,’ the immigrant’s attachment to his/her country of origin is perceived as a threat to successful assimilation. (Kinnahan 2000, 213)

It is difficult for the speaker to state where she “comes from” without being perceived as an immigrant, and therefore unassimilable. However, nor does she fit into the category of wholly English, or completely “of” the new country. Duffy does not attempt to solve the “issue” of having multiple place-based identities in this or any of her poems; rather, she honestly illustrates the sensation of simultaneously claiming multiple origins and thus not being able to claim any single one as her home. Maccubbin takes a more simplistic reading of “Originally”: “What is one’s identity? The child had the answer all along: no matter where you are, you belong in, live in, your own country: you are your own country and that is your identity” (Maccubbin 29).

While perhaps not incorrect, this analysis is reductive and glosses over the complexities—and

pain—that accompany emigration, attempted assimilation, and language loss that Duffy depicts with such nuance.

Others of Duffy's poems reinforce the connection of language to home in a more positive sense. "The Way My Mother Speaks," from *The Other Country*, is typical of Duffy's poems "in talking about intimacy and separation through entangling place and language" (Porter 78). The speaker contemplates her mother's voice while riding a train south from a visit to her mother in Scotland to her current home in England. The poem uses two refrains, first a common phrase of the speaker's mother— "*The day and ever. The day and ever*" (5, emphasis Duffy's)—and then a common phrase of the speaker: "*What like is it*" (11, 14, emphasis Duffy's). The echoing of the mother's phrase reinforces the connection between home and language: in a literal sense, it honors the concept of the mother tongue. The repetition of the mother's phrase is like a mantra for the speaker—"I say her phrases to myself / in my head / or under the shallows of my breath / restful shapes moving" (1-4)—giving her a sense of rootedness even while the train draws her away from her physical home. Thus, in "The Way My Mother Speaks," language is a more reliable connection with origin than physical location. S. Smith, however, reads more turmoil into the poem, perceiving it as autobiographical for Duffy:

For if her mother speaks with an unfamiliar Irish brogue and idiom in Glasgow, creating for the child a primary dislocation between mother and father, home and playmates, so, moving to England at the age of four, that child is doubly 'dislocated,' endures a new linguistic dislocation, where Irish and Glasgow Scots alike are alien, and the self no longer remembers what 'home' and language it is homesick for. (S. Smith 102)

Smith believes that the mother's phrases are not repeated as a mantra for the speaker's comfort, but rather are being chewed over as additional evidence of the speaker's complicated linguistic heritage. I agree that the speakers of "The Way My Mother Speaks" and "Originally" both experience anxiety over their multilingualism, but the tone of "The Way My Mother Speaks" is primarily one of respect for the mother tongue; after all, it ends with the speaker proclaiming that she is "in love / with the way my mother speaks" (22-23). The poem concludes with a confluence of emotions. The speaker's assertions that "I am happy and sad" and "I am homesick, free, in love / with the way my mother speaks" initially seem contradictory in their juxtaposition with homesickness and freedom (16, 22-23). Porter explains that the speaker is "homesick for the time before the child separated from the mother, yet she also celebrates the freedom which separation allows and the love she can feel for her mother because she is distant enough to hear her mother's distinct voice" (Porter 78). Again, the sensation of nostalgia is recognized to be simultaneously painful and inspirational.

"The Way My Mother Speaks" immediately precedes "In Your Mind," the final poem of *The Other Country*. Written in second person and composed of four sestets, this poem is set in England, prompting some critics' beliefs that the "other country" is England. However, that opinion seems erroneous, for in the poem the speaker mentally imagines a trip to this "other country" while remaining physically located in England. Its opening line provides the title of the collection and encapsulates the theme: "The other country, is it anticipated or half-remembered?" (1). By this point in the collection, Duffy has proven that it is both: this existential state of the past and memory of home is anticipated by the human longing to return to youth and stable identity, and we also attempt to remember it, though memory is faulty and cannot fully recapture the sense of childhood. The imagined journey of "In Your Mind" is a fantasy of escape: the



figure desires to “put away [her] work and head for the airport / with a credit card and a warm coat” (4-5). She mentally embarks on this journey, and the middle two stanzas recall or reimagine life in this “other country,” illuminated by the rose-colored glasses of nostalgia. The figure pulls loved ones from memory, and in a beautiful trick of language, Duffy describes this sensation as sort of photographic documentation: “You know people there. Their faces are photographs / on the wrong side of your eyes” (7-8). The state is depicted whimsically and surreally, as evidenced by a scene in which a “beautiful boy / in the bar in the harbour” serves the figure a drink and “asks you if men could possibly land on the moon. / A moon like an orange drawn by a child” (8-9, 9-10). This question firmly situates the poem in the past, prior to the moon landing of 1969. The figure’s response—“No. / Never.”—expresses a desire to keep some spaces mysterious, and to rewrite history so that the moon is left untarnished by human conquest (11-12). The adult figure, with her English responsibilities, looks to the “other country” as analogous to the moon: too far away to realistically visit. In the third stanza, she imaginatively experiences the other country as unchanged by time. She mentally returns to a time when “[she] go[es] to [her] job, right at the old hotel, left, / then left again. [She] love[s] this job” (15-16). Finding the workplace is natural and automatic, and the woman has a sense of peace in this familiar locale.

However, in the beginning of the fourth stanza, there is a shift so that the reality of this place is compromised and confused:

Then suddenly you are lost but not lost, dawdling  
on the blue bridge, watching six swans vanish  
under your feet. The certainty of place turns on the lights  
all over town, turns up the scent on the air. (19-21)

The figure is unsure of her relationship to the place; she is simultaneously “lost but not lost” and experiences a “certainty of place” even when we know that she physically remains in England and the trip to the “other country” was a mental fantasy. S. Smith notes the multiple conflicting senses of belonging in the language of the poem and comments that

such verbal destabilization dissolves the certainties of place in order to instate a different kind of certainty, a momentary access, “In Your Mind,” to that other country, that otherwhere upon which here and now depend, and to which language, fluent in the negotiation of absences, provides an access. (S. Smith 102)

The destabilization of place allows one the imaginative freedom to relinquish typical concepts of space and nation, and thus allows the speaker to access this existential “other country.” The poem seems to hint that if, as readers, we let go of strict notions concerning the actual, physical location of the “other country,” whether we conceive of it as Scotland, England, or any other literal place, we are able to perceive this more universal state of “otherwhere” (in Smith’s terms) which is the state for which we feel homesickness.

In the conclusion of “In Your Mind,” the speaker is briefly able to transport back to this state: “For a moment / you are there, in the other country, knowing its name” (21-22). In Duffy’s poetry, as discussed earlier, naming is revealed to be a faulty system since language is generally arbitrary. Maccubbin argues that “the remembered place, Scotland, for instance, may be an illusion: the only certain thing you’re sure exists is its name” (Maccubbin 29). His assumption that the “other country” is Scotland is superficial, though in the context of this poem the “other country” is certainly an illusion because it has been conjured up and re-imagined by the speaker. I would argue also that the name is not important—its name is not actually given in the poem—but rather the key point in this line is that imagination has the power to actually conjure the full

sense of the “other country” to the extent that it feels real to the speaker. While Duffy’s work proves language to be inadequate for recalling the past, in “In Your Mind,” the power of imaginative escape is a strong enough tool to evoke the sensation of existence in the “other country.” In the concluding line of the poem, the figure snaps back to her actual physical location in England, which juxtaposed against the mystery and beauty of the other country appears rather dreary: “And then a desk. A newspaper. A window. English rain” (24). These items can be read as symbolic of the quotidian experiences of writing, political events, being trapped, and the cliché of terrible English weather. The power of the imagination to conjure up fantasies and reimagine the past is one of the central themes of Kay’s poetry as well, and will be explored further in Chapter II.

While memory can be used as a tool to recall past sensations, as in “In Your Mind,” memory is also revealed as highly manipulable and unstable elsewhere in *The Other Country*. The poem “We Remember your Childhood Well” is written in the voice of parents assuring their adult child that his/her childhood didn’t happen as the child remembered it. The child believes his/her youth was fraught with danger and argument, but the speakers try to convince him/her that “Nobody hurt you. Nobody turned off the lights and argued / with somebody else all night. The bad man on the moors / was only a movie you saw. Nobody locked the door” (1-3). The details of the child’s traumatic memory grow increasingly appalling, culminating in the final stanza’s “No, no, nobody left the skidmarks / of sin / on your soul and laid you wide open for Hell” (22-24). The line structure is fairly consistent and repetitive throughout “We Remember Your Childhood Well,” with many curt, short sentences beginning “Nobody” or “We.” The speakers’ tone is dismissive and condescending.

Facts and historical events are given preference over imagination by the speakers of “We Remember Your Childhood Well” when the parents discount the experiences of the child and assert that “What you recall are impressions; we have the facts” (13). Furthermore, they tell the child that “The whole thing is inside your / head” (11-12). In Duffy’s poetry, childhood is not a physical event able to be captured in facts—rather, for the adult, childhood exists through sensation and imaginative creation—so the concept that this memory is “inside your head” and based in “impression” is natural and obvious. The poem implicitly asks, “Is there a true set of facts, an experience to return to? How does one construct a narrative of self when facts are ideologically manipulated?” (Kinnahan 1996, 256). It thus acknowledges the impossibility of true recollection or return to the past because memory is fallible and susceptible to alteration.

“Translating the English, 1989” also investigates how experience can be manipulated, but it looks specifically at language. Spoken in the awkward grammar of a tour guide immigrant still getting accustomed to English (or a mockery of the stunted speech of tabloids), it is a convoluted welcome to other newcomers to Britain. It mixes the bad with the good, emphasizing consumerism and stereotypes of British food, weather, and politics:

The Fergie,

The Princess Di and the football hooligan, truly you will  
like it here, Squire. Also we can be talking crack, smack  
and Carling Black Label if we are so inclined. (10-13)

The tone grows even darker and more critical as the poem progresses, introducing “Filth. Rule Britannia and child abuse. / Electronic tagging, Boss, ten pints and plenty rape. Queen / Mum” (27-29). S. Smith observes that in the poem, “‘the English’ refers simultaneously to a people and to an alien yet familiar language, and identity involves a continuous recasting of the self through

acts of translation which cross and recross linguistic and emotional barriers” (S. Smith 116).

British culture in the poem is simultaneously diseased and diverse; it is unable to be expressed by any one stereotype or product. The choppy, seemingly inarticulate language is critical to the poem, since it seems to be narrated by an outsider who can see the true Britain that natives may be blind to, which is the position that Duffy inhabits in England.

Interestingly, Duffy recently updated “Translating the English, 1989” with a new, more politically correct version entitled “Translating the British, 2012” which reflects an altered sense of British pride. It focuses on the cultural unity around the London Summer Olympics, and in standard, non-stunted language, proclaims, “We speak Shakespeare here, / a hundred tongues, one-voiced” (4-5). While the poem does acknowledge some societal ills, including austerity policies, it displays nearly propaganda levels of pro-British sentiment, leading one to consider how Duffy’s politics may have changed since her appointment as Laureate. When asked, “Do you feel more involved in politics now?” in 2011, Duffy replied: “Not at all. All my political or social thinking is done through my poems, but [about] issues I see as moral, not political” (Duffy qtd. in McKinley, n.p.). Contrasting these two versions of “Translating the English,” however, it is clear that her political commentary has grown less biting over the past twenty-five years. This may be attributed partially to her new state duties as Britain’s Poet Laureate, but also, perhaps, to her aging and increased sense of belonging in England: the pain of her displacement from Scotland is perhaps not so fresh now as it was in the 1990s.

“River,” one of the final poems of *The Other Country*, is perhaps Duffy’s most eloquent commentary on the arbitrariness of language and the complications of translation. It imagines a river which crosses the border between two countries:

At the turn of the river the language changes,

a different babble, even a different name  
for the same river. Water crosses the border,  
translates itself, but words stumble, fall back (1-4)

The physical entity of the river transcends political borders and different languages and so naturally “translates itself,” but humans with their diverse cultures have “different name[s]” for the same river. The words we use as signifiers are thus arbitrary and “stumble” in the face of nature. In the second stanza, a woman is introduced. The speaker does not understand her “strange sound[s],” and because he cannot translate her words, he perceives her to be “sing[ing] loudly in nonsense” (8, 17). The poem then asks,

What would it mean to you if you could be  
with her there, dangling your own hands in the water  
where blue and silver fish dart away over stone,  
stoon, stein, like the meanings of things, vanish? (12-15)

Kinnahan rephrases this question as “What would happen to our sense of self if we were to recognize our positionality in language?” (Kinnahan 1996, 262). Kinnahan reads anxiety over language into the poem, but I suggest instead that “River” is brimming with curiosity and wonder. The poem simultaneously reveals how language is arbitrary because it relies on systems of representation and also “uses words as a means of showing the way they reflect, and are rooted in, other countries or cultures” (Woods 176). Language is untethered to nature, but deeply connected to human culture and politics. “River” doesn’t condemn language or writing, but “confronts us with the arbitrariness and provisionality of our signs, but also their endless embodiments” (Porter 83).

The final couplet of “River” asks the reader to consider his/her own use of language: “If you were really there what would you write on a postcard, / on the sand, near where the river runs into the sea?” (18-19). The poem demands that we reconsider how we communicate meaning, particularly when trying to describe a place or experience, as we do when sending postcards. The postcard stands for any human language use: Kinnahan notes that “language, like the postcard, is an act of communication and needs forms or containers so that communication can occur; at the same time, the place of inscription, the position of the inscriber, makes language subject to the waters of change and erasure” (Kinnahan 1996, 2002). So, in “River,” language is both arbitrary and rooted in culture, both useful for communication and destructive as a tool for highlighting difference and miscomprehension. Duffy has used rivers as a metaphor for language several times, since “as an ultimate symbol of flux, a river is an ideal metaphor for Duffy’s exploration of the way language changes and the manner in which it relates to landscape” (Woods 177). The image of “blue and silver fish” (14) in “River” is echoed later in “The Light Gatherer,” from *Feminine Gospels*, which describes how “when language came, it glittered like a river, / silver, clever with fish” (14-15).

Three years after *The Other Country* was published to acclaim, Duffy released her fourth adult collection *Mean Time* (1993). In this collection Duffy continues to explore the themes of home, nostalgia, and longing to return, but now frames them more in terms of time than place. Duffy has explained that *Mean Time* concerns “the different ways in which time brings about change or loss” (Duffy qtd. in Rees-Jones, 45). The collection also tends to look more inwardly: Michelis and Rowland comment that “whereas *The Other Country* offers a balance of political, personal, and satirical poems, . . . *Mean Time* focuses on the plight of the self” (Michelis & Rowland 21). Duffy has commented on the personal toll of writing *Mean Time*:

I've always kind of moved between the very, very personal and the mythic and storytelling. I tend to swing between them. Usually, when I've done something that's absolutely killed me, like *Mean Time* . . . then I took refuge in the more cerebral. (Duffy qtd. in Patterson, n.p.)

Many of the poems in the collection refer back to childhood, and not all paint a rosy picture of innocent youth. In “Stafford Afternoons,” the speaker recalls a childhood memory of playing alone, wandering into the woods, and encountering the sexual advances of a naked man.

“Welltread” and “Confession” tell of childhood abuses at the hands of Catholic school authorities. “Never Go Back,” a sensorily rich homecoming poem, paints a horrid picture of a hometown as “the space where you left time pining till it died,” a place now so unfamiliar that “the places you knew / have changed their names by neon, cheap tricks / in a theme-park with no theme” (8, 35-37). Its conclusion wonders at the possibility of ever forgetting home: the speaker asserts that the figure is “an emigrant / for the last time,” although the rest of the poem implies a connection to the place so terrible that we know it can never be scrubbed from memory (42-43). Similarly, a passage from “Moments of Grace” reflects how powerfully negative childhood experiences pull people backwards to live in the past: “It seems we live in those staggering years / only to haunt them; the vanishing scents / and colours of infinite hours like a melting balloon / in earlier hands” (12-15). *Mean Time*, then, reflects on the past without any rose-colored glasses and instead reveals the seedy underbelly of childhood trauma.

“Nostalgia” depicts the negative, destructive effects of homesickness using historical narrative. In two stanzas of nine lines and a concluding ten-line stanza, it tells of “early mercenaries” whose war duties had them “leaving the mountains, leaving the high, fine air / to go down, down” (1, 2-3). The soldiers quickly encounter the unfamiliar, and this exposure to



foreign cultures is framed negatively. The men experience “the wrong taste, / stones in the belly; and the wrong sounds, / the wrong smells, the wrong light, every breath - / wrong” (5-8). This sensory list echoes the list from “Homesick” in which the speaker asserts that we are constantly trying to reclaim original sensation using the examples of love, light, and music. The soldiers’ longing for home is described as an acute “ache,” a “sweet pain in the heart” that “was killing them” (8, 12, 9). Etymologically the word “nostalgia” derives from the Greek “nostos” and “algos,” meaning “return” and “pain,” and this poem emphasizes the pain of not being able to return. Then, when this sensation is “given a name,” its reputation spreads among the soldiers and causes others to fear to leave their home countries (10). The fact that the subjects are mercenaries intensifies this sense of estrangement, since they are not only physically displaced but also required to fight for causes they have no natural stake in. While “Nostalgia” does not directly name Scotland as the home country, its references to “the music of home—the sad pipes” and “leaving the mountains, leaving the high, fine air” certainly suggest the Scottish Highlands (14, 2). *Mean Time* does not shy from suggesting physical locations as much as *The Other Country*, as certain poems directly refer to real locations (for example, “Stafford Afternoons” and “Oslo”).

In the final stanza of “Nostalgia,” the impossibility of truly returning home is reinforced.

One traveler returns,

with his life

in a sack on his back, to find the same street

with the same sign on the inn, the same bell

chiming the hour on the clock, and everything changed. (25-28)

First, the “life in a sack on his back” implies the portability of one’s affairs, both physically and metaphorically: we are not nor do we need to be constantly rooted to the land in order to physically survive. The repetition of “same” in the final phrases emphasizes how, despite the physical, superficial elements of home remaining constant, it is not the actual location but the sense of home which creates it. Thus, the mercenaries who suffered so deeply cannot be cured because they can never truly return to their homes. Michelis and Rowland comment that

the process of (nostalgic) remembering, the poem seems to suggest, does not allow us to revisit a known past but, on the contrary, reminds us that time and our notion of subjectivity are constructed in a framework of temporal relations which themselves are the closest to what we could know as a self. (Michelis & Rowland 25)

It is not only ventures to foreign countries but also the experience of aging that changes our relationship to the childhood home. As in “Plainsong,” aging distances people not only from childhood but from their memories.

In “Oslo,” Duffy discusses how traveling changes one’s perception of home. The poem is written in the second person and consists of four quatrains and a concluding couplet in the imperative. In a reversal of the situations in “Foreign” and “Deportation,” the addressee is now a British citizen venturing out to other lands (in this case, Norway). As in “Foreign,” the speaker names the subject as such: “You’re foreign here” (2). However, this term is now positive, conferring naïveté rather than guilt: “Not to speak the language makes you / innocent again, invisible” (3). Whereas in “Foreign” and “Yes, Officer” the lack of fluency was correlated with guilt, here it relieves the speaker of the responsibility to truly engage in the culture. Although these poems derive from different collections, it is useful to juxtapose them to note how Duffy

contrasts the experience of the traveler based on origin, race, and native language, since the white English-speaker is clearly respected more abroad than the non-white, non-English speaking immigrant is in Britain. “Oslo” also comments on the increased observation skills of the tourist in an unfamiliar place, as “the town reveals itself / the way the one you live in never could” (3-4). Being a foreigner endows a fresh perspective; our perceptions of home are swathed in memory and childhood dreams, but we are able to see foreign places more clearly. This theme is also pronounced in Kathleen Jamie’s early travel writing, which will be explored further in Chapter III.

In “Close,” the concept of home is directly linked to intimate experience with a lover, a premise similar to that of “Strange Place.” First, childhood is identified as a state which follows and shadows the adult figures in the poem: “In the dark journey of our night, / two childhoods stand in the corner of the bedroom” (1-2). Although the scene is sexual, childhood still colors it, and the poem implies that the sensation of being a child—of reveling in new experience and retaining some hope and innocence—is never truly lost. The lover’s sexual acts are described in terms of drawing and writing: “You have me like a drawing, / erased, colored in, untitled, signed by your tongue” (8-9). The experience of being intensely loved is thus one of being rewritten, of having one’s history inscribed over. This extends even to nationhood:

The name of a country written in red on my palm,  
  
unreadable. I tell myself where I live now,  
  
but you move in close till I shake, homeless,  
  
further than that (10-13)

Reminders of actual location are futile, since home is not a physical place but an existential state. Orgasm causes the speaker to briefly lose her sense of this state, and in this ecstasy, being

“homeless” is not a negative experience. The speaker’s new home is being defined, as it was in “Strange Place,” by this intimate experience.

As its title implies, Duffy’s 2003 collection *Feminine Gospels* centers on the female experience, and contains dramatic monologues as well as narrative story-poems and fairy tales. It is less directly focused on home than *The Other Country*, and less concerned with the effects of time than *Mean Time*, but it touches on these themes. “The Cord,” dedicated to Duffy’s daughter Ella, is a fairy tale poem about the perilous and misleading search for roots. A little girl goes searching for “the cord she was born with” which may literally be the umbilical cord and symbolizes familial and cultural ties (1). The girl grows obsessed with finding the cord, but “not a breath or a word / gave her a hint where she should go / to hunt for her cord” (28-30). Her search immerses her “into one huge darkness,” but she does find a glimmer of her past: “the stars were her mother’s eyes” (33, 34). The poem implies that true origins cannot be found. However, searching for them is not wholly futile, and the instinct to discover our true origins is innate and cannot be suppressed.

In her lengthy poem “The Map-Woman,” Duffy makes explicit the connection between self and home by establishing an extended metaphor for how origins cling to a person’s sense of self: “A woman’s skin was a map of the town / where she’d grown from a child” (1-2). In thirteen ten-line stanzas, the poem narrates this woman’s relationship with the way she has literally been marked by her childhood home. Anapestic meter and occasional rhyme combined with the surreal content give it the feel of a children’s story, a fable. The map of home is indelible yet changes with the woman: “a precise second skin, / broad if she binged, thin when she slimmed, / a precis of where to end or go back or begin” (8-10). The map marks locations but also evokes childhood memories of travelling those streets, not all of which are rosy: “She knew

you could hitch / from Junction 13 and knew of a girl who had not / been seen since she did” (74-76). Many locations are anthropomorphized, including the “railway station where trains sighed on their platforms, pining / for Glasgow, London, Liverpool” (49-50). The woman has physically left this hometown, and the poem summarizes her current location as less of a home and more a collection of transitory, relative, and mental states: “She lives down south, / abroad, en route, up north, on a plane or train / or boat, on the road, in hotels, in the back of cabs, / on the phone” (61-64). Even as a transient exile, however, she still remains connected with her origins through the skin-map.

In “The Map-Woman,” the map acts metaphorically on multiple levels. Most obviously, it symbolizes how we carry childhood experiences throughout our lives through memory, no matter where we physically travel. The poem also shows how our home experiences color how we see the rest of the world, as detailed in the tenth stanza: “She took a plane. The map seethed / on her flesh. She spoke in a foreign language. / The map translated everything back to herself” (94-96). The “seething” indicates that travel can provoke the painful sensation of nostalgia since it reminds one of the journey away from home. The concept of the map translating everything back implies that our childhood experiences affect how we perceive the rest of the world, with home acting as a kind of guide and shield that protects us throughout life. In the concluding three stanzas of “The Map Woman,” however, the plot shifts when the woman actually returns to her physical hometown. Just as in the conclusion of “Nostalgia,” home is not the same place. Duffy makes brilliant, albeit punny, use of cliché:

she went out, thinking  
she knew the place like the back of her hand,  
but something was wrong. She got lost in arcades,

in streets with new names, in precincts  
and walkways, and found that what was familiar

was only facade. (106-111)

Although home was a fixed, unchanging map on her body, the actual place has altered with time. At this realization of change, the map-skin melts off the woman's body as she sleeps: "her skin sloughed / like a snake's" (112-113). This line directly recalls "Originally," in which the speaker loses her native accent and complains of her "tongue / shedding its skin like a snake" (19-20). Both situations lament the loss of home, although "Originally" occurs immediately following a move and "The Map Woman" occurs when the woman returns to the home country to find it changed. The final lines of "The Map Woman" reveal that even though the speaker has realized home is a temporal state which cannot be reclaimed, she still hungers for it: "Deep in the bone / old streets tunneled and burrowed, hunting for home" (129-130). This desire is no longer skin-deep, but has consumed the speaker's body. Just as in "The Cord," these women realize that their hometowns and origins cannot be reclaimed but will continue searching for them regardless.

I have not discussed Duffy's love poetry in depth, which is an unfortunate omission since her love poems are powerfully built and full of aching nostalgia. They also discuss the loss of self upon leaving a home. Porter explains: "In Duffy's poetry love and language reveal lack, because the desired object cannot wholly be grasped without loss of identity" (Porter 84). I return to *The Other Country* for the final poem of this analysis. "Words, Wide Night" articulates how poetry can only grasp to capture the sense of being in love. As in "Miles Away," the speaker misses her long-distance lover, and expresses the confusion of emotions that come with missing someone: "This is pleasurable. Or shall I cross that out and say / it is sad?" (4-5). Words cannot adequately express the sensation of loss and longing. Duffy extends this concept by playing with

language: “In one of the tenses I singing / an impossible song of desire that you cannot hear. // La lala la” (5-7). Through the grammatically incorrect phrase “I singing,” she implies that longing, like nostalgia, crosses time: the poem intentionally confuses its tenses to express the sensation of desiring for the past to re-occur. The poem’s conclusion reinforces that words can only grasp at the sensations they depict: “For I am in love with you and this // is what it is like or what it is like in words” (9-10). The poem offers several iterations of the sensation of love in different terms, leading Woods to argue that “the limits of language are not contingent with the limits of feeling, something that Duffy continually seeks to address, offering a multiplicity of ‘translations’ that do ultimately speak to us in our own language, whatever that may be” (Woods 183). Although words are not adequate to directly translate the sensation of being in love, Duffy’s poetry can kindle a similar emotion within us. Her poetry comments on the relative futility of writing since it cannot recreate the past, but in doing that it reminds us of how powerful our direct experiences are. Duffy’s poems are strong, eloquent reminders of the indelible mark of our childhoods, the way in which our homes stay with us even after we leave, and how love is strong enough to create its own state of mind for which we can feel nostalgia. In short, Duffy is masterful at creating poems which almost—not quite but almost—allow us to relive the past.

## **Chapter II: Imagining Biological and Cultural Origins in Jackie Kay's Poetry, Fiction, and Memoir**

*Where do you come from?*

‘Here,’ I said, ‘Here. These parts.’

—“In my country,” *Other Lovers* (11-12)

Jackie Kay has experienced estrangement from Scotland both through physical displacement and the experience of discrimination against her race, sexuality, and political views, and her poetry expresses a strong defense of her legitimate claim to Scottishness and frustration at being marginalized. Her writing also thoroughly explores the complexities of biological, cultural, and national heritage and the way in which we use imagination to shape our personal histories. Kay tends to draw upon her biography for her writing, so it is useful to briefly outline her life story. She was born in Edinburgh in 1961 to a white Highlands mother and a Nigerian father and adopted at birth by white, Marxist parents in Glasgow, where she grew up (Rustin, n.p.). After studying English at Stirling University, she moved to London for a time. One of the motivations for Kay's move to England was the greater level of acceptance for poetry concerning lesbianism in London versus Scotland, and she is one of many Scottish writers to move south for work and exposure. As mentioned earlier, in the 1990s Kay was in a long-term relationship with Duffy. This personal relationship inspired both of them poetically, in terms of writing on similar subjects and sharing phrases and metaphors. Today, Kay teaches Creative Writing at Newcastle University and lives in Manchester (Scottish Poetry Library, n.p.; Rustin, n.p.).

Kay's work traverses many genres, styles, and subjects, but one constant theme has been an exploration of race, nationality, and what it means to be “legitimately” Scottish. In the 1980s



Kay collaborated with other female black British poets as part of the Sheba Collective. Together, they published collections and anthologies which “emphasize solidarity and the common experience of black British women rather than the diverse experiences that result from differing cultural and regional backgrounds” (Innes 318). Much of Kay’s work concerning race emphasizes the right of black British citizens to be recognized as legitimately British, so acknowledging and imagining a community of expressive black British citizens through the Sheba Collective likely fed into Kay’s later race-based writing. In the 1990s Kay’s work focused primarily on themes of political and personal identity, especially race, biological heritage, and Scottishness. This was likely driven both by her personal experience of discrimination in Britain and by the aforementioned imperative felt by Scottish female poets to assert their identities through poetry in the lead-up to devolution in the 1990s.

Never to be pigeonholed into one genre, Kay has undertaken literary projects in many writing styles, including novels, short stories, plays, poetry adapted for television and radio, and memoir. While now primarily known as a poet, she started as a dramatist, studying at the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama and writing for theater in the 1980s (Maturana; Severin 2004, 72). In addition to publishing written work, Kay also performs her work aloud and often writes poems designed for aural media. The multiple medias Kay uses bleed into each other across her work: her fiction is poetic in its attention to sentiment and detail while her poetry can feel theatrical in its use of the dramatic monologue and occasional conversational or narrative quality. Perceiving herself as someone who “experiments with form” takes away the pressure to religiously adhere to literary traditions and allows her the freedom to subvert and manipulate poetic form (Kay in H. Brown, n.p.). In 2010, Kay released *Red Dust Road*, a memoir which describes with humor, pain, and hope her search for her biological parents. *Red Dust Road* uses

multiple textual styles to convey its narrative, including correspondences with her parents, transcribed phone conversations, journal entries from certain dates, and direct storytelling. The narrative is conveyed non-linearly through glimpses into Kay's life so that it is hard to determine chronology, giving a sense of time and identity as fluid.

Unfortunately, the range of styles, subjects, and performance modes that Kay uses have led to some critics not taking her work seriously. Her tendency to write for the stage and perform live has tarnished her reputation for some in the literary establishment who consider live poetry to be less formal or sophisticated than written verse (her contemporary Liz Lochhead has received undue criticism over this as well). However, Kay understands the distinction between making poetry accessible and dumbing it down: "Getting people excited about language, the rhythms of language, and the way language works is a good thing, but dumbing it down is not" (Kay qtd. in Severin 2004, 94). Her writing for television and spoken word performance is neither "dumbed down" nor a negative reflection on Kay's writing abilities; rather, by expressing her ideas in multiple forms she is able to articulate them more fully and reach a wider audience. Furthermore, engaging in live poetry is not a new trend; as Severin observes, "the history of Scottish poetry is a performed one, with women having an important place in its early dissemination" (Severin 2004, 73). In performing her work live, Kay brings that tradition into a modern context and claims her place as a Scottish female bard. Kay has expressed a desire to be part of that Scottish "tradition that wants to see the drama that is in poetry" (Kay qtd. in Broom 66). She has a lively, expressive reading persona, and her Glaswegian brogue gives cultural context to her poems on Scottish identity.

Another way that Kay claims her Scottish literary heritage is by reimagining commonly used poetic forms for a modern age. Like Duffy, Kay manipulates the tools of her trade: her

poems don't meekly use traditional forms, but rather scratch at language to reveal its structures. This is particularly true with her appropriation of nursery rhymes and other children's poetry formats for adult poems (an example is "The Broons' Bairn's Black: a skipping rhyme," which will be discussed later). Kay also powerfully uses the dramatic monologue form, which likely derives both from her start in theater and from the mutual influence of her relationship with Duffy. C. L. Innes describes how Kay's use of thrown voice powerfully conveys personal histories:

In [Kay's] poetry, alternative cultures and perspectives are conveyed by 'voice' much more than by images or stories from a historical past or geographical distance, and with the emphasis on voice comes an emphasis on the authority of personal experience; however resonant and suggestive they might be of analogous experiences, her poems speak first of all as autobiography or biography rather than as group or communal history. (Innes 335)

Like Duffy, Kay doesn't recount history or pass judgment on politics in a sweeping, generalizing sense; rather, she tells individual narratives which are often more genuine.

Some in the literary establishment have criticized the way in which Kay writes from her own experience; these critics assume most of her writing to be directly autobiographical.

Maccubbin is unimpressed by Kay's work and believes that the poems in *Off Colour* "would have greater resonance if Kay had recast them with more imaginative and objectifying distance between her personal experience and the social and political issues she raises" (Maccubbin 21).

Similarly, Christopher Whyte cautions that "someone who writes so consistently and ruthlessly from her own experience gives the impression of a car driver perilously close to the kerb" (Whyte 2007, 84). Their observations are valid for some of Kay's work, perhaps, but neglect her

many dramatic monologues and other poems in thrown voice. Wilson has aptly argued that this critical opinion is “reductive” of Kay’s work and that “writing her self is an opportunity to stage questions about identity” (F. Wilson 27). Kay has responded to these critics and asserted that her autobiographically-inspired poems are not designed to be overtly confessional or exhibitionist:

I use my own experience. I create out of it. But I’m not trying to be autobiographical in the sense of having other people recognize it as my experience. I want other people to be able to read it and think it may be their experience. That’s the difference. (Kay qtd. in Wilson & Somerville-Arjat, 123)

Kay argues for the power and accuracy of poems that derive from personal experience; the adage “write what you know” is not for nothing. It can be tempting, certainly, to link a poet’s work to her personal life, and some of Kay’s collections invite that: the central figure of *The Adoption Papers* (1991) has a nearly identical background to Kay’s own, and the lost love poems of *Life Mask* (2005) written during the end of Kay’s decade-long relationship with Duffy do imply autobiographical inspiration. But to truly understand Kay’s poems, critics need to suppress the tendency to read her poems like tabloid headlines, and rather view them as individual works of art.

I firmly believe that Kay’s biography is not the whole sense and value of her poetry, but I do not deny the effect that biography has on a poet’s work: it is through one’s life experiences that one perceives the world and reflects that experience in poetry. Thus, at the risk of assuming authorial intent, I posit that the difference between how Duffy and Kay frame homesickness in their writing is rooted in their contrasting experiences of exile. Duffy grew up in Scotland in a large, biologically related family with a strong sense of religious and cultural heritage, but was then removed from that context when she moved to England. In her poetry, she associates the

past with a sense of childhood and cultural richness which cannot be reclaimed. Kay, however, was not able to know her biological origins for much of her life, which led to her fantasizing about her birth parents and their histories. These fantasies, and the inevitable gap between fantasy and reality, are one of the chief themes of her work. Kay's brand of homesickness is more for an imaginary place which never existed and was mentally shaped, whereas for Duffy, homesickness is for the sensations of childhood and first experiences.

Kay's work shares Duffy's perspective on the past, childhood, and love as existential states for which we feel nostalgia, and emphasizes the power of imagination in reconstructing an unknown personal history. In her memoir, she describes how "all anyone adopted really needs is a good imagination: more than genes or blood, it offers the possibility of redemption" (Kay, *Red Dust Road* 149). In her youth Kay fantasized about her birth parents—that her father was "young Sidney Poitier or Nelson Mandela or Martin Luther King or Cassius Clay," for example—and this helped her to cope with her adoption (Kay, *Red Dust Road* 37). However, upon finding her birth parents, she realizes that finding physical people and facts is not always satisfying because our psyches invent stories which may be more powerful or feel truer than facts. In *Red Dust Road*, Kay recounts how her parents tell each other stories about shared memories in order to keep their past alive. She argues, "It's not so much that people drown in memories, or that the past is *another country*; for my parents the past is their future" (Kay, *Red Dust Road* 122, emphasis mine). She refers directly to Duffy's concept of the "other country," interpreting it as the past but refuting its validity. This act of re-conjuring past events is not just remembering them but also re-creating them: Kay describes remembering as a creative, contextualizing, future-creating act. Even though Kay refutes the concept of the past as another country, her notion of the past as a state which we imagine and create is similar to that of Duffy's.

As discussed earlier, literary critics have focused on certain elements of Kay's writing at the expense of other notable aspects, creating a gap in research. The area of Kay's writing most often addressed is her race and how her writing negotiates race. This chapter focuses primarily on other themes in her work, but it is relevant to address how Kay explores the ways in which racism can cause people to internalize a sense of estrangement from their nation and culture. First, Kay objects to the labeling of poets and their work, because she feels it removes focus from the writing:

I usually define myself as a Black Scottish poet because that seems easiest. I think all these long lists after your name, being Scottish, feminist, vegetarian, socialist, it gets a bit much! I don't think the definition in itself is so important. What you write is important, and it's through your writing that people should get a sense of who you are. Because I write directly from my own experience, people do get a sense of the multiplicity of what I am. So I don't feel I need to sing it, all the time. If someone just called me a poet, that would be fine. (Kay qtd. in Wilson & Somerville-Arjat, 127)

The discrimination she faced having a dual identity frustrates her: "This irritates me, a lot, that people can't contain both things, being black and being Scottish, without thinking there is an inherent contradiction there" (Kay in Wilson & Somerville-Arjat, 121). As a teenager, Kay met American poet Audre Lorde, who told her that she didn't have to reject or deny her Scottish culture in order to be black; she could identify simultaneously with multiple cultures (Rustin, n.p.). Kay dislikes the term "black British" because she feels it is reductive of the multiplicity of character and voice that it purports to describe. In Kay's work, Katharine Burkitt argues, the term is "revealed to be not just inappropriate, but insufficient to articulate [Kay's] complex

engagements with those histories, memories, and narratives characterised by a multitude of voices that question the easy categories of “black” and “British” by foregrounding gender, sexuality, regionality, and the impact of transnational diaspora communities” (Burkitt 94). One of Kay’s chief skills is engaging with that multiplicity and illustrating the true diversity of British society in the late twentieth century. The term “black British” is also problematic because it implies that “those who are not white must in some sense be outsiders in British - and in [Kay’s] case, particularly Scottish - life,” which is frustrating for a poet who was born in Edinburgh and raised in the heart of Glasgow (Broom 59).

Kay’s work does not treat her blackness and Scottishness as oppositional forces; rather, her poems feature a diversity of voices, characters, and opinions, implying that a person need not be limited to one distinct character or cultural affiliation. The “hybridity” of her characters, however, is not in itself a solution to systemic racism; simply having a diverse society will not engender understanding. Hubel and Brooks argue that Kay’s work “not only refutes simplistic definitions of races and racial attributes, but also challenges utopian idea(l)s about racial and cultural *hybridity* as a condition that, in itself, resolves problems arising from racial differences” (Hubel & Brooks 1, emphasis theirs). In this sense, Kay’s poems from the 1990s imply that devolution and the potential establishment of Scotland as an independent nation will not inherently create a diverse and inclusive Scottish society. Matthew Brown suggests that

it seems as if Kay wants her readers to realise that the establishment of an independent parliament does not automatically remedy and resolve Scotland’s internal divisions; rather, it opens up challenging possibilities for the nation to recast its political and cultural contours on its own terms. (M. Brown 220)

Kay's use of the dramatic monologue promotes a diversity of perspectives, and she describes prejudice not in abstractions but through describing its impact on the individual and his/her community. By constantly framing the political in terms of the personal, Kay reinforces the idea that large societal shifts or political movements are only effective if they occur also within the heart and mind of the individual.

Kay's first poetry collection, *The Adoption Papers* (1991), explores themes of biological lineage, cultural heritage, family ties, race, and femininity while pushing at the formal limits of poetry. It is a lengthy poem in ten chapters which straddles the fence between drama and poetry: it is written in three voices—a daughter, her adoptive mother, and her biological mother—which are distinguished on the page by different fonts. *The Adoption Papers* was broadcast twice as a radio play by the BBC, once read by Kay in January 1990 and once in a dramatized form read by actors in August 1990 (Severin 2004, 73). It recalls Sylvia Plath's 1962 poem "Three Women," which also was spoken by three women, concerns fertility, and was broadcast by BBC Radio. The collection traces a black adopted daughter being raised by white parents in Scotland and focuses on how her concepts of identity and belonging shift throughout her life.

Because the facts, dates, and general narrative of *The Adoption Papers* match Kay's life story, it can be tempting to read the poems as autobiographical, and Kay has acknowledged that the process of tracing her biological mother in the 1990s inspired her to write the collection (Kay qtd. in Gish). However, because the poem uses dramatic monologue in three voices, Kay is writing not only from the perspective of the adopted daughter, but also as the birth mother and the adoptive mother. Interestingly, Kay has admitted that she "found it much easier to write the voices of the two mothers than I did the daughter," even though her experience was most closely linked to that of the daughter, revealing that drawing on autobiography does not necessarily



mean taking the easy route (Kay qtd. in Gish 176). Writing a collection from three perspectives requires considerable imagination and emotional range, so it would be reductive to perceive *The Adoption Papers* as some mere journaling exercise.

The multiple perspectives given in *The Adoption Papers* allow the reader to perceive the adoption story from multiple angles. Not only are the three characters distinct in age, history, and race, but they also have different modes of speech and the narrative catches them at different points in their lives. The voices are also differentiated by speaking style and the use of standard English as well as Glaswegian dialect. The characters are united by their female gender and by their shared history; Alison Lumsden argues that in *The Adoption Papers* “identity is, at times, constructed through a common language, a shared past, and common memories” (Lumsden 79). However, Wilson is also apt in her argument that the use of three voices

suggest[s] a script that is ‘unified’ only in so far as it is the product of different subjectivities, a process of knowing that cannot but complicate the adoptive daughter’s efforts to piece together the story of her origins, highlighting the ambiguous relationships between language, identity, and power. (F. Wilson 27)

Just as there is no single, omniscient narrator of *The Adoption Papers*, there is no definitive account of the daughter’s history or one perspective which can fully explain how she crafted her identity. Thus, she must navigate fact and imagination to construct a version of her past that can satisfy her.

The adopted daughter struggles with the desire to seek her origins. She is frustrated with how society considers her alien to her family because she is not biologically related to them—“I have my parents who are not of the same tree / and you keep trying to make it matter”—but she also feels that estrangement herself and longs to know her biological origins: “yet I confess to

my contradiction / I want to know my blood” (Ch. 8, lines 36-37, 44-45). Blood is a motif through the poem, and its symbolism shifts throughout: M. Brown argues that “in adult life the daughter’s imperative need to know where she comes from (‘I want to know my blood’) shifts from a purely biological enquiry into a quest for ‘home’ in terms of both culturally and nationally defined belonging” (M. Brown 224). The daughter explores the multiple symbolic meanings of blood: in terms of carried biological disease (“dentists and doctors ask / the old blood questions about family runnings”), family links (“the blood, the tie, the passing down generations”), literal blood (“I know my blood when I cut my finger”), and cultural heritage:

who were my grandmothers

what were the days like

passed in Scotland

the land I come from

the soil in my blood. (Ch. 8, 31-32, 38, 49, 54-58)

For the adopted daughter, questions of origin go beyond learning the facts about her birth mother: they encompass her biology, culture, and national heritage. Earlier in *The Adoption Papers* the child is satisfied with, even defensive of, her adoptive mother—“Ma mammy picked me (I wiz the best),” “I love ma mammy whether she’s real or no”—but later the urge to connect with her biological history overwhelms her (Ch. 6, lines 3, 11). Kay shows how, for children, the notion of non-biological family ties is often more comprehensible for children than for adults. As a child, the daughter in *The Adoption Papers* cannot understand the idea of her adoptive mother not being “real”—“After mammy telt me she wisnae my real mammy / I was scared to death she was gonnie melt”—implying that children can factually understand adoption and biological ties,

but they may not comprehend the fuss over what a “real” mother does, particularly when the woman raising them has all the attributes of a mother (Ch. 6, 23-24).

As Kay explains in *Red Dust Road*, one can never fully know one’s origins, so gaps in fact must be filled in with imagination. The daughter repeats the scant facts she knows about her mother’s life like a mantra, and in Chapter VIII they are interspersed with the mother’s voice (represented here in bold typeface):

She is faceless

She has no nose

She is five foot eight inches tall

She likes hockey best

**She is twenty-six today**

She was a waitress

**My hair is grey**

She wears no particular dress

**The skin around my neck is wrinkling**

**Does she imagine me this way?**

.....

She is faceless, she never

weeps. She has neither eyes nor

fine boned cheeks (Ch. 8, 73-82, 94-96)

Kay intended for the birth mother’s voice to be “much more ethereal, more wraith-like . . . the reader should be aware all the time, as she is listening to or reading these poems, that the birth mother is an imaginary person” (Kay qtd. in Gish 171-172). She is a projection of the adoptive

daughter's fantasy rather than a physical person. The contrast of fantasy and reality, past and present, questioning and fact, from the biological mother and daughter, both draws out their connection to each other (they are curious after the separation) and highlights the distance between them (they are forced to wonder because they know so little).

However, while the daughter relishes imagining her mother, she also craves a meeting with her: "Once would be enough, / just to listen to her voice / watch the way she moves her hands / when she talks" (Ch. 8, 97-100). Subconsciously, though, she realizes that this meeting will not be satisfactory. In the final chapter of *The Adoption Papers*, "The Meeting Dream," the daughter imagines a meeting with her birth mother, yet knows that it would never match up to her fantasy: "We don't cuddle or shake hands," "We don't ask big questions" (Ch. 10, 15, 20). The daughter realizes that she has creatively shaped her mother so many times that to meet her physically would be a contradiction:

One dream cuts another open like a gutted fish  
nothing is what it was;  
she is too many imaginings to be flesh and blood.  
There is nothing left to say.  
Neither of us mention meeting again. (Ch. 10, 38-42)

Interestingly, Kay published *The Adoption Papers* before meeting her birth mother (she was tracing her while writing it), yet the collection serves as a foreshadowing of this first meeting. She describes the tremendous excitement and inevitable disappointment in *Red Dust Road*:

In the weeks after that first meeting, I felt jangled and upset by it. I cried on and off for the best part of three weeks, unable to understand the extent of my distress. I couldn't understand what exactly was so upsetting. It was like a kind of grief;

only I'm not sure that I was grieving my birth mother, I think I was grieving the imaginary mother I'd had in my head . . . The story I had put together in the intervening years was not the woman who came through the sliding door in the Hilton Hotel in Milton Keynes. (Kay, *Red Dust Road* 67)

In emphasizing this distress, both in her memoir and *The Adoption Papers*, Kay cautions that playing with fire means getting burnt: facts will inevitably displace fantasies, and reality is often a poor substitute for the idealized parents adopted children tend to mentally envision.

Another way in which *The Adoption Papers* explores the porous line between imagined fantasy versus reality is through the motif of physical documents. The collection's title refers to papers that must be signed for an adoption, but also indicates that the poems themselves hold importance as personal narratives of the adoption. The adopted daughter simultaneously cherishes and dislikes these official documents; she constantly rereads the documents containing her mother's information, but also wishes she could shake the power they have over her: "All this bother, certificates, papers. / It is all so long ago. Does it matter?" (Ch. 5, 36-37). The daughter has a physical connection to the adoptive mother through daily interactions and to the birth mother through official documentation. The conclusion of *The Adoption Papers* implies that the power of these documents over the daughter will never end, as she fantasizes about receiving a letter from her birth mother:

waiting for the crash of the letter box  
then the soft thud of words on the matt.  
I lie there, duvet round my shoulders  
fantasising the colour of her paper  
whether she'll underline First Class

or have a large circle over her 'i's. (Ch. 10, 72-77, emphasis Kay's)

It is not merely the information within the letter that the daughter craves, but more so the physical fact of the letter itself. The birth mother exists in the daughter's mind, but a tangible piece of official paper would cause her to truly exist in the daughter's world. In the end, reality is still privileged over imagination, even though imagination is vital for imagining one's past.

The adoptive daughter's hunger to know the facts of her past is sated by both her imaginative ability to conjure up her birth mother and by her increasing loyalty to her adoptive mother. At the conclusion of *The Adoption Papers*, the daughter realizes that knowing her biological roots, while important to her, will not explain her life to her, and that cultural and familial factors were just as important in shaping her character as biological factors. Kay describes this aspect of adoption in her memoir:

The jigsaw can never, ever be completed. There will always be missing pieces, or the pieces will be too large and clumsy to fit into the delicate puzzle. The search is often disappointing because it is a false search. You cannot find yourself in two strangers who happen to share your genes. You are made already, though you don't properly know it, you are made up from a mixture of myth and gene. You are part fable, part porridge. (Kay, *Red Dust Road* 47)

Rather than dwelling in the despair of never truly being able to know one's origins, Kay suggests the power of the imagination to fill gaps in factual knowledge; indeed, *Red Dust Road* implies that while the search for birth parents can be illuminating, it can also be frustrating. The overall takeaway from the collection, Severin suggests, is a "message of the human being's potential for creative self-making," especially the re-creation of personal history (Severin 2004, 86).

Kay's poetry collection *Severe Gale 8* (1991), published in the same volume as *The Adoption Papers*, continues to explore the biological, racial, and cultural identity politics introduced in *The Adoption Papers*. Its poems navigate British political and cultural issues, including racism, homophobia, xenophobia, and economic issues, through a personal lens. One of the most striking dramatic monologues from the collection is "Whilst Leila Sleeps," which tells of a female immigrant traveling at night with her baby daughter only to be caught and arrested. Her terror strikes her dumb: "What is that fear. // Does it have a name. They want my name" (15-16). This recalls the inability to name extreme emotion of the immigrant woman from Duffy's "Foreign": "and now you do not know / why your eyes are watering and what's the word for this" (9-10). Both Kay and Duffy question the ability of language to accurately describe emotions, particularly for immigrants who speak multiple languages and find them all to be inadequate. Their poems attempt to give a voice to marginalized citizens of Britain who were not represented in British poetry until recently.

After the critical acclaim of her first collections, Kay continued to use her poetry to explore her identity as a Scottish woman, negotiating not only biological and cultural heritage but also concepts of nationhood and political allegiance. "Sassenachs" and "My English Cousin Comes To Scotland" from Kay's 1992 children's poetry collection *Two's Company* navigate the touchy cultural and linguistic divide between Scotland and England, revealing prejudice and elitism on both sides of the border. "Sassenachs," which uses as its title the derogatory Scots and Irish term for an English person (deriving from "Saxon"), is told from the perspective of a Scottish teenager traveling to London with her best friend. The friend is eager to pronounce Scotland's superiority over England, and wears stereotypical Scottish trappings: a "tartan tammy," "tartan scarf" and "the big bottle of Bru" (13, 15, 26; Irn Bru is a popular Scottish

soda). The friend's expectations cloud her perception of the trip, leading her to pronounce "England's not so beautiful, is it?" when the train hasn't yet crossed Scotland's southern border (17). The friend's fierce loyalty to Scotland blinds her to reality and incites prejudice, foreshadowing the way that Kay experienced discrimination from fellow Scottish citizens who assumed she was a foreigner (this concept will later be illustrated in "In my country").

The way in which a strong sense of cultural allegiance can cloud perception is also demonstrated in "My English Cousin Comes to Scotland," in which a Scottish girl bemoans having to translate for her English cousin:

See when my English cousin comes,

it's so embarrassing so it is, so it is.

I have to explain everything

I mean Every Thing, so I do, so I do. (1-4)

The speaker then relates a long narrative in thick Scots: "I was scunnert being skelped," and "I was knackered and I fell / into the mud and went home / mocket and got skelped again" (10, 15-17. *scunnert*: disgusted, nauseated. *skelp*: to strike. *knackered*: exhausted. *mocket*: filthy). The English cousin cannot understand, so the speaker victoriously proclaims her "Glaikit. / Stupit" (23-24. *glakit*: foolish). The speaker's sense of Scottish identity is strongly tied to her local dialect and she takes pride in how it deviates from standard English and creates a community of people who cannot be understood by outsiders. However, the speaker then makes a grammatical mistake in standard English and the cousin pounces on it "like she's scored" (28). The sense of linguistic oppression in Britain is felt in the English cousin's victory: no matter how proud Scottish citizens may be of their brogues, their minority languages must eventually defer in formal writing to standard English grammar. Through her exploration of language in "My



English Cousin Comes to Scotland,” Kay also questions the cohesiveness of Britain: Burkitt argues that “in Kay’s identification and characterisation of the two nations, she reveals the impossibility of their union and so questions the notion of Britishness” (Burkitt 87). Much of Kay’s poetry reveals and promotes the diversity and multiplicity in contemporary Britain, and demonstrates the friction between different groups caused by prejudice. However, Burkitt’s claim that Kay considers the union of Scotland and England to be “impossible” may go too far; this is, after all, a poet who resides in England yet sorely misses and identifies with her native Scottish culture.

Kay continued to navigate themes of nationality, race, and biological origins through a personal lens in her writing throughout the 1990s. Like Duffy’s *The Other Country* (1990), Kay’s 1993 collection *Other Lovers* explores estrangement, nostalgia, and the way in which home is not a stable state. It begins with a series of poems about American blues singer Bessie Smith and continues with poems that investigate cultural and familial ties as well as lost-love and long-distance-love poems. “Gastarbeiter,” “Sign,” “In my country,” and “Colouring In” from *Other Lovers* reflect different aspects of feeling excluded from one’s home culture.

“In my country” is perhaps Kay’s most well-known poem, and expresses both her sense of Scottish cultural pride and her frustration with Scots who feel they have a more legitimate claim to Scottishness than she does due to race. The poem is short enough to include here in its entirety:

walking by the waters  
down where an honest river  
shakes hands with the sea,  
a woman passed round me

in a slow watchful circle,  
as if I were a superstition;  
  
or the worst dregs of her imagination,  
so when she finally spoke  
her words spliced into bars  
of an old wheel. A segment of air.

*Where do you come from?*

‘Here,’ I said, ‘Here. These parts.’ (emphasis Kay’s)

The land itself is friendly and “honest,” but its people are fiercely suspicious of anyone who appears to be different. The speaker’s race is perceived as a threat by the xenophobic woman, and through the image of the wheel Kay implies that this racism is cyclical, that the woman’s comments are only part of a larger vehicle for systemic prejudice. “In my country” relies to some extent on the reader’s assumption that the poet is also the speaker, since the reason for the woman’s suspicion is not given in the poem and critics only read racism into it because they are aware of Kay’s race. The speaker’s answer—“‘Here,’ I said, ‘Here. These parts’”—is brusque and assertive, “seemingly demanding a recognition, without further justification, of multiplicity” (Lumsden 85). However, despite the speaker’s confident response to the racist question, the poem conveys a sense that she is harmfully estranged from her native culture. Elphinstone observes that in “In my country,” “identity is located precisely at the point of painful contradiction: recognition of and alienation from one’s own place” (Elphinstone 69). Kay has spoken to this experience of being alienated in Scotland and how it creates a sense of estrangement from oneself:

It is not so much that being black in a white country means that people don't accept you as, say, Scottish; it is that being black in a white country makes you a stranger to yourself. It is not the foreigner without; it is the foreigner within that is interesting. Every time somebody in your own country asks you where you are from; every time you indignantly reply, 'I'm from here,' you are subconsciously caught up in asking that question again and again of yourself, particularly when you are a child. (Kay, *Red Dust Road* 38)

This sense of being doubly alienated in the country of her birth—both by the culture and in her own sense of self—gives many of Kay's poems a sense of searching for a culture where the individual is recognized as truly, legitimately belonging, and reflects the internalization of Othering expressed in Heaney's concept of the "inner émigré."

Briefly, one of Kay's children's poems seems to tell the story of "In my country" from the old woman's perspective. "Yell Sound," from *Red, Cherry Red* (2007), is voiced by an old woman who seems to live in the Highlands "with the old stones and the sheep" (10). Isolated from international affairs, she "always looked out at the world, / and wondered if the world looked back at me" (1-2). The final lines recall those from "In my country" and carry a sense of regret at her failure to connect with others across the world:

I used to think I might be able—  
  
when the river ran to meet the sea,  
  
when the sun and moon shared the sky—  
  
to look out as far as eye could see,  
  
and raise a glass to the girl looking back at me. (16-20)

Although the girl in “Yell Sound” lives in another country and the speaker of “In my country” is decidedly Scottish, the similarities in language and character are striking. Comparing the two, it appears that while Kay is frustrated by the woman’s xenophobia and inability to look beyond racial appearance, she acknowledges that her shortsightedness may be to some extent caused by cultural isolation, age, and fear of change.

Several poems in *Other Lovers* discuss how a lack of language fluency can be used to Other and exclude people. “Gastarbeiter” describes a female immigrant worker in Germany following World War II and demonstrates her anxiety at being foreign through her paltry acquisition of the native language. Her disorientating arrival in Germany is described in terms of its difference from her native land: “When she moved to the new country / ... the light was the colour of metal / and the air was diesel / (although her words for these / were different)” (1, 3-6). Like the immigrant in Duffy’s “Deportation,” who learns the words for “supplication, / gratitude” (2-3), the woman in “Gastarbeiter” learns German to appease the authorities:

she learned the new tongue  
and spoke it like a faltering step  
wanting to please, *thank you*,  
nervous, crossing the road, eyes  
full of apologies, *excuse me please*,  
walking, quick, quick, to work (7-12)

Both Duffy’s and Kay’s poems demonstrate how the dominant language can be used as a tool for cultural oppression and demarcation of borders between the “native” and the Other. Even this woman, who attempts assimilation into German culture, is not spared: in the end her house is burnt to the ground. The arson is precipitated by “a soft terrifying sound, something / will fall

through the furious mouth,” which seems to imply the hateful language of the German people Othering the foreign woman (31-32). Although the poem mentions swastikas, the arson is likely not conducted by Nazis, as the gastarbeiters arrived in the 1960s and 1970s; it was more likely motivated by the racism inherent in German monoculturalism following World War II, which was not unlike the Scottish nationalist movement for homogeneity that discriminated against Kay because of her dark skin tone. Even as her house is burning, the woman in “Gastarbeiter” uses the German word for ‘daughter,’ still trying to fit in and understand the culture to which she has immigrated: “the grandmother, mother / daughter, *Tochter*, will be ghosts in another room” (35-36). However, the woman’s use of the dominant language does not save her from cultural, and physical, annihilation.

“Sign” also introduces a female figure discriminated against for her language expression and argues powerfully for the fluidity and polyphony of language. The subject is deaf, so she relies on her body to express herself, but the authorities in the poem do not recognize this as a valid language system: “That each symbol / was a sign was not thought / possible; *no language at all*” (6-8, emphasis Kay’s). Sign language is nullified as a communication system, and only spoken words are recognized. This viewpoint also discredits poetry, with its nonlinear systems of metaphorical representation. “Sign” describes the deaf woman’s way of processing and expressing the world as beautiful; this could be read as Kay’s *ars poetica*:

It is this  
  
vast linguistic space,  
  
this intricate grammar, growing  
  
as a fish grows its fin, a foetus  
  
its eyelashes. Nothing is

learnt. Everything grows  
in the right place. (26-32)

The deaf woman's—and the poet's—language use is depicted as natural and organic. This is not appreciated by the authority culture, however, and in the end the woman's hands are tied behind her back in an attempt to force her to learn the dominant (oral) language. Wilson reads “Sign” as a commentary on British linguistic diversity and the demise of minority languages and observes that “this attention to multiple language use and challenge to a dominant English tongue is articulated in Kay’s work through its multiple references to inclusion and multiplicity” (Williams 181). Similarly, Lumsden reads it, and the entirety of *Other Lovers*, as a commentary on “the ways in which the deprivation of one’s language may be seen as both a form of colonisation . . . and a means by which identity may be destroyed” (Lumsden 84). Like Duffy, Kay simultaneously questions the ability of language to wholly convey an emotion, recognizes the power of language to oppress, and celebrates the diversity of language.

“Colouring In,” from *Other Lovers*, depicts the disillusionment of returning to one’s childhood hometown as an adult. Similarly to Duffy’s “Nostalgia,” the poem describes how every aspect of home has shifted, due to the effects of times and the new perspective endowed by maturity. It begins, “When you go back, nothing is real,” and asserts that physical sensations are the key to feeling home: “You could fill the gap, know where you are, / if you could smell the cobbler’s leather” (1, 25-6). The woman addressed in the poem yearns for something familiar: “You want the voice of somebody real,” “You’d settle for someone you didn’t like. / Eileen Mackie with the buck teeth” (31, 5-6). Her childhood memories return in flashes illustrated by vivid sensation and emotion, including burning hair at the hairdresser’s and trying to jump out the dentist’s office window after being anaesthetized. The town feels smaller since the woman’s

perspective has altered since childhood: “The old primary school is a toy model; / it has a grey gate you can open and close” (7-8). Modernization and globalization have changed her hometown, introducing “drive-in *Texas*. / The same garish red and yellow in every town” (28-29). Even her parents’ home and bodies have changes: her childhood house now has an imitation fireplace and her mother has “had a change of heart” (42). This pun indicates both the mother’s changing attitudes and possibly a heart transplant: the woman must cope with the realization of her parents’ aging and mortality.

In the final two stanzas of “Colouring In,” the woman “drive[s] off alone to [her] place,” the Fintry hills, about twenty miles northeast of Glasgow (43). In this natural setting she finally finds her sense of peace and rootedness:

But only the hills, only the Fintry hills,  
the early evening light skipping  
across them like a wee girl with a big rope,  
  
the faraway rhyme of a song you used to know,  
the empty yellow stretch of land. (46-50)

In this unpopulated, natural space, the woman can recall her past and feel ownership over it. In the final lines she remembers participating in the British Easter tradition of rolling eggs down hills:

Only the hills where you definitely remember  
having an egg, a painted face of an egg,  
rolling it down, all the way down, to the bottom,  
where it did smash, it did, and you were happy, you were. (51-54)

The use of “definitely remember” is key: other memories are depicted in the poem in flashes of sensory recognition, but this memory feels more real. The repetition of “it did” and “you were” in the final line could be construed in multiple ways. One interpretation is that the woman has fully remembered this scene and is emphasizing that she was truly happy in the Fintry hills as a child. Alternately, the speaker could be attempting to convince herself that she does fully recall this memory: the second-person voice bolsters this argument, since it sounds like a two-sided conversation in which the speaker is reassuring the woman of the veracity of her memory.

“Colouring In” recalls Duffy’s “We Remember Your Childhood Well” in the way both use repetition in the second-person voice to assure a figure of a certain version of their memories. So, “Colouring In” emphasizes how childhood is a state which cannot be returned to, how hometowns evolve in our absences, and how memory is fickle and evoked most strongly through flashes of sensation.

As I have demonstrated, poems across Kay’s collections elaborate on the themes of home, childhood, nation, and migration, emphasizing both the pain of displacement and the power of imagining one’s past. “At Home, Abroad,” from her children’s collection *The Frog Who Dreamed She Was an Opera Singer* (1998), illustrates a child’s estrangement from a sense of belonging. In short, choppy lines the speaker, physically situated at home, describes mental vacations to “places I’ve never / been / where I might / see faces / I’ve never seen” (3-7). She vividly fantasizes about travel, and the poem concludes with her questioning whether her physical home is truly where she belongs: “myself, / cap-peaked, / wondering if I am / ‘home’” (37-40). The quotation marks around “home” set it off as a foreign term and imply that the speaker feels estranged from her place of origin. She finds her true sense of belonging in fantasizing about being elsewhere: her home becomes a mental state she creates imaginatively.



This idea is constant throughout Kay's poetry (and Duffy's), as home is constantly described not as a physical place but as an existential state to which one cannot satisfactorily return.

In the late 1990s, Kay turned again to explicitly address issues of racist, homophobic, and xenophobic discrimination in the U.K. Britain's nasty streak of prejudice is featured in her collection *Off Colour* (1998), which "diagnoses the systemic effects of racism, sexism, and homophobia, figured as viruses spread through society by language" (F. Wilson 27). In this powerful collection Kay takes on different voices, characters, and themes while constantly examining the systemic prejudice in Britain and worldwide. Kay sometimes uses the voice of the intolerant oppressor, exemplifying the misunderstanding she seeks to eradicate; these poems "embody an intolerance of the multivalent difference which Kay encourages her readers to embrace, suggesting that it is a failure to acknowledge multiplicity, either in ourselves or in our society, which is in fact the real ailment" (Lumsden 87). The collection focuses not only on race but also sexual orientation and other identity markers to exhibit multiple forms of societal multiplicity.

The short poem "The Broons' Bairn's Black: a skipping rhyme" concisely comments on the racism inherent in Scottish culture:

Scotland is having a heart attack

Scotland is having a heart attack

Scotland is having a heart attack

The Broons' Bairn's Black.

*The Broons* is a popular Scottish comic strip first published in 1936 in *The Sunday Post* and continuing today which illustrates a "classic," white, stereotypical Scottish family (Maturana 109). The Scots word "bairn" means "child," so the poem indicates that the Broons adopted a

black child and implies that Scottish culture is not prepared to accept a racially diverse society. By using a skipping rhyme, Kay acknowledges the racism inherent in the system which is passed down to our children, often in the most seemingly innocuous ways. She subverts the form of the skipping rhyme to reimagine it in a modern context and uses it to illustrate current societal ills.

“Pride,” the concluding poem of *Off Colour*, speaks to the deceptive power of imagining connections with one’s origins. Inspired by an event in Kay’s life, it takes the perspective of a woman on a night train crossing Britain who encounters an African man. The stranger recognizes in her face the features of the Ibo tribe in Nigeria, claiming ““That nose in an Ibo nose. / Those teeth are Ibo teeth”” (25-26). He reads her ethnicity through her face, and the speaker perceives that her “whole face changed into a map, / and the stranger on the train / located even the name / of my village in Nigeria / in the lower part of my jaw” (35-39). Fairly quickly the speaker accepts his determination and begins associating with the previously unknown to her Ibo culture: “I found my feet. / I started to dance. / I danced a dance I never knew I knew” (83-85). She trusts the stranger on the train and imagines him to be her kin:

Tell me, I asked the black man on the train  
who was himself transforming,  
at roughly the same speed as the train,  
and could have been  
at any stop, my brother, my father as a young man,  
or any member of my large clan,  
Tell me about the Ibos. (44-50)

Only a spark of suggestion is needed for the speaker to identify with a previously foreign culture. This newfound knowledge is framed positively, celebratorily, throughout the poem, but the joy is

undercut by the final couplet: “When I looked up, the black man had gone. / Only my own face startled me in the dark train window” (89-90). This conclusion could be construed in several ways, but the sense is that the mind will run free and situate the self in various fantasies with very little prompting: in this it echoes the passages of *The Adoption Papers* where the adopted daughter joyously but perilously fantasizes about her biological parents. Hubel and Brooks argue that “Pride” “eschew[s] easy celebrations of hybrid heritage”: it indicates that fantasizing about belonging in a community can bring momentary satisfaction but leaves enduring questions about the facts of one’s personal history (Hubel & Brooks 19). The poem captures how “the ‘quality of being certain’ about oneself is a desirable, but unattainable thing”—we can crave the facts but we will never know all the actual details, which can be incredibly frustrating (Winning 243).

Several of Kay’s poems comment on how trauma can obscure memory and confuse the facts of one’s personal history. In her powerful poem “Hottentot Venus,” from *Off Colour*, Kay speaks from the voice of the abused, showcased Saartje Baartman, the woman captured from South Africa and displayed naked in Britain in the nineteenth century. In the poem, Baartman expresses how estrangement from her homeland has caused it to become unreal in her mind: “My country is a dream now. Or maybe it did not exist” (31). This recalls the way in which Duffy discusses the “other country” as a sort of imaginary dream state. Like Duffy’s “Deportation” and “Yes, Officer,” “Hottentot Venus” also vividly illustrates how language is a tool of the majority culture. The speaker recalls her capture:

They asked me in my own bush tongue  
if I wanted to be exhibited in this fashion.  
I said the English words I’d heard them say often.  
Money. Freedom. My Boer keeper smiled. (33-36)

Language is a tool of the oppressor not only in its overshadowing of minority languages, but also in that those attempting to speak in the voice of authority may be ridiculed and unwittingly “out” themselves as the Other. As in “Gastarbeiter,” the woman’s use of the dominant language only endangers her more.

Not all of the poems in *Off Colour* address race; many discuss social injustices or traumas through personal narratives. One such poem is the heartbreaking “False Memory,” which illustrates how Kay’s theme of imagining one’s own personal history is connected not only to the lack of actual facts about one’s life, but also to a recognition that memory is unstable. The speaker has suppressed a memory of childhood rape by a family member, and in adulthood suddenly remembers: “I can still see him / coming through the crack of light / at the bottom of my room, / splitting me open like a nut” (9-12). The voice continually shifts from first to third person as the adult struggles to make sense of the traumatic memory. The woman wishes that she could reimagine or reinvent her history, but realizes that some facts, especially traumas, are indelible. Kay uses the metaphor of a flooded river to represent memory returning to the woman: “A bit of her would rather not remember; / but when I did the memory was a flood” (24-25). She associates this memory with her entire childhood which she had previously blotted out:

I saw myself, nine years old,  
shipwrecked, soaked, floating down  
the river with the lovely name,  
the name I can’t speak,  
without filling again, as if the  
river was my childhood,  
  
as if I could say I was

down by the river with the lovely name,  
and none of it happened. (31-39)

But the speaker must come to terms with the reality of the rape and admits to herself, “But one night it did. / And then it happened again. / And then it happened again” (48-50). The poem provides a counterpoint to much of the wishful thinking in *The Adoption Papers* and *Red Dust Road*, where Kay praises the power of re-creating one’s past through imagination. It acknowledges the impossibility of erasing certain events and facts, no matter how hard our memories try to blot them out. “False Memory” is reminiscent of Duffy’s “We Remember Your Childhood Well,” since both poems comment on the child’s vulnerability to threatening adults and how memory can be unstable and manipulable. In Duffy’s poem the child’s parents try to alter her memory of the past, but in “False Memory” it is the child’s brain which initially suppresses the trauma but ultimately releases details of the past.

Although this thesis focuses on poetic work, I will briefly discuss Kay’s 1998 novel *Trumpet* because it explores questions of belonging—to a home, culture, gender, or sexuality—and affirms the fluidity of all of these states, as well as the unreliability of perception and memory. The novel, which won the Guardian fiction prize (Scottish Poetry Library, n.p.), tells the story of a black Scottish jazz musician, Joss Moody, who is married (to Millie) with an adopted child (Colman) and is revealed postmortem to be biologically female. *Trumpet* was inspired by the story of Billy Tipton, a white American jazz musician who lived as a man, and by elements of Kay’s autobiography. Kay interweaves and adapts these narratives: Joss is Scottish and black whereas Tipton was white, and Colman’s pessimistic, cynical attitude couldn’t be further from Kay’s curious, exploratory creativity. Because of these changes, Ryan Fong argues, the novel is not “reducible to either Tipton’s story or a fictionalized recapitulation of Kay’s

autobiographical work on race or nationality” (Fong 245). Critics have primarily focused on the radical nature of Joss’s race, gender presentation, sexuality, and nationality: these elements are important because the narrative imagines and presents alternative ways of being legitimately Scottish.

In *Trumpet*, Kay uses multiple perspectives and a sort of theatrical script to convey multiple sides to the story. The novel begins with Joss’s death, so his voice is mostly absent from the narrative and his story is revealed backwards through his surviving friends’ and family’s memories as they struggle to revise their memories of him given the revelation of his sex. His son Colman especially has difficulty reconciling his memories with the truth: he states that “the life, the one I thought I knew I lived, changed” due to the revelation of his father’s female sex (Kay, *Trumpet* 46). Now he feels compelled correct his memories: “I’m going to have to go back over my whole life with a fine-tooth comb” (Kay, *Trumpet* 48). The family realizes not only the unreliability of perception but also the possibility of artifice in one’s origin stories, which encourages again the creative imagination of one’s past.

Kay’s work promotes not only the ability to create one’s own past through imagination, but also the possibility of shaping one’s own identity regardless of societal expectations. Joss exists outside socially determined binaries and negotiates multiple identities, some of which are traditionally marginalized: he is biologically female with a male gender presentation, Scottish but living in England, Scottish but black. As Matthew Brown comments, “Joss himself promotes radical self-fashioning permitting the subject to author his or her own history and national affiliation, as well as racial and ethnic ‘routes’—and not to be beholden to any collective, biologically encoded ‘roots’” (M. Brown 225). This self-fashioning is revealed to be essential, for Kay’s concept of self involves a central void, an inner lack, which one fills with imagination

and created histories. In *Red Dust Road* Kay describes “the windy place at the core of my heart” which is the void left by her adoption and estrangement from her biological parents (Kay, *Red Dust Road* 45). This concept of a central essence defined by nothingness is brilliantly described in *Trumpet* in a chapter describing Joss playing jazz:

When he gets down, and he doesn't always get down deep enough, he loses his sex, his race, his memory. He strips himself bare, takes everything off, till he's barely human. . . . He goes down, swirling and whirling til he's right at the very pinpoint of himself. A small black mark. The further he goes, the smaller he gets.  
(Kay, *Trumpet* 131)

The social constructions of gender and race do not extend into one's essence, Kay argues, and nor do memories. Tracy Hargreaves suggests that this “small black mark” could be “an unreadable, indecipherable sign, a deliberate refusal of cultural assignation,” or a reference “to [Joss's] own ethnicity, drawing attention back to his blackness” (Hargreaves 74). A few pages later, the narrative describes Joss's blood as inconsequential: “The music is in his blood. His cells. But the odd bit is that down at the bottom, the blood doesn't count for much. . . . All his self collapses - his idiosyncrasies, his personality, his ego, his sexuality, even, finally, his memory” (Kay, *Trumpet* 135). This recalls *The Adoption Papers*' adoptive daughter's desire to cast away her obsession with origins. So, as Carole Jones observes, *Trumpet* argues that at our cores, we are defined by none of the features by which society marks us, and “identity [is] a cover for an existential void at the centre of being” (Jones 198). *Trumpet* does not encourage that these identity features be dismantled per se—rather, they are cause for celebration—but rather urges one to construct an identity imaginatively, based not on social binaries but on one's desires. This vividly written chapter on Joss's music concludes with him “slowly, slowly, piecing

himself together” after the orgasmic self-negation of trumpet-playing: once stripped bare, he has the power to shape his own identity from scratch (Kay, *Trumpet* 136).

Although Joss is often cited as the most radical figure in *Trumpet* for his gender-bending and minority race, his wife Millie is actually the most threatening figure to socially constructed norms. Millie consistently refers to Joss as “he” and considers him her husband; she wholly rejects the idea of herself as lesbian. When the tabloid media smears her after Joss’s death for “living a lie,” she reflects that “I didn’t feel like I was living a lie. I felt I was living a life. Hindsight is a lie” (Kay, *Trumpet* 95). She rejects the labels that are applied to her: “No doubt they will call me a lesbian. They will find words to put on me. Words that don’t fit me” (Kay, *Trumpet* 95). Millie is an unassuming, shy, white woman: as Hargreaves observes, “it is precisely Millie’s ordinariness that is the source of the threat she poses to dominant sex-gender systems” and to twentieth-century ideas about mixed-race marriages (Hargreaves 74).

*Trumpet* also confronts the negative stigma around adoption. Colman’s sense of alienation due to his adoption leads him to cynicism and feelings of estrangement. He bemoans that even though he was born in Scotland, “I didn’t feel Scottish. Didn’t feel English either. Didn’t feel anything” (Kay, *Trumpet* 51). Joss, who is not adopted but lives the experience of self-creation, encourages his son to create his own history: “He said you make up your own bloodline, Colman. Make it up and trace it back. Design your own family tree - what’s the matter with you? Haven’t you got an imagination?” (Kay, *Trumpet* 58). To Joss and Millie, the physical facts of biological gender or race are inconsequential; the narrative encourages “self-invention and the challenge this makes to dominant conceptions of personal norms and fixity” (Jones 193). Both *The Adoption Papers* and *Trumpet* emphatically promote imagination as the saving grace not only of adopted people but of all people, since no memory or history is entirely intact.



In addition to encouraging the construction of one's identity, *Trumpet* also promotes the imaginary creation of one's motherland and cultural roots. Joss's first big jazz hit is called "Fantasy Africa," and in one of the chapters she narrates, Millie describes how Joss mentally shaped his ancestral motherland:

We never actually got to go to Africa. Joss had built up such a strong imaginary landscape within himself that he said it would affect his music to go to the real Africa. Every black person has a fantasy Africa, he'd say. Black British people, Black Americans, Black Caribbeans, they all have a fantasy Africa. It is all in the head. (Kay, *Trumpet* 34)

The power of the imagination is strong enough to substitute for physically being in the motherland, and actually visiting Africa would alter Joss's creative power by deconstructing his artistic vision of his origins. Kay relates the power to imagine one's own past and childhood with the artistic mind: as humans with faulty memories, we are constantly enacting the art of self-creation. Joss performs the art of self-creation through jazz: "rather than being haunted by his father's lost homeland, Joss engages with it and with *his* homeland of Scotland in a moving call-and-response" with his trumpet (Fong 257, emphasis his). This is consistent with Kay's autobiography: there is chapter in *Red Dust Road* entitled "Fantasy Africa" in which she discusses how as a child, she constructed an ideal father for herself in which he was a powerful African chieftain.

Torr, the cottage in rural Scotland to which Millie retreats following Joss's death, is initially portrayed as a haven in the storm where time stops and Millie can reminisce about the past; metaphorically, it is a physical location representing the past. In her narrative sections, Millie ruminates that "time feels as if it is on the other side of me now, way over, out across the

sea, like another country. I don't live inside it any more and it doesn't rule me" (Kay, *Trumpet* 3). The use of "another country" to describe a place representing the past is another nod to Duffy's *The Other Country*. *Trumpet* describes the contradiction of the past "living on" at Torr while outside world continued: "The past had lived on in those small airless rooms whilst we had been away living our lives. The past had been here all the time, waiting. It was wonderful" (Kay, *Trumpet* 7). This gives a sense of vivacity to the past: rather than it being a dead, dark thing, for Millie it means comfort and a return to a time when her husband lived. However, this sense of peace is soon warped by the reality that no place is untouched by time. Millie starts receiving letters from the aggressive, fame-hungry journalist Sophie Stones and realizes that the anxieties of the present can reach her even in Torr. She realizes that "Torr is not the same Torr anymore. . . It is familiar like the way a memory is familiar, and changed each time like a memory too. Utterly changed" (Kay, *Trumpet* 92). Like the sad revelations of the speakers of Kay's "Colouring In" and Duffy's "Nostalgia," Millie understands that although one may briefly dwell in the past, it is impossible to truly return there and reclaim a former life once it has passed.

Much has been made of the racial politics in *Trumpet* and the hybridity evident in Joss's gender performativity and Black Scottishness. While the novel does contain a valuable commentary on racial politics, the larger takeaway is that we all have the power to self-construct, and we are all affected by a powerful desire to belong. Winning captures Kay's central message:

To be a woman, to be black, to be lesbian, to be young, to be Scots (male or female) means that the search for 'home' is an unending quest without closure - a journey which inevitably involves both the past and the future. Perhaps instead it is 'homing' that is the on-going and perpetual psychic state. (Winning 242)

Her final statement rings true for all of Kay's work, and for Duffy's as well. No matter our origins, we all have gaps in our memories and histories that we fill with imagination, and our quest to discover and return to our origins is ongoing and can never truly be completed.

After publishing *Trumpet*, Kay took a seven-year break from publishing poetry for adults. *Life Mask* (2005), the most recent Kay collection discussed in this thesis, broke that hiatus, and turns away from explicit discussions of race, focusing on love, identity, and memory. It was written during and after Kay's breakup with Duffy, and thus contains many poems of grief, frustration, and longing. Its title and central metaphor were inspired by Kay having a bronze cast of her head made by sculptor Michael Snowden (*Acknowledgments, Darling*). Throughout many poems in the collection, Kay discusses how identity is shaped both by us and for us, using the mask as "a symbol, a means of exploring the various possibilities of an art derived from, and yet also distinct from, the life of the artist" (F. Wilson 28). The collection wrestles with the contradiction inherent in poetry that language is a problematic vehicle for conveying meaning but it is also the only medium in which poets can work. In keeping with the melancholy tone of the collection, many poems reflect on the past and express deep homesickness for various situations. The poems "Old Tongue," "Eleven Chances," and "Childhood, Still" from *Life Mask* ache with nostalgia for another place and time.

"Old Tongue" uses language diversity as a vehicle to explore cultural divisions in Britain, recalling the regional linguistic pride in Kay's earlier poem "My English Cousin Comes to Scotland" with a different style and mood. Similarly to Duffy's "Originally," "Old Tongue" tells of a child's emigration from Scotland to England and the subsequent loss of her native accent (as Kay did not move to England until adulthood, this poem may be personally inspired but is not fully autobiographical). The speaker describes being "forced south" and how, as she adapted to

the new culture, “words fell off my tongue” (1, 5). The poem intersperses standard English with Scots words and describes the transition from one dialect to another: “words disappeared in the dead of night, / new words marched in: ghastly, awful, / quite dreadful, *scones* said like *stones* / *Pokey hats* into ice cream cones” (12-15). Kay’s live readings of “Old Tongue” bring to life this linguistic difference through exaggerated, contrasting accents: she reads “ghastly, awful, quite dreadful” in a posh English accent and draws out her Glasgow brogue for all of the Scots terms (a video of a live reading is here: <http://youtu.be/JiP684Ss3FI>). The speaker aches to return to her native voice, her “dour Scottish tongue. / Sing-songy” (28-29). Nerys Williams remarks that the poem conveys an “abstracted sense of loss. Words are mourned since the poem chronicles not only the loss of accented speech, but of an alternate language use” (N. Williams 179). In Kay’s work, native language and dialect is strongly associated with a sense of home and belonging, so migrating evokes a sense of displacement, alienation, and personal loss.

In *Life Mask*, the mutual influence of Duffy and Kay’s relationship is particularly clear, likely because the collection focuses on the emotional connection remaining between them following their separation. Phrases and themes from Duffy’s poetry seep into Kay’s work—and vice versa—in multiple ways. In “Eleven Chances,” Kay writes simply and sparsely of a lost or long-distance lover who is more imagined than real: “I dream you often, / standing sturdy, firm / on the old dream land” (4-6). The contrast of “study, firm” and “dream” illustrates the speaker’s confusion at how memory can seem as truthful as fact. We may speculate at the location of the “old dream land” in the same way as critics guess at the meaning of Duffy’s “other country”; however, it is likely more of a metaphorical, existential location than a concrete place. The lover’s guidance is praised in the final couplet of “Eleven Chances,” which also references the title of Duffy’s 1993 collection *Mean Time*: “In the slow mean time / you hold my hard hand”

(“Eleven Chances,” 11-12). Kay references Duffy’s collection titles again one page later in “Dream Pier,” reminiscing, “Dream of you, dream of me, and the old country, / strolling in the heather” (9-10). This recalls the title of Duffy’s *The Other Country* (1990), and reinforces her concept of the past as a state we recall in dreams, often with rose-colored glasses.

“Childhood, Still” describes a combination of positive and traumatic childhood memories with the implication that while childhood technically ends, its events constantly resonate in the adult mind. In a series of tight, occasionally rhymed couplets, it uses repetition and suspense to portray childhood as never-ending yet tragically limited. It begins, “The sun is out and so is childhood - remember / how the summer droned its song forever,” emphasizing the contradiction of a natural end with the sensation that childhood would continue endlessly (1-2). The use of a repeated couplet heightens this tension: “*Childhood ticks, tocks, ticks. Metronome. / Speaking clocks. Sand glass. Time bomb*” (9-10, emphasis Kay’s). Initially the memories are idyllic— “A wee boy scoots towards the big blue loch” (5)—but they contain undertones of danger. The subtle threat then explodes into full-scale trauma: “Suddenly, the clatter of boots in the street. / The sob of a white van speeding away” (23-24). The poem records the deaths of childhood authority figures, including “the janitor, the teacher, the priest” and “the father, the mother,” conveying the child’s lack of control and sense of helplessness (29, 31). It acknowledges how memories of trauma and death haunt children even into adulthood: “The past keeps calling the children back” (42). In the final couplets, the poem seems to regress, reverting to nursery rhymes and childhood play songs:

Skip, skop, to the barber’s shop, Keepie-Upper, Kerbie.

Bee Baw Babbity, Following Wee Jeanie.

Green peas and Barley. Okey Kokey. My mummy told me.

Stotty. Peever. Thread the needle. The Big Ship sails.

This is childhood, let it be childhood still. (48-52)

These lines illustrate the influence not only of nursery rhyme and Scottish cultural idiom but also of dub poetry on Kay. Childhood memories are rarely whole and sensical; rather, they echo in the mind fragmented and sensory. The final line of “Childhood, Still,” which has been repeated throughout the poem in different iterations, accepts the staying power of childhood in our lives. It could be interpreted as a plea that childhood remain this way—dangerous but full of vibrant life—for generations to come, and also as a request that we all recognize that we remain children, to some extent, throughout our lives. We mature, yes, but we always look back, captivated by the events of our youth, so in many ways we never completely detach from childhood and our pasts. Kay’s work as a whole emphasizes this inability to detach from our origins: whether we rely on our factual histories, our faulty memories, or our imaginations to recall our pasts, Kay’s writing is a testament to the powerful hunger and curiosity to know our connections to home.

**Chapter III:  
To Cherish or Dump the Relics in our Land?  
The Poems of Kathleen Jamie**

but we have surely gone,  
and must knock  
with brass kilted pipers

the doors to the old land:  
we emigrants of no farewell

—“The Graduates,” *Jizzen* (10-15)

The final poet examined in this thesis is the enigmatic, shrewd Kathleen Jamie. Jamie was born in Renfrewshire, Scotland, in 1962 and grew up in Midlothian, the area south of Edinburgh (Wilson & Somerville-Arjat, 91). Her father was an accountant and her mother worked in a solicitor’s office; Jamie has described her decision to begin writing as reactionary, a defense against working a mundane office job (Scottish Poetry Library, n.p.). Her interest in poetry began in her teenage years, and she published her first poem, “View from the Cliffs,” at age of 17 (McGuire 141). Jamie has described her first forays into writing as “secretive and liberating and real,” and she was mostly self-taught, with no formal training in writing (Jamie, Univ. of Stirling Staff Profile; Wilson & Somerville-Arjat, 92). The first person in her family to attend university, Jamie studied Philosophy at the University of Edinburgh (Wilson & Somerville-Arjat, 91, 92). Like Duffy, Jamie’s formal education in philosophy has heavily influenced her written work; she examines human interactions with the past and nature through inquisitive, explorative poems and essays.

Jamie shares Kay’s rejection of labels, asserting in 1990, “I certainly don’t think of myself as a woman poet. I don’t even think of myself as a poet” (Jamie in Wilson & Somerville-

Arjat, 93). This may perhaps be attributed to her lack of formal poetic training, but more to her general dislike of categorization. Jamie's female and Scottish identity is not the most interesting thing to her; rather, it is the anthropological observation of how these cultural identities are constructed and deconstructed that fascinates her. Early in her career, particularly in *The Queen of Sheba* (1994) and *Jizzen* (1999), her poetry shrewdly probed the stereotypes and realities of modern female Scottish identity. The 1990s movement towards devolution in Scotland spurred Jamie's more political poetry, but when the Scottish Parliament was established in 1999, she has said that she "woke up . . . and discovered that half my poems were obsolete" (Jamie qtd. in Gairn 239). Jamie has since moved away from discussing politics explicitly in her work, and has quipped to interviewers that "'Do you consider yourself a woman writer or a Scottish writer?' is a question I can no longer answer politely" (Jamie, British Literature Council, n.p.). Today, Jamie is more often categorized as a "nature poet." She rejects that label as well, but acknowledges that her work now focuses more on human co-existence with the environment. This shift occurred in the early 2000s, with *The Tree House* (2004) being her first collection fully devoted to natural themes. Her work has traversed many genres, tones, and subjects, so she, like Duffy and Kay, defies any singular categorization.

For Jamie, traveling has been an important way to escape being labeled with a singular identity; in 1992, she stated "sometimes I feel so constrained with this palaver of labeling. I just bugger off abroad where nobody knows and nobody cares" (Jamie qtd. in McGuire 143). In 1981, at the age of 19, she was awarded the Eric Gregory Award by the British Society of Authors (Scottish Poetry Library, n.p.). This grant allowed her to travel in the Near East, and her experiences there spurred her first collection, *Black Spiders* (1982). Like Duffy, Jamie emphasizes how traveling doesn't erase identity, but rather causes one to redefine oneself and



one's home through a new perspective. Boden has observed that in Jamie's travel writing, she sometimes unintentionally assumes the role of the privileged colonizer, a major shift from being a doubly marginalized Scottish woman (Boden 28). The ability to associate with and understand various identities is integral to Jamie's writing, which slips on different styles and voices seamlessly. The fresh perspective gained by extensive traveling also alters Jamie's perceptions of her mother nation, and in her poems Scotland is often described as a poor, ragged country in contrast to the exotic Asian landscapes she visited in her young adulthood.

Jamie's experience of cultural estrangement from Scotland is markedly different from Duffy's and Kays both in terms of biography and how they negotiate this theme in their poetry. After these extensive travels in her youth, Jamie returned to Scotland and now lives in a village in Fife with her husband and two teenage children (Goring, n.p.; Scottish Poetry Library, n.p.). Her exile has been conducted in patches of travel rather than in permanent emigration, and because of this, Scotland is assuredly her home-base (although the definition of the term "home" is as conflicted for Jamie as it is for Duffy and Kay). Jamie's experience of nostalgia is less a desire to return to that physical home-space or to her childhood, and more about investigating Scotland's ancient and traditional past and finding a meaningful connection with that past as a modern Scottish woman. As Whyte comments,

Scottishness in Jamie's poetry is not a problem. She does not hunt for or struggle to define her identity, more concerned instead to transcend the often mundane realities surrounding her by establishing connections with another plane of being, capable of galvanising and eventually transforming them. (Whyte 2004, 221)

Because of this sense of physical belonging, Jamie's poems are freer to be critical of Scotland: she shrewdly compares Scotland with the other nations to which she traveled and is honest where

she finds it lacking. However, just because Jamie physically lives in Scotland does not mean that she does not experience estrangement. Her sense of displacement relates to her awareness of the grand scheme of history and nature and the way in which humans fit into that timeline. Jamie also feels isolated from any singular regional identity: she has described herself as “West Coast urban, Edinburgh middle class, English liberal - an outsider everywhere” (Jamie qtd. in McGuire 142). Kaye Kossick remarks that Jamie “embraces her anomalous cultural and gendered personality with the ex-centric pleasure of the traveler who is everywhere ‘not at home’” (Kossick 196). This sense of being an unsettled outsider has informed her work in that she records her experiences of travel and home with a keen eye for detail.

As in the poetry of Duffy and Kay, a central theme in Jamie’s writing is the pull of the past and the allure of unveiling one’s shrouded origins. Her poetry charts the painful tug-of-war between nostalgia, sentiment, and retention of outdated customs versus progress, innovation, and moving beyond painful histories. Jamie has spoken to this eternal conflict, noting, “I have an ambivalent attitude about the past; part of me’s saying, aw just take it away, and part of me thinks, take it all away but *save* this and this” (Jamie qtd. in Fraser 21, emphasis hers). Poems such as “Forget It” and “Mr and Mrs Scotland are dead” obsess over this conflict, often using physical objects as metaphors for a past that must either be locked in museums or tossed in the rubbish heap. Jamie questions what should be done with these “elements of tradition that survive vestigially, lingering in the common consciousness” (Borthwick 145). Her work explores these ideas in a specifically Scottish context, using Scottish traditions, myths, artifacts, and landscapes to juxtapose past fantasies with current reality. Roderick Watson aptly argues that “Jamie’s poetry negotiates a complex passage between nostalgia and irony, recognising the need for sustaining myths, and yet also their capacity to enslave us”; this theme is particularly strong

in *The Queen of Sheba* (Watson 331). An awareness of Scotland's history and culture is essential for bringing the nation forward into a new era, but obsessively retaining the customs and sense of the past is a hindrance to national progress and cultural evolution.

Jamie rarely uses traditional poetic forms; rather, her skill lies in her exacting attention to detail, vivid descriptions, and the constant probing curiosity behind her writing. Jamie's poems lack the activist urgency of Kay's; Alison Smith argues that Jamie's poems are "more cerebral than Kay's: Jamie's agenda is much less clearly defined, hasn't the immediate urge of moral communication of Kay's" (A. Smith 187). This is less true of Jamie's more political 1990s collections (especially *The Queen of Sheba*), but accurately describes her early collections, which convey the sense of a wide-eyed traveller grasping every detail of her environment and distilling them into tight, detailed poems which have no direct responsibility to persuade. David Williams observes that Jamie writes "measured poems: generally short, sober in tone, exact in diction, formally restrained and rooted in the local," although again this is more characteristic of her early and recent work than the exuberance of her 1990s collections (D. Williams 39). Jamie makes excellent use of internal rhyme and sonic alliteration, crafting aurally dynamic poems without using tired structures.

Much like Duffy and Kay, Jamie initially felt constricted and tongue-tied at the multitude of British languages and dialects available to her before she came to appreciate her polyphonic abilities. Echoing the sentiments of Duffy and Kay in their poems "Originally" and "Old Tongue" (respectively), she stated in a 1992 interview,

I moved to Sheffield [England], and there I discovered I spoke Scots and English both, so then I got into a linguistic fankle, and couldn't write, couldn't find a voice, a language. (I'm beginning to understand that it's ok to have several, Scots

do have several, and people are beginning to talk about this, this babel, the Scots polyphony). (Jamie qtd. in Boden 37)

Her writing often weaves Scots and English together seamlessly, without making Scots seem a stuffy, dead language, an accomplishment which led William Logan to declare her “one of a group of younger Scottish poets who don’t take English as the natural valence of the tongue” (Logan 66). Her ability to use Scots in a fresh way, rather than making it sound like a museum relic thrown into a poem for the sake of prodding the embers of a dying language, is consistent with the message in her work of not continuing outdated traditions for tradition’s sake alone. As she commented in a 2000 interview, “If you feel duty-bound to use Scots to uphold the language, that’s no reason to use the language at all, you use it because it’s present in your mouth and in your ear and because it can do a job that standard English can’t do, reach parts that language cannot reach” (Jamie qtd. in Fraser 22). As Jamie implies in “Mr and Mrs Scotland are dead” and other poems concerning the outdated traditions of Scotland, Gaelic seems to be edging nearer and nearer the rubbish dump of antiquities that poets increasingly must decide what to do with. In “The Graduates,” from *Jizzen*, Jamie mourns the loss of Scots as a daily language: it has been reduced to “jokes and quotes” and the speaker’s children will be “monoglot” (16, 23; this poem will be further discussed later). Similarly, in “Suitcases,” also from *Jizzen*, she describes how, as an emigrant, “Sometimes // all you can take is what you can carry / when you run,” and lists among the packed items “the useless dead-weight // of your mother tongue” (3-5, 6-7). Jamie’s use of Scots is a hopeful sign for the continuity of the language, but her commentary on its status in the modern day is more pessimistic.

As Jamie’s early work predominantly focuses on other lands, cultures, and times, and her most recent writing concerns nature, I will chiefly devote this chapter to her more Scotland-

focused, politically-aware collections *The Queen of Sheba* (1994), *Jizzen* (1999), and *The Tree House* (2004). However, her early works are remarkable for their intense attention to detail and skill at vividly illustrating exotic scenes. *Black Spiders* (1982), written during Jamie's travels and published when she was a 20-year-old undergraduate student, demonstrates the naïveté of a young, wide-eyed Western girl traveling alone through Eastern villages, but describes these experiences with astounding sophistication. *A Flame in Your Heart* (1986), co-written by Jamie and fellow young Scottish poet Andrew Greig, tells the war-blighted romance of a pilot and his lover in 1940. An abridged version was broadcast as a radio play by BBC Radio 4 in 1985 (five years before Kay's *The Adoption Papers* was broadcast). *The Way We Live* (1987) narrates a wide range of subjects and concerns, leaping from travel accounts such as the "Karakoram Highway" poem series to childhood reminiscences to poems of love and war. Jamie's early work is marked for its extraordinary focus and ability to distill a tight, precisely worded poem from a landscape or moment, with a distinct lack of the sentimentality or showiness that so often characterizes juvenilia. Many of the poems across these collections exhibit a sense of restlessness and explore the question of whether we can ever truly uproot from our homes.

In 1992 Jamie published *The Golden Peak*, an autobiographical prose account of her travels through the Northern Regions of Pakistan. The book was re-issued in 2002 as *Among Muslims* with an extended epilogue (the publishers wanted more personal, positive accounts of Islamic culture available in Western culture following the September 11th terrorist attacks). The book is a studious, highly detailed narrative of a solitary woman in her late twenties navigating Pakistani culture and landscape, but, as Andrew Monnickendam observes, "this is also a Scottish woman's journey of self-discovery" (Monnickendam 79). Jamie's account of how traveling makes one reflect on one's identity is similar to the way in which Kay realizes and re-affirms her

Scottish identity when she travels to Africa to trace her biological father in *Red Dust Road*: both realize an affinity with Scotland that it took distance to recognize. Jamie draws comparisons between the Northern Regions of Pakistan and Scotland—which is, in a sense, also a contested Northern Region—such as the interpersonal restraint shared by Islamic and Calvinist Scottish cultures. In her exploration of developing Eastern nations, she questions value systems, asking, “What is worth keeping? Can’t we keep our relationships and our willow baskets and our songs and looms, yet say goodbye to deficiencies and blight?” (Jamie, *Among Muslims* 246). The connections drawn between Eastern and Scottish cultures illustrated in *Among Muslims* certainly influence Jamie’s later work, both in the cross-cultural spaces she imagines (see discussion of “The Queen of Sheba”) and in how her view of Scotland is altered by distance and fresh perspective. Crawford argues that Jamie is not isolated in this trend, noting that

recent years have certainly seen an upsurge in Scottish orientalism. . . . For some this chinoiserie may seem merely flippant, or an effort to escape from having to be Scottish as a shortbread tin, but again the interest in bridging cultures and examining the areas where cultures don’t match as well as the places where they jigsaw is at the heart of the Scottish tradition. (Crawford 160)

It could be argued that Jamie’s drive to ‘fly the coop’ is also consistent with the Scottish tradition of emigration (see discussion of “The Graduates”).

The following year, Jamie published her multimedia reflection on travels in Tibet, entitled *The Autonomous Region* (1993). It features Jamie’s poetry alongside photographs by fellow Scottish artist Sean Mayne Smith. Jamie’s poems are almost cryptic in their level of detail, intrigue, and references to unfamiliar and fantastic places and occurrences. The collection imagines a porous relationship between past and present, myth and history: Jamie’s poems tell of

modern-day travelers being accompanied through Tibet by Fa-hsien, a fourth-century Chinese monk, and Princess Wen Chen of the sixth century. These figures emerge fully-wrought into the modern world—the princess carries a walkman—causing the reader to wonder at the connection between ancient past and modern life. Jamie’s occasional use of Scots dialect to describe Tibet “suggests the locality of what happens in a language closer to the personal,” as Alison Smith suggests, and helps to give the narrative voice distinctive character (A. Smith 191). Severin believes Jamie’s use of this multimedia format foreshadows her later nature-focused writing, arguing that *The Autonomous Region* has “created a place-sensitive art that embodies a dialogical interaction with nature, reflective of an understanding of humanity’s simultaneous separation from and continuity with nature” (Severin 2011, 98).

In 1994, Jamie’s poetic eye, dazzled and wizened by foreign travels, turned back to shrewdly focus on her mother country. Dedicated to “the folks at home,” *The Queen of Sheba* (1994) is Jamie’s first collection entirely devoted to Scotland’s politics, culture, and traditions. Its poems raid the dusty attic of the past—both Scotland’s past and Jamie’s childhood—to assess its relics. Jamie’s nostalgia is tempered by honesty and the practical question of when it is best to let the past go and how to move forward when tethered by traditions and history. The collection “pivots on the idea of ‘home’ as a political, cultural and gendered entity” by exploring the many identities, languages, and dreams of the Scottish people; Jamie uses many voices and styles to craft a polyphonous dialogue (Gairn 2007, 237). She tends to focus more on the female Scot’s experience, exploring “the way in which women’s lives can be, and often are, dictated by ‘biological and cultural forces’” (F. Winning 231, inc. quote from Raymond Friel). *The Queen of Sheba* is no love song to Scotland or to childhood; although glimmers of Jamie’s fondness for her country of origin shine through, her poems take an honest look at the seedier, decaying

aspects of both. “Mother-May-I” echoes Duffy’s “We Remember Your Childhood Well” and “Stafford Afternoons” and Kay’s “False Memory” by painting a crude, horrifying picture of child endangerment in which the child speaker asks to go play in “*the woods / where men / lift up your skirt / and take down your pants / even though you’re crying*” (10-14, emphasis Jamie’s). Similarly traumatically, in “A shoe,” an Edinburgh schoolgirl finds a platform shoe washed up on Cramond Beach, a relic of a suicide off the Forth Bridge. Through these vivid accounts of danger, Jamie undercuts naïve nostalgia and our idealization of our personal and national histories.

The collection opens with its title poem, in which the Queen of Sheba gloriously parades through Scotland as a “personification of exotic, subversive womanhood come to seek revenge upon small-minded Scotland” (Gairn 2007, 237). The plot of the poem is drawn from the traditional Scottish insult for uppity young women, *Whae do you think y’ur, the Queen of Sheba?*, and imagines that the Queen “heard, yea / even unto heathenish Arabia / your vixen’s bark of poverty, come down / the family like a lang neb” (4-7). Scottish poverty is portrayed as genetic (like a long nose), and Scotland’s desolate industrial landscape, “this dump,” “scattered with glass,” is in need of some Biblical intervention (11, 19). The Queen of Sheba, however, could not be further from the dry Calvinist figures Scotland historically worshipped: with her “gorgeous breasts,” “hairy legs and / bonny wicked smile” she embodies female sexuality and freedom (33, 77-78). She’s no dumb sexpot, though; she “desires the keys / to the National Library,” which both exemplifies the radical ability of women to be simultaneously sexual and intelligent as well as the Queen’s “desire for a *bona fide* Scottish identity; as an incomer, she needs to experience ‘authentic’ Scottish culture and to possess knowledge of Scotland” (69-70; Boden 30, emphasis hers). The women of Scotland, too long told to be “cliver like yer father. /



but no too cliver, / no *above yersel*,” eagerly yearn to break from tradition and become more like the Queen, to “take / PhDs in Persian, be vice / to her president” (59-61, 79-80, emphasis Jamie’s). Jamie uses a polyphonous blend of standard English, Biblical language, and Scots, and Broom observes that although “the poem is very critical of the values of the society it represents, . . . the use of Scots words and phrases situates the poem itself (and implicitly the author) within the community it critiques” (Broom 133). The conclusion of the poem is a proud cry for Scottish female power. A heckler from the crowd of Scottish people gathered to see the Queen demands to the Scottish women:

*whae do you think y’ur?*

and a thousand laughing girls and she

draw our hot breath

and shout

*THE QUEEN OF SHEBA!* (88-92)

The women vivaciously reclaim the oppressive language as an assertion of their sexual and mental power. In “The Queen of Sheba,” Jamie doesn’t present Scotland as a lost cause, but rather as a nation still culturally isolated and entrenched in tradition, needing to look outwards to other nations in order to progress beyond its outdated customs.

Later in *The Queen of Sheba*, Jamie reprises the concept of Eastern figures coming to Scotland to breathe life into its landscapes in “A dream of the Dalai Lama on Skye.” The poem doesn’t imagine the Dalai Lama as a savior so much as a mythical element of the Scottish landscape; he walks through the rich, fertile fields of Skye and “when no one’s watching, he

jumps lightly onto Soay / and airborne seeds of saxifrage, settled / on the barren Cuillin / waken into countless tiny stars” (17-22). He regenerates natural life on Soay (an uninhabited islet in the Outer Hebrides and the westernmost point in Scotland) through the saxifrage, whose name means “rock-breaking” in Latin. The rebirth in the poem begs the question: does Scotland need foreign figures to enter and revitalize it? The fact that two poems in *The Queen of Sheba* situate Eastern legendary figures as revivers does seem to suggest this, as well as entertaining the idea of colonization in the opposite direction from the colonialism of the British Empire. The poem is rich with natural imagery and glancing symbolism, creating a fanciful dreamscape. Following her travels in Asia, Jamie’s poems are peppered with these mythical or legendary Asian spiritual figures, often transplanted into contexts where they would ordinarily seem out of place. The significance of the Dalai Lama is not fully explained within the cryptic poem, but his presence furthers Jamie’s mission to entangle past and present, myth and reality, prompting the reader to question the veracity of his/her national and personal histories.

Jamie’s assertion of the power of Scottish women despite traditional repression in “The Queen of Sheba” is reprised in the Scots-language poem “Arraheids.” The poem proclaims that “The museums of Scotland are wrang” because the relics in their glass cases “urnae arraheids / but a show o grannies’ tongues” (6, 7-8; *arraheids*: arrowheads). It concludes by imagining the tongues “muttering / *ye arnae here tae wonder, / whae dae ye think ye ur?*” in a twist on the final lines of “The Queen of Sheba” (22-24, emphasis Jamie’s). Like the (assumedly male) heckler from “The Queen of Sheba,” these female tongues admonish the contemporary museum-goer who is overconfident in his/her knowledge of history. Winning notes that “Arraheids” “makes the serious point that in fact we may well get history wrong, and that the constructions and interpretations of nationhood may overlook other narratives of identity” (Winning 229). It warns

against a fixed view of the past and argues for personal, oral stories rather than a singular, sweeping account of history (much as Duffy and Kay do through their regular usage of the dramatic monologue and lyric *I*). Rhona Brown observes that the use of Scots in “Arraheids” returns narrative power to the grannies and argues that “in these poems, voices and reminders of the past are resolutely Scottish. They may need to be struggled against or wrestled with, but once mastered, reclaimed and digested, they are recycled for a new generation” (R. Brown 150). Modern generations must jettison or repurpose the traditions and advice of their predecessors in order to come into their own. However, as many poems in *The Queen of Sheba* stress, this process of casting off is laden with nostalgia, and thus difficult to do without evoking feelings of guilt and loss.

“Fountain” explores the human desire to connect with past tradition, which is often manifested in clichéd or seemingly ridiculous ways. The poem examines our modern custom of tossing coins into man-made fountains at shopping malls and casting wishes despite that fact that “We know it’s all false: no artesian well / really leaps through strata / fathoms under *Man at C&A*” (16-18). Jamie ridicules the modern tendency to use classical Greek and Roman myths in consumerist contexts by describing “bags printed / Athena, Argos, Olympus” and our need to label everything: “a neon sign - FOUNTAIN” (11-12, 9). Although the poem initially mocks these misguided attempts to continue ancient traditions and connect with mythical pasts, it also acknowledges the impossibility, or at least impracticality, of directly linking with this past; after all, “who these days can thrust her wrists / into a giggling hillside spring / above some ancient city?” (19-21). In the final lines, the poem suggests that grasping for the past by throwing coins into the mall well may not be an entirely futile act:

Who says

we can't respond; don't still feel,  
as it were, the dowser's twitch  
up through the twin handles of the buggy. (26-29)

Even though we know on a practical level that dialogue with oracles and mythical Greek gods is an outdated fantasy, we can perhaps still feel that connection. Boden observes that in the poem, “Jamie demonstrates that, against the odds, the signifiers can and do refer to something prior to their hijacking by the capitalist state, and permit a connectedness to be established with classical and native cultural traditions” (Boden 33-34). This carrying on of tradition through material objects which at face value seem not to have any practical or traditional worth anymore is one of the central themes of *The Queen of Sheba*, and the idea of almost connecting with the past—almost but not quite—reminds one of Duffy's work.

This theme is explored through one of Jamie's most well-known poems from *The Queen of Sheba*, “Mr and Mrs Scotland are dead.” Echoing “The Queen of Sheba,” it describes Scotland as a “dump,” using an extended metaphor of “the civic amenity landfill site” to represent how Scotland is scattered with old relics that its citizens do not necessarily know what to do with now (2, 1). In 1992, Jamie commented that “we feel threatened and therefore hang on to anything and everything Scottish, even the bad old junk that should have been ditched years ago. Change would mean chaos and we're feart of chaos, we don't know it can be glorious” (Jamie qtd. in Boden 35). “Mr and Mrs Scotland are dead” echoes Wallace Stevens' poems “A Postcard from the Volcano” and “The Man on the Dump” in its exploration of what happens to our relics after they are used up, after *we* are used up. The poem investigates the premise that the representative figures of Mr. and Mrs. Scotland have died and left behind material objects—either junk or treasures depending on one's perspective, and the poem reflects both—that the current and future

generations must now decide how to deal with. The first stanza describes the landfill and items, the second stanza angrily asks why the deceased didn't just burn their artifacts so they would have died with them, and the third stanza contemplates whether or not the speaker should save these relics. The relics include Mrs. Scotland's "stiff / old ladies' bags, open-mouthed, spew[ing] / postcards sent from small Scots towns / in 1960," as well as Mr. Scotland's "last few joiners' tools, / SCOTLAND, SCOTLAND, stamped on their tired handles" (3-5, 24-25). In addition to using material objects to embody the past, the poem also mourns the loss of the sense of knowing one's home, listing among the relics "those days when he knew intimately / the thin roads of his country, hedgerows / hanged with small black brambles' hearts" (21-23). In the age of the Internet, globalization, and GPS navigation systems, "the poem displays nostalgia for a time when communal and local knowledge was commonplace" (N. Williams 149). However, this nostalgia is tempered with frustration at not knowing where to situate these old skills, or the memory of them, in the modern world.

The third stanza asks whether the speaker, representing contemporary Scottish society, should take the relics, "save this toolbox, these old-fashioned views / addressed, after all, to Mr and Mrs Scotland?" (29-30). Monnickendam observes that Jamie emphasizes the violence of their potential destruction by having "the bulldozer com[e] / to make more room, to shove aside" their objects (26-27; Monnickendam 83). Before answering the question of whether allowing this destruction is irresponsible, the poem chillingly pans to the future, in which the speaker will have passed away and her belongings, now antiques themselves, will be perused by future generations. By concluding with this foreshadowing, Jamie contextualizes and normalizes the act of "the sweeping up, the turning out" as a cyclical act that each generation must perform with the relics of its parents (36). This "perfunctory rite" is not limited to the detritus of mid-twentieth-century

Scotland, but continues constantly, and progresses nations forward: as Winning suggests, “such a cyclical purging suggests that national identity never remains static” (35; Winning 234).

However, normalizing this sloughing of tradition doesn’t completely assuage the nagging question of where exactly we situate the past and its outdated customs as we try to progress forward. In this sense, “Mr and Mrs Scotland are dead” serves as a disclaimer to the exuberance of “The Queen of Sheba”: once Scotland has shed all of its hierarchical, repressive traditions, what does it do with them and their physical remnants?

The meaning or moral conclusion of “Mr and Mrs Scotland are dead” is contested by critics, likely because the poem weighs the value of totally eradicating relics versus hoarding them and decides neither is optimal (or possible). Gairn reads the poem pessimistically, considering it “an elegy for a Scotland dead and gone, and already being erased from memory” (Gairn 2007, 237). Yes, its title seems conclusive, but it is to some extent a misnomer; Mr. and Mrs. Scotland live on, annoyingly ineradicable, through their relics. Boden considers the poem more optimistically, positing that Jamie introduces the possibility of “establishing a temporal continuum” which allows a sense of traditional, if stuffy, Scottishness to continue into the future (Boden 36). This is consistent with the simultaneous existence of past and present, myth and reality, in many of Jamie’s poems (“One of Us,” discussed below, is an excellent example of this). Boden argues against Gairn’s pessimistic contentions by pointing out that Jamie could be “challenging the way the Scots have been represented as nostalgic and inert, by redefining their cultural signifiers for a modern world; these ‘touchstones’ appear too often in her poetry . . . to be considered insignificant or as having been rejected” (Boden 35). Boden’s argument rests on the assumption that the speaker has decided not to hoard the objects, and for her that indicates the ability of Scottish culture to progress without clinging to its relics. Whyte also reads hope

into the poem, arguing for the “fundamental stability of its vision of continuity within change, of fidelity, even, to a previous generation or generations seen as solidly and irrevocably connected to us” (Whyte 2004, 216). However, his reading neglects to consider the frustration and anger the speaker harbors about the previous generation’s relics; while the poem endows them some sentimental and historical value, it also rejects them as junk. In my view, “Mr and Mrs Scotland are dead” does not describe generations “solidly and irrevocably connected,” but instead depicts a nation sifting through the detritus of its outdated customs, attempting to find balance between practicality and sentimentality, historical recordkeeping and hoarding. In a sense, Jamie’s very act of writing the poem is a way to carry Scottish culture forward, and her frustration with not being able to let go of these relics is what matters; even such a shrewd, practical poet cannot shake vestigial nostalgia.

“One of Us” again situates ancient, semi-mythical figures in contemporary Scotland, but unlike the brazenly foreign Queen of Sheba or Dalai Lama, this time they are native, ancestral Scots. The poem describes a clan of traditionally dressed Hebrideans traveling south, gradually casting off their customary, mythical trappings to assimilate into modern Scotland. In a nod to the Celtic selkie myth, they wear “sealskin cloaks” and can shape-shift: “we took swans’ shape / to cross the Minch, one last fling / with silly magic” (5, 24-26). In this new context, the ancient Scots internalize the modern opinion that myth and magic are passé, “silly.” Like many of Jamie’s figures, they find Scotland “a poor place, a / ragged land all worn to holes” (11-12). Told by a forester to “get some proper clothes,” they seem to submit to capitalist Scotland:

We ditched  
the cloaks, bought yellow  
Pringle sweaters in Spean Bridge,

and house by safe house  
arrived in Edinburgh. So far so  
tedious: we all hold  
minor government jobs, lay plans, and bide our time. (34-40)

As Boden observes, the poem “deals with how the past is used to define present national identity” and furthers Jamie’s exploration of how much history and tradition societies must shed in order to progress forward (Boden 31). The image of fur-clad, magical men traversing the industrial Scottish central belt evokes humor; like Mr. and Mrs. Scotland’s old postcards and relics, it is clear that these ancient figures do not fit cleanly into present-day Scotland. Their seeming assimilation at the poem’s conclusion could suggest the ability of traditions and myths to co-exist in the present, but not without significant adaptation. Alternately, the conclusion of the poem, with the phrase “bide our time,” carries an almost threatening tone. Have the ancestral Scots, metaphors for Scotland’s ancient traditions and history, truly been carried forward into the present and assimilated into modern culture? Or do they “bide their time” for some great cultural awakening or upheaval? The humor underlying the poem suggests Jamie’s sly pleasure at the idea of past legends masquerading as modern Scots and leaves the reader with the question of just how culturally and historically rooted we modern citizens are.

Jamie reprises the concept of ancient, mythical figures emerging from the past to live among modern Scots in “The Bogey-Wife,” from *Jizzen*, in which a terrifying, baby-devouring figure with “one eye swiveling in the middle of her forehead” is revealed to be “charming when cornered, / speaks a nice Scots, / wears a fresh T-shirt / and attractive batik trousers” (5, 18-21). The Bogey-wife is more dangerous, perhaps, than the mythical men, but both poems reinforce the concept of the past living on, disguised in modern garb.



Not all of Jamie's poems from "The Queen of Sheba" concern national issues; some explore modern humans' relationship with the past on a more personal level. "School Reunion," a lengthy poem in five sections, charts the chatter, shattered dreams, and terrifying realization of aging at a high school reunion. Returning to the small town of her childhood, the speaker simultaneously recalls her past and foreshadows her future. The women at the reunion are all too aware of their inevitable aging; in the bathroom they

lean  
into mirrors                      look                      our mother's faces  
rise to greet us  
framed in paper rosebuds  
from the opposite wall. (Pt. 1, 37-41)

These lines recall the final lines of Sylvia Plath's "Mirror," in which the mirror states of its owner, "In me she has drowned a young girl, and in me an old woman / Rises toward her day after day, like a terrible fish" (17-18). The concept of the women's past being drowned or burned is thematic in the poem: "women / who work in banks are dancing, handbags / piled like ashes at their feet" (Pt. 1, 12-14). The Scottish Poetry Library suggests that "for Jamie, the handbags are remains, symbols of girlhood aspirations perhaps, or of female status," but the image also evokes the phoenix rising from the ashes and the women being reborn through the rite of the reunion (Scottish Poetry Library, n.p.). Watson argues that the poem "reflect[s] on the death of early promise - yet without bitterness," although the motifs of ash, bright lipstick, and drooping breasts certainly do not paint a pretty picture of aging (Watson 329). The poem's lines are scattered across the page, emphasizing the sense of overheard gossip and flashing recognition of old faces; Whyte terms the poem "technically experimental in its irregular disposition of lines across the

page . . . a Maenadic narrative of female socialising” (Whyte 2004, 220). This sense of overheard and observed snatches of conversation lends the poem an almost anthropological tone, as though the speaker is an outside observer of some pagan ritual. However, this objectivity cannot be sustained, and by the fourth section the pronouns for the speaker’s classmates shift from the Othering “They” to “We” as the speaker acknowledges her inclusion in the clamoring, wild group.

Throughout the poem, memories of childhood are juxtaposed with and superimposed onto the current experience of aging. “School Reunion” eloquently captures the sense of belonging to one’s childhood home, yet recognizing that one has been replaced. Jamie uses the metaphor of a child spinning three times: first, “The child birls in the frosty playground, / her woolly hat, gloves flying on strings” (Pt. 2, 1-2; *birls*: spins), then “we knew each other utterly, the spinning bairn” (Pt. 2, 29; *bairn*: child), and finally in the conclusion:

In yellow light, the bairn spins

a colored twist  
within us, like a marble.

Close the taxi door and wave

know we are the space  
the others ease into  
at your old road-end. (Pt. 5, 23-29)

The inner child still lives within the adult speaker, churning at this visit home. This recalls the adult of Kay’s “Colouring In” recalling the sensation of childhood by visiting the Fintry hills: both figures recognize that they cannot return to childhood, but still feel its presence and pull within them. In the conclusion of “School Reunion,” the pronouns are intentionally confused: it

suggests the possibility of “you” being an outside viewer, a child of the town. Alternately, “you” could refer to one of the reunion-goers, indicating that she has left and made space for the newcomers: this also implies the cyclical nature of generations replacing generations. This lack of temporal and subject clarity feeds into the most pressing question of Jamie’s work in the 1990s: how do I relate to history? Terrifyingly, the speaker of “School Reunion” realizes that she is one of Mr. and Mrs. Scotland’s relics and is being bulldozed aside in order for new generations to emerge. The final lines of the poem convey additional temporal contradictions, but also imply an acceptance of the cyclical nature of time:

You watch  
from the same door,  
then let yourself in.

As if  
it’s never happened  
all that’s happened since. (Pt. 5, 31-36)

Like one of the ancestral Scots from “One of Us,” the speaker seems capable of existence across time frames, living both as a child spinning within her adult body and as a detached observer of her own history.

Five years after *The Queen of Sheba* was published, Jamie released *Jizzen* (1999), which won the Geoffrey Faber Memorial Prize (Crown, n.p.). The word “jizzen” is old Scots for childbed; Jamie wrote the collection around the births of her two children and it uses physical childbirth as a metaphor for the national rebirth of Scotland following the 1997 successful Scottish devolution referendum and the establishment of the Scottish Parliament (Dósa 143). In its subtle discussion of politics through poems of birth, childhood, and female figures of the past,

*Jizzen* “address[es] questions of history and national identity in terms of women’s experience” (Gairn 238). *Jizzen* continues to ruminate on our connection with the past, and weighs what should be forgotten with what must be remembered, particularly in the sharp, autobiographically generated poems “Forget It” and “The Graduates,” and asks the question of what is “native” versus “foreign” in “Rhododendrons.”

“Forget It” is perhaps Jamie’s most direct and personal exploration of how to deal with an undesirable past. It recalls a childhood scene in which the young speaker studies the housing schemes in school and excitedly recognizes her mother’s childhood life in the tenements. Returning home, she eagerly tells her mother, “*We done the slums today!*” but receives the rebuke “*What for? . . . / Some history’s better forgot*” (10, 13-14, emphasis Jamie’s). The daughter is curious about her familial and national history, and insists that “this is a past / not yet done” (53-54). She demands answers and defends the value of remembering and retelling histories:

*How come*  
*you don’t know*

that stories are balm,  
ease their own pain, contain  
a beginning, a middle—  
and ours is a long *driech*  
now-demolished street. *Forget it!* (64-70, emphasis Jamie’s. *driech*: dreary,  
dismal)

The speaker of “Forget It” has decided that the relics of Scotland *are* worth saving. Her parents’ reasons for denying her these stories are briefly explained: their past was dark, with “war / at our

backs,” marked by hard labor, poverty, and siblings emigrating to America (19-20). O’Brien suggests that the poem illustrates how “the corollary of cunning silence may be the internalisation of shame, the abolition of history and, in a sense, of the self” (O’Brien 266). To children, the past is a fascinating alien world, but to their parents it was a real, difficult era. Class is certainly an element here: we can contrast Jamie’s parents’ dislike of retelling stories with Kay’s parents’ love of telling each other anecdotes and Kay’s assertion that “for my parents the past is their future” (Kay, *Red Dust Road* 122). Whyte highlights the eagerness of the speaker of “Forget It” for a communal history based in the personal, and for a sense of pride in that history: “the links being uncovered need not be limited to what one person can experience, or what reluctant parents bent on suppression can be forced to reveal” (Whyte 2004, 216). The speaker’s demand to know her history runs counter to the frustration of the speaker of “Mr and Mrs Scotland are dead” with the relics of the past, and these contrasting voices remind the reader that Jamie’s own opinions on the merits of keeping versus destroying are by no means settled.

“The Graduates,” the second poem in *Jizzen*, is perhaps Jamie’s most wistful poem lamenting a lost connection with the past. Written in dense tercets, it opens with the avowal that “If I chose children they’d know / stories of the old country, the place / we never left” (1-3). Immediately we are thrown into confusion: *Jizzen* is a rare personal collection from Jamie, dedicated to her husband and children with several poems directly discussing her personal life, so why “if”? One possible interpretation of the line could be “If I engineered my children,” or the speaker could be envisioning a situation in which she had the power to determine her children’s individual connections with the past. The contradiction inherent in “old” and “never left” captures the odd state of living in Scotland, a country drenched in traditions which are inaccessible to modern generations. It also conjures Heaney’s term ‘inner émigré’: the family is

not physically separated from the land but is culturally and emotionally distanced from it. The speaker has no personal memory of her country's history of emigration—"I remember no ship / slipping from the dock" (4-5)—but she knows

we have surely gone,  
and must knock  
with brass kilted pipers  
  
the doors to the old land;  
we emigrants of no farewell  
who keep our bit language  
  
in jokes and quotes;  
our working knowledge  
of coal-pits, fevers, lost (10-18)

To connect with the past, one must knock and perform a clichéd ritual—recall the tossing of coins in "Fountain"—and the presence of "brass kilted pipers" implies Scotland's reliance on stereotype and tradition to feign a linkage with its cultural history. The concept of the speaker's family having lost its connection with Scotland's history without ever having left is reiterated in the brilliant phrase "emigrants of no farewell." Gairn observes that in a twisted sense the current generation can find a connection to past Scottish citizens in their shared experience of exile: the poem "parallels the history of Scottish emigrants - those who left the 'old country' by the boatload in the nineteenth century - with the modern condition of Scottish cultural exile" (Gairn 2007, 238). As in "Mr and Mrs Scotland are dead," Jamie laments the loss of physical labor skills and intuitive knowledge in modern Scotland.

The cryptic conclusion of “The Graduates” conveys a sense of regret, almost of shame, but could be interpreted in multiple ways. The speaker predicts how

my bright, monoglot bairns

will discover, misplaced

among the bookshelves,

proof, rolled in a red tube:

my degrees, a furled sail, my visa. (23-27)

As a world traveler in her youth who is now settled with children, there is a sense of regret and nostalgia coloring Jamie’s tone (if we can assume Jamie to be the speaker). The degrees, visa, and sail, all symbols of opportunity, are collecting dust rather than being actively used. The speaker is sorting out her relationship to the Scotland’s historical emigrants: how can it be that she is similarly estranged from Scotland without having used her visa? Her sense of shame at her children’s unawareness of Scottish languages and stories is pervasive throughout the poem. Rhona Brown’s comment that in “The Graduates,” “there is a collision here between nostalgic, expatriate language and the register of the native: although the narrator ‘never left’, there is a sense that some aspects of Scotland have been lost even to her” describes the simultaneous insider/outsider, native/exile conflicted identity that Jamie expresses in many of her poems concerning Scotland (R. Brown 144).

“Rhododendrons” uses the transplanting of a foreign species into Scotland’s landscape as a metaphor to question at which point a foreign element becomes “native,” if ever. In sensory detail, Jamie describes how the rhododendrons were brought to Britain “under sail/ from a red-tinged east,” depicting them as “innocent / and rare” immigrants (1-2, 4-5). The final stanza illustrates

the bare glens, ready now  
to claim this flowering, purple  
flame-bright exotica as our own;  
a commonplace, native  
as language or living memory,  
to our slightly acid soil. (27-32)

With its simple binary of exotic versus native, and through the use of the term “claim,” the language evokes colonialism. Jamie’s depiction of Scotland as “bare” is consistent with the “dump” description in “Mr and Mrs Scotland are dead,” and the concept of foreign (specifically, Asian) elements coming to revitalize Scotland’s landscapes echoes “The Queen of Sheba” and “A dream of the Dalai Lama on Skye.” Today, the rhododendron is a menace to the Scottish landscape, choking out native species, which intensifies Jamie’s question of what “native” truly means. The description of Scottish soil is “slightly acid” could symbolize its lack of welcoming attitude, but rhododendrons actually enjoy more acidic soil. This may indicate that the rhododendrons are not actually welcome, and by extension that “language” and “living memory” are equally foreign in Scotland. As with many of Jamie’s poems, “Rhododendrons” offers the reader no simple conclusions.

Jamie’s 2004 collection *The Tree House*, which won the Forward prize, heralded the growth of her interest in nature into a full-time poetic focus (Crown). As Jamie’s interests have shifted, she has continued to resist labeling, and has been particularly adamant about the restrictiveness of the term “nature poet.” Her poetry focusing on natural elements is not confined to ecological concerns, but rather reflects (metaphorically and otherwise) other aspects of life; as Dósa notes, “it would be wrong to brand her simply as a nature poet because landscape evokes



serious moral, political or spiritual considerations in her poems” (Dósa 136). Rees-Jones agrees, commenting that in *The Tree House*, “Jamie shifts towards an identification as much with Scottishness and femininity as with nature” (Rees-Jones 2005, 199). Much of Jamie’s nature writing is concerned with finding one’s place within nature, on a species level—how can humans interact responsibly with the environment?—but more notably on a personal level, questioning where an individual can find true communion with the natural world and how we can put down roots in politically divided, culturally marked earth. In this sense her work “respond[s] to contemporary alienation from place and disconnection from nature” by honestly recording solitary forays outside of civilization (Borthwick 135). This exploration of the human relationship with nature is intimately connected with Jamie’s investigation of how humans situate themselves in history: Gairn aptly argues that “as part of this vital reconciliation between culture and nature, Jamie writes about the equally important need for us to see our past in a different way, to understand how landscapes are inscribed by history” (Gairn 2007, 243). As earlier noted, Jamie uses material items, relics, to represent the past, and much of her nature writing situates these relics within their landscapes.

One interesting aspect of Jamie’s nature-focused writing is her frequent commentary on language and its inadequacies. Jamie’s work obviously relies on the power of language, but like Duffy and Kay, Jamie is forthright about language’s failures and appropriations. Jamie has spoken directly to how our linguistic Othering of nature creates a rift between humans and the environment: “I don’t recognise the idea of “the outdoors”, or of “nature.” *We* are “nature”, in our anatomy and mortality. Regarding nature as the other, different, an “outdoors,” an “environment” speaks volumes about our alienation from ourselves” (Jamie qtd. in McGuire 146). In addition to its alienating effects, language is also described as inadequate for depicting

nature's grand, incomprehensible beauty. In "The Dipper," the concluding poem of *The Tree House*, the speaker notices a lone bird that "wrung from its own throat / supple, undamnably song" and humbly recognizes that "it isn't mine to give" (7-8, 9). The bird controls its language, and it is not the place for the human—even the poet—to appropriate that music; in Severin's terms, "Jamie acknowledges that the human cannot, and should not, attempt to subsume the natural, despite their ongoing connective relationship" (Severin 2011, 100). This notion of language failing to fully connect humans with the environment is thematic in Jamie's later work. In "May," one of the five Tay sonnets from *The Overhaul*, the speaker wonders, "What can we say / the blackbird's failed / to iterate already?" (11-13). And in an essay in *Findings*, the human's inability to articulate his/her environment is considered freeing: "the reason I'd come to the end of the road to walk along the cliffs is because language fails me there. If we work always in words, sometimes we need to recuperate in a place where language doesn't join up, where we're thrown back on a few elementary nouns. Sea. Bird. Sky" (Jamie, *Findings* 130). Jamie is humble in her interactions with the grand scheme of nature and history, particularly in her later collections, and acknowledges the failings of human representational systems to fully encompass these phenomena.

*The Tree House* meditates on the various spaces and places which we craft into homes, the eponymous tree house being the ultimate example. In this title poem, written in neat cinquains, the speaker crawls into a tree house and is rendered "unseeable" to outside eyes in order to ponder what it means to be home (6). Rather than being a symbol of positive human interaction with nature, the tree house is actually depicted as a burden to the tree that bears it:

we've knocked together  
of planks and packing chests

a dwelling of sorts; a gall  
we've asked the tree to carry  
of its own dead, and every spring  
to drape in leaf and blossom, like a pall. (40-45)

The emphasis on wood as the tree's "own dead" borders on melodramatic, but the lines are effective in conveying the human colonization of nature even in the structures we perceive as ecologically sound. However, the human speaker still yields a stronger sense of connection with nature, and—no pun intended—her roots, by inhabiting the tree house. Gairn observes that *The Tree House* "echoes the work of [French philosopher Gaston] Bachelard, who suggests that spaces, even the physically uninhabitable spaces of a cupboard or a nest, can speak to us as symbols of the primordial dwelling place, containing 'the essence of the notion of home'" (Gairn 2007, 242, inc. quote from Bachelard). The speaker of "The Tree House" does find solace and escape from the bustle of modern life in her "primordial dwelling place." From a sustainability standpoint, Borthwick argues that in the poem, "Jamie emphasises the delicacy and fragility of the modes of dwelling we enact," which is consistent with much of Jamie's work: her travel writing in particular establishes the concept that dwellings are physical and temporary, but a home is a much more difficult entity to identify or inhabit (Borthwick 142). In the end of "The Tree House" the speaker imagines hailing a random taxi and asks,

Suppose just for the hell of it  
we flagged one - what direction would we give?  
Would we still be driven here,  
our small-town Ithacas, our settlements  
hitched tight beside the river (31-35)

The Homeric reference would ordinarily give the concept of home increased importance and magnetism—the return to Ithaca being the chief motivation of Odysseus—but in this context it seems to almost parody the idea of home as such a pivotal location. In “The Tree House,” Jamie poses the question of whether all roads really do lead to home, and how we situate our senses of belonging and origin in a world of many dwellings but few roots.

“The Whale Watcher” also describes the value of temporary dwelling places as havens of respite. The speaker literally goes off the beaten path to escape modernity—“And when the road / gives out, I’ll walk”—and plans to “hole up the cold / summer in some battered / caravan” (1-2, 5-7). This outdated, temporal shelter is, like the tree house, a solitary refuge, a resting place for the speaker to recuperate until “I’m willing again / to deal myself in” to modern life (10-11). The poem’s rhythms and imagery support this sense of healing and calm: the speaker finds peace in watching the whales “breach, breathe, and dive / far out in the glare, / like stitches sewn in a rent / almost beyond repair” (13-16). The poem implies that the modern divorce between humans and nature is nearly irreparable, but through solitary communion with the natural world there is hope for a mend. Like in Jamie’s earlier travel writing, her poems concerning nature imply that one must leave home and go beyond the point where “the road gives out,” in order to gain perspective on one’s true place in the world.

“Reliquary” is one of Jamie’s most important, if most concise, poems on the intermingling of past and present, antiquity and technology. It is brief enough to be quoted here in its entirety:

The land we inhabit opens to reveal  
the stain of ancient settlements,  
plague pits where we’d lay

our fibre-optic cables;

but witness these brittle August

bluebells casting seed,

like tiny hearts in caskets

tossed onto a battle ground.

The term ‘reliquary,’ referring to a container for holy relics, is metaphorical on multiple levels: the poem is a reliquary for its symbolic treasures, the land is a reliquary “open[ing]” to reveal its past, and the caskets are reliquaries containing hearts. Jamie’s diction is precise, and the use of “the land we inhabit” rather than “home” or “motherland” is important; it confers an element of distance and distinctness from the speaker’s physical location. Gairn contends that the poem “insists that a mingling of ancient and modern human artifacts is not only right and proper, but inevitable and necessary” (Gairn 2007, 243). I would counter that, while Jamie understands that the reappropriation of the land across centuries is inevitable, there is a tinge of ire behind the line concerning “fibre-optic cables”: Jamie is not entirely at peace with this new use of the earth. In a 2000 interview, Jamie shared an earlier draft of “Reliquary” and discussed her conceptual framework for the poem:

The idea that the land we call Scotland - despite the Reformation, we got rid of all the reliquaries but we still treat the entire land as a reliquary. . . . So much of what we would relate to in this country is because of things happening in the past and the relics of the past are in the land, literally in the landscape. And I was also thinking about how the natural order works, which is [that] it keeps replenishing and reinventing itself every moment, every instant and casting seeds into the future the whole time. (Jamie qtd. in Fraser 19)

The frustration at human retention and fetishizing of artifacts expressed in “Mr and Mrs Scotland are dead” lingers here, and Jamie articulates how this fetishizing feeds into the Scottish cultural tendency to look backwards to the past rather than forwards into the future. The metaphor of the bluebells is a nod to the Black Douglas, a fourteenth century Scottish warlord who fought for Independence alongside Robert the Bruce and whose heart was “carried to the Crusades and thrown into battle” (Jamie qtd. in Fraser 19). The use of this metaphor establishes different levels of access for different readers: knowledgeable Scots may catch the significance, but other readers would need contextualizing to make that leap. The parallel metaphors of hearts and seeds imply a sort of regenerating Scottish nationalism and bring a sense of hope to the conclusion of the poem. The combination of the laying of fibre-optic cables and the metaphor of seeds heralds a forward-thinking Scotland able to respect its past while simultaneously regenerating and innovating. Another interpretation, though, recalls “One of Us” in that old legends are being revitalized in a modern age, either for good or in a threatening manner. Again, Jamie’s ideas on the merits of sloughing or hoarding the past are complicated, and in one poem the reader may infer both optimism and despair for Scotland’s relationship with its history.

Jamie’s most recent poetry collection, *The Overhaul* (2012), indicates a change in her writing style, perhaps due to her recent preoccupation with essay-writing. Its poems are more personal and more narrative, reflecting the comfort of a well-established poet who no longer feels the need to be cryptic or feign sophistication (although her early work earned its mature sensibility). Jamie plays with form and voice and the collection is peppered with rhetorical questions asked without anger or urgency: her tone is more optimistic, more curious now as she explores her world with humility and wonder. Her Scottish identity is less important than her identity as a lifeform in communion with the larger environment and her female identity as one

who gives life. With the 1990s passed, Scottish Parliament established, her traveling days behind her and a family alongside her, it seems that the imperative to write about her politicized identity is very much behind Jamie, and her curiosities lie more in questioning the larger context of human interactions with nature.

I will conclude by briefly discussing Jamie's two collections of essays on the natural world, *Findings* (2005) and *Sightlines* (2012). Both collections expand the detailed, humble observations presented in *The Tree House* into full, but still exactly worded, essays. First, Jamie has stated that she feels her identity as a native Scot gives her a sort of permission to write about Scotland's landscapes:

I do think that part of the reason for *Findings'* success, for example, was that the land and landscapes were described by an indigene. Not by someone arriving as a tourist – or crucially, as an owner. On the scandalous business of land and land ownership, especially in Scotland, where 80% of the land is owned by 10% of the people, I feel I might be striking a tiny blow: by getting out into these places, and developing a language and a way of seeing which is not theirs but ours. (Jamie in Crown, n.p.)

Clearly this comment can strike both ways and could cast her early travel writing in *Among Muslims* and *The Autonomous Region* into the realm of colonizing writing, but in this context her fierce defense of her mother country is notable in that she easily claims her Scottish citizenship and legitimate right to discuss Scottish territory. Her discussion of language is also relevant; like Duffy and Kay she describes language both as a tool of the authorities and of common citizens jostling for power.

In *Findings*, Jamie continues to wonder which of a culture's relics are worth saving, but this time with an environmental bent: now hoarding all of Mr. and Mrs. Scotland's artifacts is no longer ecologically responsible (but neither is tossing them in the dump). In her essay "Darkness and Light," Jamie projects into the future much as in the conclusion of "Mr and Mrs Scotland are dead," asking

What, if the world lasts, would people five thousand years hence find worth saving of our age? They could scarce avoid all our plastic and junk, but what would they want? Something at the top of our competence, something that expressed the drama of our times and beliefs. (Jamie, *Findings* 18)

Again Jamie wonders which tokens of Scottishness best represent the national consciousness and history, if any truly could. Furthermore, she questions the value of the items which can last far into the future, asking in the title essay "Findings," "if it's still possible to value that which endures, if durability is still a virtue, when we have invented plastic" (Jamie, *Findings* 54). Perhaps ephemerality is the more powerful, desirable quality in this modern age. This value is reflected in Jamie's poetry; rather than seeking to create enduring symbols, her metaphors are more fleeting, enabling brief revelations.

Occasionally Jamie's questioning of how much we ought to preserve of the past verges on the hopeless, such as when she asks in the essay "Crex-Crex" why exactly humans bother to conserve the corncrake bird in the Hebridean island of Coll, "other than it being our moral duty to another life form on this earth" (Jamie, *Findings* 78). Practically, these conservation efforts may not make much sense; however, her essay answers this question through describing the unnameable magic of being near a corncrake, one of those "little gods of the field" (Jamie, *Findings* 79). There are some elements of life that we preserve because we simply must. Despite



Jamie's frequent skepticism, frustration, and desire to be done with the past, she still feels and intimately understands its tug and her responsibility to carry some elements forward.

*Sightlines* presses further in Jamie's navigation of humans' relationship with our past(s). A common theme across the essays is how we unearth, claim, and catalogue physical remnants of our history and of the natural. Jamie is interested in the physical record of the past and recalls a time in her youth where she worked on a Neolithic dig site where "there was no quarrel, because the past, the various pasts, were all present. It was what I'd felt in my fanciful visits to standing stones, that to level all estates, to abolish all layers of time, took only a little imagination" (Jamie, *Sightlines* 58). This notion of collapsing time recalls "One of Us" and other poems in which the past exists simultaneously within modern life. Jamie is factual and reasonably objective even while perceiving this simultaneous past/present continuum, recognizing that "We know we are a species obsessed with itself and its own past and origins. We know we are capable of removing from the sanctuary of the earth shard and fragments, and gently placing them in museums" (Jamie, *Sightlines* 69). Her concept of the past is wedded to these physical artifacts and thus connected to the natural settings in which they are embedded. Throughout the polyphonous voices and styles Jamie employs and the diverse subjects she explores, there is always a throughline of intense curiosity asking where humans are situated within the vast range of history, how we relate to the past and carry it forward, and how we can connect with this past through its material relics and in a more philosophical sense. Jamie doesn't give any clear answers, but articulates the complications of finding our roots and true homes in a land with a romanticized, fetishized past and an uncertain future.

## Conclusion

And when we reach the narrow, choppy loch  
we remember the legends of giant fish  
that no one believed and everybody told  
as we drove south that morning, years ago,  
pretending we could find our own way home.

— John Burnside, “Exile’s Return” (13-17)

If questioned in the late 1990s, Duffy, Kay, and Jamie would likely articulate their concepts of home differently. Duffy might discuss reclaiming the sense of childhood, Kay might fantasize about connecting with her biological roots or acknowledge the power of imagining her own history, and Jamie might speak of understanding the connection between Scotland’s artifacts and her modern life. Today, their answers would likely deviate even further, considering how each has formed her own home through family and moved on somewhat from directly discussing her female Scottish identity in her work. However, for a dynamic decade in the 1990s, strong common threads ran through each of their work tying the concept of home to experiences of childhood, female identity, and assertion of their legitimate Scottish pride. These shared themes suggest a uniquely Scottish experience of nostalgia, related to the Scottish cultural trend of retrospection, in which contemporary Scottish citizens search their country’s past for the familiar, attempting to situate themselves in a long historical tradition.

While cultural estrangement and nostalgia are universal feelings, these poets express the distinct experience of these issues in 1990s Scotland. Duffy, Kay, and Jamie all reference cultural stereotypes and markers to contextualize their nostalgia; language and a strong sense of unified culture and tradition situate their poetry within the Scottish literary tradition even as they push its boundaries. Furthermore, the way that Duffy and Kay specifically term Scotland as the

“other country” is telling. They mark it as an alternative, the lesser-thought-of sister to England, a country on the margins. It inspires such pride and longing in its poets perhaps because it is perceived as this black sheep, this almost fantastical “other country” shrouded in legend. Poets from England, the United States, or other non-marginalized major cultural powers would likely not share this particular pride and nostalgia; it is more regionally specific.

There are other ways that this experience of nostalgia is specifically Scottish. Just as the experience of emigration is seen as a marker of Scottish identity, so too is retrospection and an attachment to past tradition. Much contemporary Scottish poetry discusses the difficulty of situating oneself within a complicated national history, particularly as it relates to concepts of individual identity, including gender, race, and language. Poetry and politics have always been tightly connected in Scotland: the Scottish Parliament in Edinburgh is covered with stones engraved with poems, and Liz Lochhead, the Scottish Makar (the traditional title for the national Poet Laureate), is one of the most vocal supporters of Scottish political independence. Furthermore, for female Scottish poets, the oral ballad and dramatic monologue are literary forms available to be taken up and reimagined for a modern age; Duffy, Kay, and Jamie certainly build upon these customs in their poetry.

Particularly in the latter half of the twentieth century and continuing today, Scottish poets have been articulating the distinctness of their national culture from pan-British culture. While generally these claims have been expressed using traditions, clichés, and past events, Scottish poets are now envisioning a new image of what it means to be Scottish today, and describing how that may have nothing to do with shortbread, whisky, or Nessie. As Scotland has gradually devolved from Britain and now faces the possibility of independent self-governance, its poetry

has reflected this forward-thinking, increasingly diverse image of a new nation, distinct and strong not despite but because of its multiplicity of cultures and voices.

Scotland's increasingly diverse population has yielded many new voices claiming multiple heritages and identities, and some of the most exciting recent Scottish poetry describes the experience of claiming legitimate Scottishness in the face of xenophobia and prejudice. Like Kay, many contemporary Scottish poets express feeling Scottish but being rejected by their fellow citizens due to race, religion, language, or other cultural factors. The excellent anthology *Wish I Was Here: a Scottish multicultural anthology* (2000) introduces some of these immigrant voices alongside the poetry of "native" Scots writing in marginalized languages such as Gaelic and Scots. Research in the field of Scottish identity conveyed through late 20th century literature is fascinating for the breadth and diversity of poets making exciting new work, and the themes of marginalization, estrangement, and nostalgia run through the work of many contemporary Scottish writers. Duffy, Kay, and Jamie provide the strongest example of poets navigating the experience of female Scottish identity in the 1990s through the perspective of the exile, but they certainly aren't isolated in their exploration of that material. It is outside the scope of this thesis to comprehensively introduce other poets making similar work concerning assertions of Scottish identity and nostalgia, but for a brief discussion of related work and suggestions for further reading, please see Appendix B.

There are several avenues for further research into the ideas explored by this thesis. Beyond the question of how unique to Scotland Duffy's, Kay's, and Jamie's experiences of cultural estrangement and nostalgia are, there is also the question of how this nostalgia is different for poets who remained in Scotland for their entire lives and never experienced physical displacement. It is probable that, like Jamie, some still experience estrangement from Scotland's

traditions and history; they may express an inability to relate to ancient Celtic myths as modern Scottish citizens, as articulated in Jamie's "Fountain" and similar poems. Estrangement and a sense of cultural exile is not always directly correlated to a physical displacement; Kay experienced this Othering even before she left Scotland, through the discrimination she faced at the hands of prejudiced "native" Scots. Even when one appears "native," the disconnect between national history, myth, and tradition versus lived experience and personal history is common in modern citizens unable to relate to their country's legends.

Another avenue for further research is into Scots- and Gaelic-language poems concerning cultural estrangement and nostalgia for a true sense of belonging. While Kay and Jamie use some light Scots in their work, this thesis has not explored any poems that are inaccessible to non-Scots speakers. I speculate that work in the traditional Scottish languages might mourn the eroding connection between Scottish tradition and modern Scottish life, particularly since writers in these tongues have felt the decrease in their readership as fewer people prioritize fluency in these languages. In Scottish poetry across its dialects, it seems thematic to examine the extent to which any language is effective at conveying strong emotions, with Duffy, Kay, and Jamie all finding language to be lacking (for Gaelic poems on this subject, see Appendix B).

Where are Duffy, Kay, and Jamie today? Kay and Jamie hold professorships at prestigious universities in Britain, and of course Duffy enjoys the Poet Laureate position. All continue to write and publish, although their writing has shifted away somewhat from the political, female-focused writing of the 1990s. The imperative to address feminist and national political issues in poetry felt by Duffy, Kay, and Jamie in the 1990s has passed somewhat, at least for poets of their generation. However, with the September 2014 independence referendum swiftly approaching, the issues of Scottish identity and singularity are again being picked up,

articulated, and debated by poets and artists. A similar study to this one could, and should, be conducted in a decade or so to investigate how assertions of Scottishness and nostalgia for Scotland are being made in the era leading up to potential Scottish independence.

The poetry of home and homing is a vital means through which we express our connections with history, culture, and the larger context of nature and time. How we relate to our home countries, our childhoods, and our pasts is not only wildly varying, but an ongoing exploration that occupies each of us throughout our lives. For Duffy, Kay, and Jamie, these poems are their way of negotiating the complexities of these relationships and of expressing their frustrations with social expectation that they conform to labels. Each of these poets has rejected any singular concept of “home” or “womanhood” or, especially, any simple definition of “Scottishness,” and in so doing they have imagined the possibility of a polyphonous, heterogeneous new Scottish society. Yet I doubt their goals as they set pen to paper were so lofty. They are poets, experiencing nostalgia, estrangement, and pride, and expressing their experiences and perceptions through language, acknowledging its fallibility but putting it to lasting purposes. In the end, their collective body of work is an eloquent, evocative testament to the human need to know our origins and to the unending creative curiosity that drives us to imagine them.

## Bibliography

- Abell, Jackie, Susan Condor, and Clifford Stevenson. "'We Are An Island': Geographical Imagery in Accounts of Citizenship, Civil Society, and National Identity in Scotland and England." *Political Psychology*, 27.2 (2006): 207-226. Web.
- Acheson, James, and Romana Huk, eds. *Contemporary British Poetry: Essays in Theory and Criticism*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996. Print.
- Ashley, Katherine. "Scots Abroad: The International Reception of Scottish Literature." *The Edinburgh Companion to Contemporary Scottish Literature*. Ed. Berthold Schoene. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007. 345-354. Print.
- Barry, Peter. *Contemporary British Poetry and the City*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000. Print.
- Bell, Eleanor. *Questioning Scotland: Literature, Nationalism, Postmodernism*. Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004. Print.
- Bertram, Vicki, ed. *Kicking Daffodils: Twentieth-Century Women Poets*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1997. Print.
- Beyer, Charlotte. "Imagining Mother: Representations of Contested Maternal Identities and Loss in Jackie Kay's *The Adoption Papers* and Isha McKenzie-Mavinga's 'Yearning to Belong.'" *MP: An Online Feminist Journal* (2010): 72-83. Web.
- Boden, Helen. "Kathleen Jamie's Semiotic of Scotlands." *Contemporary Scottish Women Writers*. Ed. Aileen Christianson and Alison Lumsden. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000. 27-40. Print.
- Borthwick, David. "'The tilt from one parish / into another': Estrangement, Continuity, and Connection in the Poetry of John Burnside, Kathleen Jamie, and Robin Robertson."

- Scottish Literary Review*, 3.2 (2011): 133-148. Web.
- Broom, Sarah. *Contemporary British and Irish Poetry: An Introduction*. Houndsmills, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006. Print.
- Brown, Helen. "Jackie Kay: Interview." *The Telegraph*, 5 June 2012: n.p. Web.
- Brown, Matthew. "In/outside Scotland: Race and citizenship in the Work of Jackie Kay." *The Edinburgh Companion to Contemporary Scottish Literature*. Ed. Berthold Schoene. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007. 219-226. Print.
- Brown, Rhona. "Twentieth Century Poetry." *The Edinburgh Companion to Scottish Women's Writing*. Ed. Glenda Norquay. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012. 140-151. Print.
- Buck, Claire. "Poetry and the Women's Movement in Postwar Britain." *Contemporary British Poetry: Essays in Theory and Criticism*. Ed. James Acheson and Romana Huk. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996. 81-112. Print.
- Burkitt, Katharine. "Breaking the Mould: Escaping the Term 'Black British' in the Poetry of Bernardine Evaristo and Jackie Kay." *Revista Canaria de Estudios Ingleses*, 60 (2010): 83-95. Web.
- Caraher, Brian. "Carol Ann Duffy, Medbh McGuckian and Ruptures in the Lines of Communication." *The Cambridge Companion to Twentieth-Century British and Irish Women's Poetry*. Ed. Jane Dowson. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011. 179-195. Print.
- "Carol Ann Duffy, b. 1955." *Scottish Poetry Library*. Web. 8 Dec 2013.
- Carruthers, Gerard, and Liam McIlvanney, eds. *The Cambridge Companion to Scottish Literature*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012. Print.



- Christianson, Aileen. "Liz Lochhead's Poetry and Drama: Forging Ironies." *Contemporary Scottish Women Writers*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000. 41-52. Print.
- Christianson, Aileen, and Alison Lumsden. *Contemporary Scottish Women Writers*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000. Print.
- Craig, Cairns. "From the Lost Ground: Liz Lochhead, Douglas Dunn, and Contemporary Scottish Poetry." *Contemporary British Poetry: Essays in Theory and Criticism*. Ed. James Acheson and Romana Huk. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996. 343-372. Print.
- Craig, Cairns. "Otherworlds: Devolution and the Scottish Novel." *Cambridge Companion to Scottish Literature*. Ed. Gerard Carruthers and Liam McIlvanney. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012. 261-274. Print.
- Crawford, Robert. *Identifying Poets: Self and Territory in Twentieth-Century Poetry*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1993. Print.
- Crown, Sarah. "Kathleen Jamie: a life in writing." *The Guardian*, 6 April 2012: n.p. Web. 11 Dec 2013.
- Davidson, Ian. *Ideas of Space in Contemporary Poetry*. Houndsmills, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007. Print.
- Davidson, Neil. *The Origins of Scottish Nationhood*. London: Pluto Press, 2000. Print.
- Devine, T.M., ed. *Scotland and the Union: 1707-2007*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008. Print.
- Dósa, Attila. *Beyond Identity: New Horizons in Modern Scottish Poetry*. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2009. Print.

- Dowson, Jane. *The Cambridge Companion to Twentieth-Century British and Irish Women's Poetry*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011. Print.
- Dowson, Jane, and Alice Entwistle. *A History of Twentieth-Century British Women's Poetry*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005. Print.
- Duffy, Carol Ann. Interview with Amy Grier. *The Stylist*, 2011. n.p. Web.
- Duffy, Carol Ann. *Feminine Gospels*. New York: Faber and Faber, 2002. Print.
- Duffy, Carol Ann. *Mean Time*. London: Anvil Press Poetry, 1993. Print.
- Duffy, Carol Ann. *Selling Manhattan*. London: Anvil Press Poetry, 1987. Print.
- Duffy, Carol Ann. *The Other Country*. London: Anvil Press Poetry, 1990. Print.
- Duffy, Carol Ann. *The World's Wife*. New York: Faber and Faber, 1999. Print.
- Eliot, Thomas Stearns. "The Portrait of a Lady." *Prufrock and Other Observations*. From Poems. New York: A.A. Knopf, 1920; Bartleby.com, 2011. n.p. Web.  
<http://www.bartleby.com/198/2.html>.
- Elphinstone, Margaret. "Contemporary Scottish Women's Poetry." *The Poetry Ireland Review*, 63 (1999): 65-72. Web.
- Entwistle, Alice. "Scotland's New House: Domesticity and Domicile in Contemporary Scottish Women's Poetry." *The Edinburgh Companion to Contemporary Scottish Literature*. Ed. Berthold Schoene. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007. 114-123. Print.
- Fairbairns, Zoë. "Carol Ann Duffy - visibility for poetry." *newbooks*. (Date unknown): 35-38.  
Web: <http://www.zoefairbairns.co.uk/carolannduffy.pdf>

- Finlay, Richard. *Modern Scotland: 1914-2000*. London: Profile Books Ltd., 2004. Print.
- Fong, Ryan D. "Weaving a Different Kind of Tartan: Musicality, Spectrality, and Kinship in Jackie Kay's 'Trumpet.'" *Thamyris/Intersecting*, 22 (2011): 243-264. Web.
- Gairn, Louisa. "Clearing Space: Kathleen Jamie and Ecology." *The Edinburgh Companion to Contemporary Scottish Literature*. Ed. Berthold Schoene. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007. 236-244. Print.
- Gairn, Louisa. *Ecology and Modern Scottish Literature*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008. Print.
- Gish, Nancy K. "Adoption, Identity, and Voice: Jackie Kay's Inventions of Self." *Imagining Adoption: Essays on Literature and Culture*. Ed. Marianne Novy. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2011. Ebook.
- Gonda, Caroline. "'An Other Country?': Mapping Scottish/Lesbian/Writing." *Gendering the Nation*. Ed. Christopher Whyte. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1995. 1-24. Web.
- Greig, Andrew, and Kathleen Jamie. *A Flame in Your Heart*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Bloodaxe Books, 1986. Print.
- Griffin, Gabriele. "In/Corporation? Jackie Kay's *The Adoption Papers*." *Kicking Daffodils: Twentieth-Century Women Poets*. Ed. Vicki Bertram. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1997. 169-177. Print.
- Hargreaves, Tracy. "The Power of the Ordinary Subversive in Jackie Kay's 'Trumpet.'" *Fiction and Theory: Crossing Boundaries*. Spec. issue of *Feminist Review*, 74 (2003): 2-16. Web.
- Heaney, Seamus. "Exposure." *Seamus Heaney: Poems 1965-1975*. New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1980. 227-228. Print.

- Hubbard, Tom. "Contemporary Poetry in Scots." *The Edinburgh Companion to Contemporary Scottish Poetry*. Ed. Matt McGuire and Colin Nicholson. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009. 36-48. Print.
- Hubel, Teresa, and Neil Brooks, eds. *Literature and Racial Ambiguity*. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2011. Print.
- Innes, C. L. "Accent and Identity: Women Poets of Many Parts." *Contemporary British Poetry: Essays in Theory and Criticism*. Ed. James Acheson and Romana Huk. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996. 315-342. Print.
- "Jackie Kay." *Scottish Poetry Library*. Web. 8 Dec. 2013.
- Jamie, Kathleen. *Findings: Essays on the Natural World and the Unnatural World*. Saint Paul, MN: Graywolf Press, 2005. Print.
- Jamie, Kathleen. Interview with Kenny Taylor. *BBC Wildlife*, 24.4 (2006): 57. Web.
- Jamie, Kathleen. Interview with Lili Fraser. *Scottish Studies Review*, 2.1 (2001): 15-23. Web.
- Jamie, Kathleen. Interview with Rosemary Goring. *Scottish Review of Books*, 8.2 (8 June 2012). Web.
- Jamie, Kathleen. *Among Muslims: Meeting at the Frontiers of Pakistan*. London: Sort Of Books, 2002. Print.
- Jamie, Kathleen. *Black Spiders*. Edinburgh: The Salamander Press, 1982. Print.
- Jamie, Kathleen. *Jizzen*. London: Picador, 1999. Print.
- Jamie, Kathleen. "Kathleen Jamie." British Council: Writers on Writing. Web. Accessed 3 March 2014.  
<http://www.transculturalwriting.com/radiophonics/contents/writersonwriting/kathleenjam>

[ie/index.html](#)

Jamie, Kathleen. *Sightlines*. London: Sort Of Books, 2012. Print.

Jamie, Kathleen. "Staff Biography." University of Stirling: Creative Writing at Stirling. Web. Accessed March 3, 2014. <http://www.creativewriting.stir.ac.uk/staff/kathleen-jamie/>

Jamie, Kathleen. *The Overhaul*. London: Picador, 2012. Print.

Jamie, Kathleen. *The Queen of Sheba*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Bloodaxe Books, 1994. Print.

Jamie, Kathleen. *The Tree House*. London: Picador, 2004. Print.

Jamie, Kathleen. *The Way We Live*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Bloodaxe Books, 1987. Print.

Jamie, Kathleen. *Waterlight: Selected Poems*. Saint Paul, MN: Graywolf Press, 2007. Print.

Jamie, Kathleen, and Sean Mayne Smith. *The Autonomous Region: Poems and Photographs from Tibet*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Bloodaxe Books, 1993. Print.

Jenkins, Lee. M. "Interculturalism: Imtiaz Dharker, Patience Agbabi, Jackie Kay and Contemporary Irish Poets." *The Cambridge Companion to Twentieth-Century British and Irish Women's Poetry*. Ed. Jane Dowson. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011. 119-135. Print.

Jones, Carole. "'An Imaginary Black Family': Jazz, Diaspora, and the Construction of Scottish Blackness in Jackie Kay's *Trumpet*." *Symbiosis: A Journal of Anglo-American Literary Relations*, 8.2 (2004): 191-202. Web.

"Kathleen Jamie." *Scottish Poetry Library*. Web. 11 Dec 2013.

Kay, Jackie. *Darling: New and Selected Poems*. Highgreen: Bloodaxe Books, 2007. Print.

- Kay, Jackie. Interview with Adam Jacques. *The Independent*, 18 Dec. 2011: n.p. Web.
- Kay, Jackie. *Red Dust Road: An Autobiographical Journey*. New York: Atlas & Co. 2010. Print.
- Kay, Jackie. *The Adoption Papers*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Bloodaxe Books, 1991. Print.
- Kay, Jackie. *Trumpet*. Picador: 2011. Print.
- Kerrigan, Catherine, ed. *An Anthology of Scottish Women Poets*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1991. Print.
- Kidd, Helen. "Writing Near the Fault Line: Scottish Women Poets and the Topography of Tongues." *Kicking Daffodils: Twentieth-Century Women Poets*. Ed. Vicki Bertram. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1997. 95-110. Print.
- Kiely, Richard, Frank Bechhofer, and David McCrone. "Birth, blood, and belonging: identity claims in post-devolution Scotland." *The Sociological Review*, 53.1 (2005): 151-171. Web.
- Kimpel, Ursula. "Beyond the Caledonian Antisyzygy: Contemporary Scottish Poetry in Between Cultures." *Poetry in the British Isles: Non-Metropolitan Perspectives*. Ed. Hans-Werner Ludwig and Lothar Fietz. Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1995. 135-156. Print.
- Kinnahan, Linda A. "Contemporary British Women poets and the Lyric Subject." *The Concise Companion to Post-War British and Irish Poetry*. Ed. C. Blanton, Nigel Alderman, and Peter Middleton. Hoboken, N.J.: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009. Web.
- Kinnahan, Linda A. "'Looking for the Doing Words': Carol Ann Duffy and Questions of Convention." *Contemporary British Poetry: Essays in Theory and Criticism*. Ed. James Acheson and Romana Huk. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996. 245-268. Print.

- Kinnahan, Linda A. "'Now I am *Alien*': Immigration and the Discourse of Nation in the Poetry of Carol Ann Duffy." *Contemporary Women's Poetry*. Ed. Alison Mark and Deryn Rees-Jones. Hampshire: Macmillan Press, 2000. 208-225. Print.
- Korte, Barbara, Ralf Schneider, and Stefanie Lethbridge, eds. *Anthologies of British Poetry: Critical Perspectives from Literary and Cultural Studies*. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2000. Print.
- Kossick, Kaye. "Roaring Girls, Bogie Wives, and the Queen of Sheba: Dissidence, Desire, and Dreamwork in the Poetry of Kathleen Jamie." *Studies in Scottish Literature*, 32.1 (2001): 195-212. Print.
- Logan, William. "The world is too much with us." *The New Criterion*, 26.4 (2007): 61-68. Web.
- Lucas, John. "Souls, Ghosts, Angels, and 'Things Not Human': John Burnside, Alice Oswald, and Kathleen Jamie." *Poetry Nation Review*, 34.1 (1979): 27-32. Web.
- Ludwig, Hans-Werner, and Lothar Fietz, eds. *Poetry in the British Isles: Non-Metropolitan Perspectives*. Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1995. Print.
- Lumsden, Alison. "Jackie Kay's Poetry and Prose: Constructing Identity." *Contemporary Scottish Women Writers*. Ed. Aileen Christianson and Alison Lumsden. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000. 79-91. Print.
- Maccubbin, Robert P. "Encounters with Contemporary Scottish Poetry." *Scotia: Interdisciplinary Journal of Scottish Studies*, 34 (2010): 11-38. Web.
- Macdonald, Graeme. "Scottish Extractions: 'Race' and Racism in Devolutionary Fiction." *Orbis Litterarum*, 65.2 (2010): 79-107. Web.
- Mackay, Peter, Edna Longley, and Fran Brearton, eds. *Modern Irish and Scottish Poetry*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011. Electronic Resource.

MacNeil, Kevin, and Alec Finlay, eds. *Wish I Was Here: A Scottish Multicultural Anthology*.  
Edinburgh: Pocketbooks, 2000. Print.

March, Cristie L. *Rewriting Scotland: Welsh, McLean, Warner, Banks, Galloway, and Kennedy*.  
Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002. Print.

Mark, Alison, and Deryn Rees-Jones, eds. *Contemporary Women's Poetry*. Hampshire:  
Macmillan Press, 2000, Print.

Marlowe, Christopher. "The Jew of Malta." *Project Gutenberg*. Project Gutenberg. 26 July,  
2008. Web. 14 March, 2014.

Matthews, Kirsten. "A Democracy of Voices." *The Edinburgh Companion to Contemporary  
Scottish Poetry*. Ed. Matt McGuire and Colin Nicholson. Edinburgh: Edinburgh  
University Press, 2009. 65-79. Print.

Maturana, Ma del Coral Calvo. "Jackie Kay's Representation of 'The Broons': Scotland's Happy  
Family." *Spinning Scotland: Exploring Literary and Cultural Perspectives*. Spec. issue of  
*eSharp* (2009): 109-143. Web.

McCulloch, Margery Palmer. "Scottish Women's Poetry 1972-1999: Transforming Traditions."  
*Contemporary Scottish Women Writers*. Ed. Aileen Christianson and Alison Lumsden.  
Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000. 11-26. Print.

McGonigal, James. "Scottish Poetry after 1945: Part Three: Contemporary Scottish Poetry."  
*Scottish Literature in English and Scots*. Ed. Douglas Gifford, Sarah Dunnigan, and Alan  
MacGillivray. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2002. 780-793. Print.

McGuire, Matt, and Colin Nicholson, eds. *The Edinburgh Companion to Contemporary Scottish  
Poetry*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009. Print.

McGuire, Matt. "Kathleen Jamie." *The Edinburgh Companion to Contemporary Scottish Poetry*.  
Ed. Matt McGuire and Colin Nicholson. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009.



141-154. Print.

McKinley, Joss. "The NS Interview: Carol Ann Duffy, poet." *New Statesman* (Dec. 2011 - Jan. 2012): 38. Web.

Michaels, Amanda G. "The Mystic and the Poet: Identity Formation, Deformation, and Reformation in Elizabeth Jennings' 'Teresa of Avila' and Kathleen Jamie's 'Julian of Norwich.'" *Christianity and Literature*, 59.1 (2010): 665-681. Web.

Michelis, Angelica. "A Country of One's Own? Gender and National Identity in Contemporary Women's Poetry." *European Journal of English Studies*, 6.1 (2002): 61-69. Web.

Michelis, Angelica. "'Me not know what these people mean': Gender and National Identity in Carol Ann Duffy's Poetry." *The Poetry of Carol Ann Duffy: 'Choosing tough words.'* Ed. Angelica Michelis and Antony Rowland. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003. 77-98. Print.

Michelis, Angelica, and Antony Rowland, eds. *The Poetry of Carol Ann Duffy: 'Choosing tough words.'* Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003. Print.

Moffat, Alexander. *Poets' Pub: Norman MacCaig, Sorley MacLean, Hugh MacDiarmid, Iain Crichton Smith, George Mackay Brown, Sidney Goodsir Smith, Edwin Morgan, Robert Garioch, Alan Bold and John A. Tonge.* 1980. Oil on canvas. National Galleries of Scotland, Scottish National Portrait Gallery, Edinburgh. Web.  
[http://www.nationalgalleries.org/collection/artists-a-z/M/241/artist\\_name/Alexander%20Moffat/record\\_id/2762](http://www.nationalgalleries.org/collection/artists-a-z/M/241/artist_name/Alexander%20Moffat/record_id/2762)

Monnickendam, Andrew. "Changing Places with What Goes Before: The Poetry of Kathleen Jamie." *Revista canaria de estudios ingleses*, 41 (2000): 77-86. Web.

Monterrey, Tomás. "A Scottish Metamorphosis: Jackie Kay's *Trumpet*." *Revista Canaria de Estudios Ingleses*, 41 (2000): 169-183. Web.

- Norquay, Glenda, ed. *The Edinburgh Companion to Scottish Women's Writing*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012. Print.
- O'Brien, Sean. *The Deregulated Muse*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Bloodaxe Books, 1998. Print.
- O'Rourke, Donny, ed. *Dream State: The New Scottish Poets*. 2nd ed. Edinburgh: Polygon, 2002. Print.
- Papaleonida, Paraskevi. "'holding the beads in my hand': Dialogue, Synthesis and Power in the Poetry of Jackie Kay and Grace Nichols." *Kicking Daffodils: Twentieth-Century Women Poets*. Ed. Vicki Bertram. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1997. 125-139. Print.
- Paterson, Don, and Charles Simic, eds. *New British Poetry*. Saint Paul, MN: Graywolf Press, 2004. Print.
- Patterson, Christina. "Carol Ann Duffy: 'I was told to get a proper job.'" *The Independent*, 10 July 2009. n.p. Web.
- Pinto, Samantha. "'The World and the 'Jar': Jackie Kay and the Feminist Futures of the Black Diaspora." *Atlantic Studies*, 7.3 (2010): 263-284. Web.
- Pittock, Murray. "Scottish Sovereignty and the Union of 1707: Then and now." *National Identities*, 14.1 (2012): 11-21. Web.
- Plath, Sylvia. "Mirror." *The Collected Poems of Sylvia Plath*. Ed. Ted Hughes. New York: Harper & Row, 1981. 173-174. Print.
- Popp, Valerie L. "Improper Identification Required: Passports, Papers, and Identity Formation in Jackie Kay's 'The Adoption Papers.'" *Comparative Literature*, 53.2 (2012): 292-318. Web.
- Porter, Eleanor. "'What Like Is It?' Landscape and Language in Carol Ann Duffy's Love Poetry." *Neohelicon*, 26.1 (1999): 77-87. Web.

- Preston, John. "Carol Ann Duffy Interview." *The Telegraph*, 11 May 2010: n.p. Web.
- Quinn, Justin. "Outside English: Irish and Scottish Poets in the East." *Modern Irish and Scottish Poetry*. Ed. Mackay, Peter, Edna Longley, and Fran Brearton. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011. 191-203. Electronic Resource.
- Ramazani, Jahan. "Black British Poetry and the Translocal." *The Cambridge Companion to Twentieth-Century English Poetry*. Ed. Neil Corcoran. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007. 200-214. Web.
- Reizbaum, Marilyn. "Canonical Double Cross; Scottish and Irish Women's Writing." *Decolonizing Tradition; New Views of Twentieth-century 'British' Literary Canons*. Ed. Karen Lawrence. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992. 165-190. Web.
- Rees-Jones, Deryn. *Carol Ann Duffy*. Devon: Northcote House, 2010. Print.
- Rees-Jones, Deryn. *Consorting with Angels: Essays on Modern Women Poets*. Highgreen: Bloodaxe Books, 2005. Print.
- Riach, Alan. "The Poetics of Devolution." *The Edinburgh Companion to Contemporary Scottish Poetry*. Ed. Matt McGuire and Colin Nicholson. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009. 8-20. Print.
- Ross, Peter. "Interview: Poet Laureate Carol Ann Duffy talks Christmas, poetry, politics and perks of the job." *The Scotsman*, 2 Dec. 2012. n.p. Web.
- Rustin, Susanna. "A life in writing: Jackie Kay." *The Guardian*, 27 April 2012: n.p. Web.
- Schoene, Berthold, ed. *Companion to Contemporary Scottish Literature*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007. Print.

- Severin, Laura. "A Scottish Ecopoetics: Feminism and Environmentalism in the Works of Kathleen Jamie and Valerie Gillies." *Feminist Formations*, 23.2 (2011): 98-110. Web.
- Severin, Laura. *Poetry Off the Page: Twentieth-Century British Women Poets In Performance*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004. Print.
- Smith, Alison. "Four Success Stories." *Chapman: Scotland's Quality Literary Magazine* (1993). 177-192. Web.
- Smith, Stan. *Poetry and Displacement*. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2008. Electronic Resource.
- Stafford, Fiona. "A Scottish Renaissance: Edwin Morgan, Douglas Dunn, Liz Lochhead, Robert Crawford, Don Peterson, Kathleen Jamie." *The Cambridge Companion to Twentieth-Century English Poetry*. Ed. Neil Corcoran. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007. 230-244. Web.
- Stafford, Fiona. "'What is the language using us for?: Modern Scottish Poetry.'" *Cambridge Companion to Scottish Literature*. Ed. Gerard Carruthers and Liam McIlvanney. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012. 233-247. Print.
- Strachan, Zoë. "Is that a Scot or am Ah Wrang?" *The Edinburgh Companion to Contemporary Scottish Literature*. Ed. Berthold Schoene. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007. 51-56. Print.
- Thwaite, Anthony. *Poetry Today: A Critical Guide to British Poetry 1960-1995*. Essex: Longman Group Limited, 1996. Print.
- Varty, Anne. *The Edinburgh Companion to Liz Lochhead*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013. Print.

- Watson, Roderick. *The Literature of Scotland: The Twentieth Century*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007. Print.
- Whetstone, David. "Interview: Jackie Kay." *The Journal*, 30 March 2013: n.p. Web.
- Whyte, Christopher. *Modern Scottish Poetry*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004. Print.
- Whyte, Christopher. "Twenty-one Collections for the Twenty-first Century." *The Edinburgh Companion to Contemporary Scottish Literature*. Ed. Berthold Schoene. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007. 78-87. Print.
- Williams, David. "New Scottish Poetry—The St. Andrews Poets." *The Literary Criterion*, 40.3-4 (2005): 39-46. Web.
- Williams, Nerys. *Contemporary Poetry*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011. Print.
- Wilson, Fiona. "Scottish Women's Poetry since the 1970s." *The Edinburgh Companion to Contemporary Scottish Poetry*. Ed. Matt McGuire and Colin Nicholson. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009. 21-35. Print.
- Wilson, Rebecca E. and Gillean Somerville-Arjat, eds. *Sleeping with Monsters: Conversations with Scottish and Irish Women Poets*. Dublin: Wolfhound Press, 1990. Print.
- Winning, Joanne. "'Curious Rarities'? The Work of Kathleen Jamie and Jackie Kay." *Contemporary Women's Poetry*. Ed. Alison Mark and Deryn Rees-Jones. Hampshire: Macmillan Press, 2000. 226-246. Print.
- Woods, Michael. "'What is it like in words': translation, reflection, and refraction in the poetry of Carol Ann Duffy." *The Poetry of Carol Ann Duffy: Choosing tough words*. Ed. Angelica Michelis and Antony Rowland. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003. 169-185. Print.

Wright, Craig, ed. *Listening to Music*. 6th ed. Boston: Schirmer Cengage Learning, 2011. Web.

## Appendix A: Poems Referenced

This is a comprehensive list of every poem analyzed in this thesis, organized by poet and collection. Novels, memoirs, essay collections, and other longer works are not included in this list. Copies of each poem on this list are available to members of the Honors Thesis Panel in a separate file (each poem is provided in that file in the order in which it is listed here).

### Carol Ann Duffy

- *Selling Manhattan* (1987)
  - “Strange Language in Night Fog”
  - “Homesick”
  - “Yes, Officer”
  - “Selling Manhattan”
  - “Foreign”
  - “Strange Place”
  - “By Heart”
  - “Deportation”
  - “Plainsong”
  - “Miles Away”
- *The Other Country* (1990)
  - “Originally”
  - “Translating the English, 1989”
  - “River”
  - “The Way My Mother Speaks”
  - “In Your Mind”
  - “We Remember Your Childhood Well”
  - “Words, Wide Night”
- *Mean Time* (1993)
  - “Nostalgia”
  - “Stafford Afternoons”
  - “The Cliché Kid”

- “Moments of Grace”
- “Never Go Back”
- “Oslo”
- “Close”
- *Feminine Gospels* (2003)
  - “The Map Woman”
  - “The Cord”
  - “North West”

### **Jackie Kay**

- *The Adoption Papers* (1991) (As this poem is over 35 pages long, it is not included in the materials provided to the Honors Panel; my apologies.)
- *Severe Gale 8* (1991)
  - “Whilst Leila Sleeps”
- *Two’s Company* (1992)
  - “Sassenachs”
  - “My English Cousin Comes to Scotland”
- *Other Lovers* (1993)
  - “Sign”
  - “Gastarbeiter”
  - “In my country”
  - “Colouring In”
- *The Frog Who Dreamed She Was an Opera Singer* (1998)
  - “At Home, Abroad”
- *Off Colour* (1998)
  - “Hottentot Venus”
  - “False Memory”
  - “The Broons’ Bairn’s Black: a skipping rhyme”
  - “Pride”
- *Life Mask* (2005)
  - “Childhood, Still”



- “Old Tongue”
- “Eleven Chances”
- “Dream Pier”
- *Red, Cherry Red* (2007)
  - “Yell Sound”

### **Kathleen Jamie**

- *The Queen of Sheba* (1994)
  - “The Queen of Sheba”
  - “Mother-May-I”
  - “A shoe”
  - “Fountain”
  - “School Reunion”
  - “Mr and Mrs Scotland are dead”
  - “Arraheids”
  - “One of Us”
  - “A dream of the Dalai Lama on Skye”
- *Jizzen* (1999)
  - “The Graduates”
  - “Forget It”
  - “The Bogey-Wife”
  - “Suitcases”
  - “Rhododendrons”
- *The Tree House* (2004)
  - “The Whale Watcher”
  - “Reliquary”
  - “The Tree House”
  - “The Dipper”

### **Miscellaneous**

- Carol Ann Duffy: “Translating the British, 2012”

- Seamus Heaney: “Exposure”
- John Burnside: “Exile’s Return”

## Appendix B: Further Reading

This appendix suggests materials for further reading, including additional poems by Duffy, Kay, and Jamie, poems by other contemporary Scottish writers on the themes of Scottish identity and nostalgia, and anthologies of recent political Scottish writing.

### Carol Ann Duffy

Although I worked to do justice to Duffy's poems on the theme of homesickness, an entire dissertation could be written on them. Some other poems on this theme to explore include:

- "I Live Here Now" (*Selling Manhattan*)
- "Telephoning Home" (*Selling Manhattan*)
- "All Days Lost Days" (*Selling Manhattan*)
- "Hometown" (*The Other Country*)
- "Caul" (*Mean Time*)

### Jackie Kay

This thesis covers Kay's poetry on race, but does not focus on her poetry condemning homophobia. This was a necessary but unfortunate omission. I briefly trace this theme in her work below:

• "From Stranraer, South" and "Bed" from *Off Colour* tell of lesbianism, prejudice, and familial obligations through a personal lens. In the first poem, a lesbian daughter realizes "that my mother got sick that day I said I was in love / with a girl who lived round the corner - / and never got better" (2-4). Now her mother's primary caretaker, she dutifully attends to her and accepts that "it will never get better, // better than this, for what is a life for but to be a good

daughter / and love your mother's weakness" (24-26). "Bed," on the following page, is told from the mother's perspective in heavy Scots. She does not explicitly mention her daughter's sexual orientation but expresses both guilt and resentment at her daughter's care: "Am a burden tae her" (2). The poem concludes with seemingly sarcastic statements: "No that Am saying A' want her guilty. / No that Am saying Am no grateful" (39-40). Kay navigates two perspectives fraught with tension to narrate both sides of the story, and illustrates the strengths and weaknesses of both characters.

- Kay's "Mummy and Donor and Deirde," from *Severe Gale 8*, looks at biological heritage through the perspective of a child of lesbian mothers, who calmly explains artificial reproduction practices to her schoolyard friend and asserts, "I don't have a daddy; / I have a mummy and a donor and a Deirdre" (12-13). The poem alternates between the child's voice and one of the mother's voices, and implies that the child has no inherent difficulty understanding the situation of his birth and origins; it is only societal prejudice that makes him feel his family situation is unnatural.

I drew from Kay's biography by analyzing *Red Dust Road*, but I focused mainly on her fictionalized account of adoption through *The Adoption Papers*. Some poems which draw directly upon the facts of Kay's adoption and search for her biological parents are listed below:

- "Keeping Orchids" (*Other Lovers*) is about keeping the orchids her biological mother gave her and trying to make them last forever.

- "Things Fall Apart," "The Wood Father," and "White African Dress," all from *Life Mask*, are inspired by the experience of meeting her biological father.

## **Kathleen Jamie**

- “The Republic of Fife” (*The Queen of Sheba*), is a tricky poem concerning Scottish nationality and pride which superficially reads as a manifesto for a united, outward-looking Scottish citizenry, but is tinged with irony.

- “Outreach” (*The Queen of Sheba*) concerns the experience of being a Westerner abroad, and is told through the perspective of a female missionary.

- “Hame” (*Jizzen*) is Jamie’s translation into Scots of an English translation of a poem by German Romantic poet Friedrich Hölderlin. It is not included in this thesis because it is a translation rather than an original work and because it is in heavy Scots which is difficult for non-Scots speakers to interpret, but it is an interesting read contextualized within the whole of the *Jizzen* collection.

- “Lucky Bag” (*Jizzen*) is an excellent example of Jamie’s “touchstoning” in Boden’s terms: Jamie uses stereotypical cultural artifacts to represent the rubbish—or treasures—of a culture that we must either discard or cherish.

- “Meadowsweet,” the final poem of *Jizzen*, concerns the old Gaelic tradition of burying Gaelic women poets face down. Jamie subverts the disrespectful nature of that burial by claiming that these poets will “dig [themselves] out - / to surface and greet them, / mouth[s] young, and full again / of dirt, and spit, and poetry” (15-18). It is a resounding declaration of the power of Celtic female poets.

## **Liz Lochhead**

I would be remiss to omit any discussion of Liz Lochhead in a thesis concerning politically vocal female Scottish poets. Lochhead, the current Scottish Makar, is often discussed alongside Kay due to their shared experience of theatrical poetic performance. Her poem “The

Bargain” carries similar themes to much of Jamie’s work: it describes an elderly couple sifting through old, broken goods at a Glasgow bargain sale, and concludes with the lines “I wish we could either mend things / or learn to throw them away” (106-107). Another relevant poem of Lochhead’s is “Inter-City,” in which a woman rides a train through Britain and ponders female and national identity.

### **John Burnside**

Another poet who deserves mention here is John Burnside, who shares the experience of exile from Scotland with Duffy, Kay, and Jamie. Burnside moved from Scotland to England at the age of eleven and writes compelling of this displacement. His poem “Exile’s Return” touches on many of the themes in Duffy, Kay, and Jamie’s work, including a sense of estrangement from the country of origin, the difficulty of relating to Scotland’s overly romanticized culture, the strain to recall childhood’s sensations, and the inability of language to adequately capture the sense of home and homesickness. This poem’s discussion of “identity / to be assumed like tartan” speaks to the overly optimistic notion of a homogenous Scottish identity that could fit all Scots which Kay rejects in much of her work (2-3). The questions, “Do we know / where we are in these tourist hills? / Is it plantain we chew to draw the taste / our childhood was?” capture the sensation of returning to the home country and finding it changed, being unable to capture that original sensation of childhood and belonging that Duffy grasps for in “Plainsong,” Kay finds in “Colouring In,” and Jamie discusses in “School Reunion” (6-9). “Exile’s Return” is evocative and sad, and offers another specifically Scottish take on the experience of the emigrant.

- “Out of Exile” is a beautifully wrought poem of homecoming and driving through border towns to arrive back in one’s hometown.

## **Alan Riach**

- “Clearances” concerns our connection with the past and traditions.

## **Meg Bateman**

- “Ealghol: Da Shealladh” / “Elgol: Two Views” recalls Jamie’s “Forget It” in that it juxtaposes a young woman romanticizing and fantasizing about the past before her birth with an older person recalling that era honestly, without nostalgia.

## **Liz Niven**

Niven’s 2001 collection *Stravaigin* explores the ideas of Scots as wanderers (“stravaigers”) within and beyond Scotland’s borders, and gives a perspective on Scotland and foreign nations through the eyes of a traveler. It is an interesting comparison to Jamie’s traveling writing.

## **Kate Clanchy**

Clanchy belongs to the same generation as Duffy, Kay, and Jamie, and also moved from Scotland to England. Maccubbin includes Clanchy in his “Exiles” category. She writes poems and radio plays on feminist and political themes.

## **Gaelic Language Poems on Homesickness**

I wish to touch upon the apparent trend in Scottish poetry which describes language—or, at least, the English language—as inadequate to describe the sensation of homesickness.

- In her poem “Cianalas,” poet Siùaidh NicNèill laments how

The only word we have for *cianalas*

in the sadly inaccurate english language  
is homesickness.  
How can homesickness compare  
to the  
gut-wrenching,  
mind-numbing,  
soul-crunching,  
foot-aching,  
eye-wincing,  
finely tuned melancholy  
that is *cianalas*. (1-12)

Like the speaker of Duffy's "Homesick," NicNèill feels the power of homesickness and expresses frustration at our inability to capture it in a word. However, for her, the Gaelic term is more capable of that, suggesting the power of the native language to express emotions relating to home.

• Christine Laennec, an American poet now living in Scotland, expresses a similar idea in her poem "Building Vocabulary, which is quoted here in its entirety:

*Cianalas:*  
Who would have thought  
I'd have to come  
so far from home  
to find a word that perfectly captures  
the voiceless ache



of having left?

*A' dol dhachaigh:*

Strange that I should

find restfulness

in a language

where you can never *be* home,

but only going

homewards.

Laennec finds refuge in the Gaelic terms for “homesickness” and “going homewards,” despite the fact that (or perhaps because) they are not in her native tongue.

### **Anthologies**

- As mentioned in the Conclusion, Kevin MacNeil and Alec Findlay’s anthology *Wish I Was Here: a Scottish multicultural anthology* (2000) introduces the voices of contemporary Scottish poets writing on the themes of inclusion, exclusion, race, language, and how Scotland is changing in a globalized economy. It was published by Pocketbooks in Edinburgh.

- Donny O’Rourke’s anthology *Dream State: The New Scottish Poets* is essential reading for anyone interested in recent, diverse offerings in the field of Scottish poetry. *Dream State* publishes the work of a new generation of Scottish writers and compiles their work primarily on the theme of Scottish cultural identity; it contains many poems ruminating on the theme of a specifically Scottish homing instinct and sense of nostalgia. The first edition was released in 1994, and the second edition in 2002, in Edinburgh by Polygon Press.