



Aesthetic Reader of Kristen Lang's Modern Ecopoem

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Abstract:

The present paper attempts to examine the modern poetic discourse of the most outstanding Australian woman-poet Kristen Lang in terms of aesthetics of the potential energy of feminist ecopoetics. Lang plays a key part in constructing an aesthetic affinity with nature and the non-human world. Moreover, she creates an aesthetic area in her ecopoem to attract her reader to be aesthetically involved in her poetic experience. The poet works as an aesthetic defender of both woman and nature by means of what comes to be called as ecofeminism. Consciously or unconsciously, the poet applies such kind of ecocentric philosophy to her poems. The poet discusses a very sensitive and crucial issue of 'domination of woman' by man which has a common ground with 'domination of nature'. Furthermore, Lang deals with her poetic discourse, as a creator and creative thinker, in terms of aesthetic physicality. Her ecopoem is a body of human and non-human experience. The paper, therefore, debates over such significant issue in some selected poems written by that poet pointing out the role of the aesthetic reader in such modern experience.

Keywords: Kristen Lang, Australian poetry, aesthetic reader, ecopoetics, ecofeminism, aesthetic physicality



1-Introduction

1.1-Aesthetics of Australian Ecopoetry

“Tell me of what plant-birthday a man takes notice, and I shall tell you a good deal about his vocation, his hobbies, his hay fever, and the general level of his ecological education”.

(Leopold, 1966, p.48)

“...all alone like a kurrajong tree.

And I said ...: “Mate- I don’t need to know your name-

Let me camp in your shade, let me sleep, till the sun goes down.

(Ralph Stow, 2009, p.248)

To be a conscious aesthetic reader of poetry is not an easy process; it’s a crucial one since “the word *aesthetic* is such a complex notion, because it includes who you are as a person: your stance and position in the world as creator, philosopher or critic...”, to use the words of Penelope Galey-Sacks (Interview with Charles Bernstein, 2012). Being engaged in the process of aesthetic reading, the reader is committed to “experience the text,...[to]note its every word, its sounds, its patterns...” and to have a “unique ‘lived-through’ experience with the text [poem]”, to use the words of Charles E. Bressler (2011, p.73). So the aesthetic reader of poetry is that sort of a reader who seeks the poem in its attractive aesthetic garment which “necessitates new kinds of reading” as “the function of the poem is not to create beautiful objects [only] (though it may be a beautiful object) but to foment new forms of reading”, according to Charles Bernstein (2012). The poem, therefore, works as an aesthetic fomenter when it aesthetically instigates the senses of the reader to be in harmony with the poet’s poetic portrait. “The poem is not the end”, Bernstein explains, “but a springboard point, an energy field that intensifies the reader’s fantasies, reflections, projections, and introjections” (2012). The reader of ecopoetry may find him/herself in the midst of two areas since two aesthetic moments may spark there: that of prose narration and that of poetry inspiration. Tess Gallagher says in an interview by Richman and Zeller (2007, p.95)

I feel like prose comes much more from outside me than poetry



does. Poetry is intimate and more generated in my own theatre,
shall we say. But in prose I have to be responsive to that story
that's
coming to me and there has to be some part of me that goes out
to
meet it.

The poet has such a kind of aesthetic 'theatre' that could receive even natural narratives and transform them into energetic and poetic intimacy. Ecopoetry, in way or another, might be related to the reciprocal aesthetic performances. Nature, also, plays its key part in that dramatic and aesthetic acts of the human world. In his significant essay, *Australian Ecopoetics Past, Present, Future: What Do the Plants Say?*, John Charles Ryan (2014,p.1) likens the "the country's [Australian] arid interior" to the "contemporary Australian ecopoetics" in terms of being "vast and robust". Ryan argues that,

The expressions of Australian ecopoetry are as varied as the
anti-
podean landscape itself, underscoring the intricate connections
between language and ecology in this part of the world...the
Australian environment is a mosaic of biota, climates,
topographies
and regions (2014,p.1)

Such environmental 'mosaic' has its aesthetic impact upon the human mood and the linguistic reaction to a great degree. In other words, it invokes the aesthetic response of the reader of Australian landscape to be emotional and aesthetic partner and performer of that environmental and dramatic language. In order to narrate the drama of the universe, the aesthetic reader of nature, by means of poetry, is committed to construct "the fictional relation to the world" of human and non-human beings throughout "the aesthetic function of [poetic] language", to use the words of Jonathan Culler (2011, p.33). Ryan maintains that modern styles of Australian poets "range from intimate meditations on nature as a dynamic phenomenon to the broadly-sweeping gestalts of the landscape poetry tradition" (2014, p.1). Many writers take into



their account the relationship between woman and nature, not only within the confines of romantic perspective, but they consider it as a social, political, human and ecological issue. Generally speaking, in poetry there is an aesthetic kinship between woman and nature. Rachael Mead acknowledges that “[e]cofeminism is a similarly ecocentric philosophy which argues that the domination of women by men is fundamentally linked to the domination of nature” (2016, p.10). Woman is the tree of life, she gives man her fruity food and shade of beauty without which man will lead a wild and wastelandish living. Man who treats woman in a brutal way is like that wild and mad man who deliberately uproots the tree that nurtures him with food and beauty.

1.2-Poetics of Woman’s Skin as a House, Aesthetics of Woman’s Heart as a Nest

Debating over the crucial issue of “Australian Women’s poetry and Feminism” Ann Vickery is keen to “map the emergence of women’s poetry in and of Australia [which] requires exploring the role of gender in poetic authorship and how the field of Australian poetry has changed in light of feminist movements and theories” (2018). Poetry, however, supports women to cross the boundary space “between public and private spheres, [in order] to assert an individual and often collective voice, and to critique gender’s intersection with other constitutive identities such nation and race” (Vickery,2018). In an article entitled *A Romantic Entanglement with Ecopoetry*, A. Stuart maintains that “Ecopoetry needs to be intense and unpredictable, needs to establish relationships with all manner of things, as well as acknowledge disconnections” (Stuart, 2017, p.3). Christopher Arigo regards the ecopoem as “a house...founded on the tension between the cutting age of innovation and ecological thinking” (2007, p.3). Gander and Kinsella, as aesthetic readers, express their impressions about ecological poem in terms of describing it as “a nest, a collectivity” (2012, p.13). The ecopoet himself/herself is an aesthetic observer of the poetic landscape of nature. He/She observes the aesthetic moment at which “...the day unfolds,



the plants are the ones inscribing upon the land, imprinting knowledge there”, according to Bruce. B. Janz (2009, p.194). The ecopoet is that one who aesthetically translates for his readers “[h]ow could a weed be a book...”, as it was maintained by A. Leopold (1966, p.48). One of the skillful aesthetic translators of the book of nature is the Australian poet Kristen Lang. She is a PhD holder in poetry from Deakin University. She worked as a lecturer in creative writing in many Australian universities. She lives in Tasmania where she is obsessed to a great extent by depicting the spells of nature there, both as photographs by the lens of her personal camera, and as an aesthetic ecopoet. Her first collection of poems and photographs, *Let me show you a ripple*, was published in 2007. Lang’s poem *Goodbye is too small a word* won the Rosemary Dobson Award for Poetry in 2011. She won, too, the 2015 Australian Catholic University Prize for Poetry with her poem *Glass*. Her other two collections: *SkinNotes* and *The Weight of Light* were both published in 2017.

In spite of her strict stance towards the politics of identity or gender, the Australian poet Kristen Lang believes that she is “This half-girl poet” who insists on the oneness of humanity, on her human identity and the physical and aesthetic belonging to ‘Earth’:

...To anywhere. In the bush
the relief, the fall of borders, ...
in learning stone and sky and river, in the tug
of the Earth, ...

.....

We need that now. We align ourselves – this or that
kind of humanity. The divide drawing us
from that rare gift we have in common – Earth itself.

(title of pending poem, Kristen Lang’s e-mail on 5 March, 2019)

On choosing the title of “This half-girl-poet, Kristen Lang comments by e-mail on 7 March, 2019:

I chose this title as the poem is a response to the increasing tendency



for people in the modern world to question and explore their gender identity. The poem is about my own exploration in response to a quest-ionnaire and to my suggestion that the emphasis on identity politics (on ourselves being some particular division of humanity) can even when important, distract us from some vital issues (like looking after the planet). I am the half-girl-poet...The title simply introduces the position from which I write in the poem.

Lang never likes to be classified as ecopoet. By an e-mail on 7 March 2019, she asserts: "I do not set out to be an ecopoet. Rather, I set out to make sense of and to create art from concerns, experiences, and imaginations that evoke a strong response in me. I would feel constrained by deciding what kind of poet I was before I wrote". However, her poetic discourse has obvious ecological elements. In her ecopoem, Lang abridges the gap between the mind of woman as a house and her heart as a nest for real and poetic sparrows. One can meet all necessary potentials in her ecopoem: breeze and human lungs, music of water and song of stone, house of woman's mind, and nest of her heart; she gives her reader an aesthetic distance for contemplation and emotional participation: in her poetic diction, the aesthetic reader is invited to feel and see the aesthetic moment of her ecopoem whose "words are a way of seeing" (Lang, 2007, front cover). In a poem entitled *Of the body*, She makes her skin a home for night and stars, for the sounds of wind, beneath her skin she makes the rock breathe when it is rolling "into veins of snow" (Lang, 2007, p.39). In her ecopoem, the aesthetic reader feels that "light bleeds" (ibid). In one of her photographs, her poetic lens a very special moment, it is that of a "cloud-bodied woman" (p. 126). There is a kind of aesthetic reciprocity and musicality between the nest of nature and the birds of her feelings.



2-Aesthetic Reader of Kristen Lang's Poetic Discourse

In her website, Kristen Lang warmly welcomes the aesthetic reader of her poetic discourse saying:

Welcome.

When I write poetry, it's you I have in mind. The person who will find the words I have worked on. And perhaps it is not you precisely that I am thinking of so much as what happens to you as you read. Will the words cause you to smile, will you feel what I have felt, will we understand each other, will the poems seem alive and able to stir something inside you? (www.kristenlangbooks.com)

Kristen Lang constructs an aesthetic bridge with her reader from the very beginning. Her aesthetic dialogue starts with him/her at the moment of her poetic writing since the reader inhabits her mind. Her aesthetic reader is that person who looks for aesthetic meaning or joy in the very 'words' she has 'worked on, 'the words' that make him/her 'smile' as he/she shares her own feelings. The aesthetic reader Lang addresses is that one who is in constant quest for the energetic and alive poems that 'stirs' inside him/her 'something' or sense of beauty which makes the matter of understanding aesthetically possible. To understand aesthetics of place, one should be aware of the place-knowledge. Aesthetics of that place-knowledge is apt to interrogate man's own knowledge in general, and that of the poet in particular. Moreover, the aesthetic reader, by means of the eccopoem, can contemplate and expect what the poet "is going to translate for [him/her] the olfactory poems that who-knows-what silent creatures have written in the summer night. At the



end of each poem sits the author [poet]-if we can find him [/her]”, to use the words of A. Leopold (1966, p.46-47). In the second part of the poet’s welcome letter, she invites her reader to read and contemplate aesthetics of the place, Tasmania, where she lives in and works on her poetic discourse:

I am writing to you from Tasmania, Australia. There is a mountain

behind me and trees around me and a dog snoring lightly to my right. Our homes and our family lives will be different. Yet, there is

much, I think, that we share. I hope you will find some sense of this

common ground in the poems on these pages.

(Lang, www.kristenlangbooks.com)

Each place has its own philosophy of ethics and aesthetics. Bruce B. Janz assures that “we are always rooted in place and a long list of philosophers (Heidger, Merleau-Ponty, Edward Casey, Jeffery Malpas, Andrew Light [and Gaston Bachlarde]) have argued that it is our very human nature to exist and act within place”. So, “[w]e are essentially palatial beings” (Janz, 2009, p.182). Lang’s poetic discourse is an aesthetic storehouse for contemplating beauty in its ecological, poetic, and dramatic meanings. Critic Martin Duwell, as an aesthetic reader, highly appreciates her poetic experience and regards “Kristen Lang...as terrific addition to the cast of Australian poets” (2018). He maintains that in her “poems we [aesthetic readers] can feel the pressure of complex thought and...[she] is craft sophisticated enough to explore the best ways of making poems out of embodying these ideas” (Duwell, 2018). The aesthetic reader will discover throughout her poetic discourse that she is keen to aesthetically fuse her thoughtfulness and human blood physicality in order to show the aesthetic bridge she has constructed with the other human and non-human world.



2.1- Lang's "Let me show you a ripple": Aesthetic Theatre of Poems and Photographs

The poem, whether it is short or long, has its separate entity. It is an aesthetic theatre by itself. In his important book on literary theory, Jonathan Culler addresses the aesthetic readers of lyrical poetry: "don't treat the [lyric] poem as...a bit of conversation, a fragment that needs a larger context to explain it, but assume that it has a structure of its own. Try to read it as an aesthetic whole" (2011, p.80). Kristen Lang establishes the theatre of her poem on that aesthetic base. The aesthetic pillars of her first poetic collection, *Let me show you a ripple* (2007), are both poems and photographs. She provides her aesthetic reader with a prose introductory word about the common body of poems and paragraphs and the aesthetic bridge that ties them tightly:

The poems and photographs in *let me show you a ripple* raise small but essential subjects. They express a fondness for intricate patterns and close detail, exposing a music that resides here, in the way one shape, thought or colour relates to another. There is a commitment to beauty and, with tenderness, to our natural landscapes, where there is always more to be seen than a simple postcard picture. The majority of the photographs were taken in North West Tasmania, where Kristen lives and writes. Immersion in their textures, the textures of water, rock, leaf, and light, is invited. Concurrently, the poems offer [aesthetic] space for the dense textures of human emotion, positioning each example in



the same large fabric, issues of the heart meshed with the elements of

our physical universe. The book is inevitably a reflection of its author's

tastes and experiences. It is a book dedicated to the inner worlds we

each carry with us (Lang, 2007, p.1)

In a poem titled *Dear Reader*, Kristen Lang addresses her aesthetic reader informing him/her about the aesthetic meaning of the 'new life' that they need to discover in their constant quest:

The river was damn good!
Dragonflies and a perfect breeze,
Since you were there by proxy (as requested)
I should inform you that you enjoyed yourself
greatly, returning with new life; the gum leaves
showed every edge (Lang, 2007, p.11).

The aesthetic reader, here, who is involved as a partner and performer in Lang's theater of poem, finds himself/herself face to face with ecological characters: 'the river', 'dragonflies', and 'the gum leaves'. That aesthetic and ecological scene urges the reader to enjoy himself/herself to a great extent as it refreshes his/her feelings and bestows him/her a 'new life'.

Talking about terms like 'feminism' and the relationship to 'ecopoetics' seems crucial and sensitive matter to Lang. In an e-mail on 7 March, 2019, she argues that:

The relationship between feminism and ecopoetics is varied. There are feminist writers who are not ecopoets and ecopoets who are not feminists and writers who produce poems that are variably one or the other or both or neither...I do not set out to be a feminist writer. I don't

write with a conscious agenda. Is my work feminist? I don't think so, not



in any stronger sense than that I write as a woman. Some feminist writing

damages ecopoetics. I suspect, some strengthens it. I would hope any feminist leanings I might have would strengthen the ecopoetic leanings

I certainly have.

‘In “reading from the text”, the poet focuses, consciously or unconsciously, on the ‘feminist leanings’ which ‘would strengthen the ecopoetic leanings’ she ‘certainly’ has. The reader is invited to contemplate ecopoetics as an aesthetic atmosphere in the act of reading done by a woman-reader:

the day, swept into piles,
takes her figure into morning,
leaving imprints on her skin;

and waking before the sun,
she sits on the verge of history,
to weave the indents into text;

thus inscribed, she rises
as the ghost of things past,
sweeping the day’s impressions

into the new night’s work;
so she trails, reading the world
in the wake of the dark’s rendition (Lang, 2007, p.142).

Kristen Lang’s poetic discourse is that of aesthetic physicality of space and time. Her energetic poem is “encased in the warmth contours of a breathing body”, to use the words of Alison Clifton (2018). Lang keeps her aesthetic reader in mind by building an aesthetic and poetic dialogue with his/her voice. Clifton acknowledges that “in writing, Lang writes for us. She voices our lives so that the [aesthetic] reader of her poetry will feel the jolt of the



familiar as the recognize their own experiences in the words on the page” (Clifton, 2018).

2.2- Kristen Lang’s SkinNotes: Aesthetic Physicality and Ecological Skin of the Poem

Kristen Lang’s poetic discourse is a source of aesthetic physicality. Her poetic language has an aesthetic skin, which contains in its layers visible and invisible images. The poet is crafted enough to make an aesthetic balance between the inside and the outside of human world and non-human one. As an aesthetic reader, Daniela Brozek Cordier(2018) appreciates the poetic discourse of Lang’s *SkinNotes* saying:

SkinNotes is a wonderful book. It really does nudge the boundaries of language and perception; in this way it has almost shamanic qualities.

It might very well herald an epistemological shift into a different way of

looking at humanity’s place within a vast, beyond human world. It is also

full of rich and tender observations and detailed nuances. In ways that

remind me of Virginia Woolf’s writing, Lang seems to offer such an accurate

portrayal of humans and the world that encloses them, that much will always remain to reward future reading and re-reading.

Nudging different notions related to a special type of feminist ecopoetics discourse is investigated not only by the creator of the text; but the aesthetic reader who has been given a space to take a conscious role there. “Being there” is the title of the third section of *SkinNotes* in which the aesthetic



reader is invited to think of the double sense of the word ‘Being’. Daniela Brozek Cordier argues that:

Section three of Lang’s volume, ‘Being here’, resonates with Hamlet’s

eternal ‘to be’. It nudges these themes further, asking what is it to be human, or to be what are? Lang subtly takes esoteric thought down

a

notch, and brings us back to earth, reminding us of the simple miracle

of ordinary existence. In Lang’s hands, angels become, wonderfully,

horses (2018)

Amelia Walker argues that “Lang has a gift for writing about animals, including human animals, and for reminding us [aesthetic readers] how close, how interrelated and interdependent we are with other creatures and the spaces of this earth we share” (2018). Let us aesthetically consider the reciprocal language of the kinship between human ‘house’ and non-human ‘nest’:

She is the nest
some cuckoo has taken
already hatched, wet still and calling, calling
under the house (Lang, 2017, p.40).

Kristen Lang is committed to abridge the gap between man and animal. She is walking together with her dog as a close friend outside facing the rain in a short poem entitled *rain*:

pad
of the dog’s paws
softly through my own soles
out walking under the umbrella (Lang, 2007, p.41).



There is another controversial poem titled Glass, which works as a sample poem too. The following is the entire text of that poem followed by some critical comments of aesthetic-critic-readers:

The Text: *Glass*

The stained fringes of the shore
remember the water.
And the skins of the stones
sketch their memories of the waves.
In the silt, the white roots

of heavy gums, once hemmed
in ripples, wait, though
the lake has been dry since winter.

She watches. The cracks
widen into quietness. She stands
at a window, a flat, eastward eye
in a room that hums with the stillness
of its shadows. By her chair, a wooden table where she has placed
her red and yellow cup,
her white plate, in the weep of time.

On the glass of the window,
at the level of her lips, the faint
fog mark of her breathing- proof
or a figment, she cannot tell.
Is this, she wonders, how it feels
to be that man or woman
who cannot walk while the tribe
travels on out of the weather.

She moves the cup
to the kitchen and returns



to the fog mark of her lungs.
There is no tribe. The walkers
are the image of herself,
trailing away from her.
She is silent.

She believes the hour
would say to her: *the day*
is unfolding, the beat
you hold still joins you
to all I am... She would touch
the life in it.
But cannot move. Time
slips ahead of her.

She dreams of a hand
stretching back into the haze
of her being here. The tremor. Its slim
breadth, the grip. And the glass
thrown open.
There is drought – all of us
beside her, the rain of our warmth
brimming in our chests, not

knowing how to hold her, not
holding even ourselves. This chance.
Her lips are the stones. In the dry
waves of her words, the shadow
of herself – her eyes, windows,
her breath on the glass. This
chance. That we walk away
or cannot walk, that we let



go, that we embrace. Can rain
simply end. We watch. And we tell her...
we tell her none of us
are angels, all of us moving stones
to quench the need for water.
We tell her, here – palms
cupped in the air – drink,
drink until the stone grows lighter.
Hurl what you can into the cracks.
And we wait. And we forget. In the vines
of our own weather. (Lang, 2017a)

The Australian novelist Janette Turner Hospital believes “that literature is the keeper of the record of humanity and the guardian of our history of compassion” (Wilson, 2008, p.35). In her poetic discourse, Kristen Lang works poetically and aesthetically to be the emotional ‘keeper’ of both human and non-human ‘record’. Lang’s “mysterious yet powerful poem” of *Glass* has been awarded the Australian Catholic University Prize for Poetry (Luttrell, 2015). Lang comments on that poem saying: “The poem is essentially about one person who is left alone and what it takes to reach out to a person and the choices we make as to whether we reach out or not and how that relates to what is in our own minds”. The key character in the poem’s theatre is that woman who lives alone. Lang records the aesthetic moment by means of which that solitary woman be in harmony with non-human neighbours since “[t]here is no tribe. /The walkers are the image of herself, trailing away from her. She is silent”. Being alone with ‘silence’ is a matter of challenge, and that woman is committed to defy the odds when she lives alone where no one of the tribe to speak to but the glass of her window. Lang focuses on the crises of modern “man or woman/who cannot walk while the tribe/travels on out of weather” (Lang, 2017a). However, this woman is keen to complete the course of her life with a challenging spirit. Janette Turner Hospital asserts that “[e]verywhere there are people of magnificent moral courage who are able to defy the mores, the culture, the



beliefs of the culture or subculture where they find themselves” (Wilson, 2008, p.34). So the solitary woman in Lang’s poem is that kind of a ‘magnificent moral courage’. Judge Kevin Hart has highly praised the poem which “stood out the 200 entries”. Professor Hart acknowledges that “*Glass* maintains a sense of mystery and stillness from its first lines, yet perhaps the most powerful moment of this quiet yet forceful poem is its ending” (Wilson, 2008). Hart, as an aesthetic reader of “*Glass*” highly appreciates it since it teaches a moral lesson that “[w]e never escape ourselves, even in our moments of compassion for other people’s pains” (ibid).

In Cordite Poetry Review, Nathanael Pree argues that: “*Glass* is one of these, remarkable [poems] for the nuanced and multi-layered interplay between visible surfaces and what lies beneath” (2018). The ecological words such as ‘shore’, ‘water’, ‘stones’, and ‘waves’ in the very first stanza invite the aesthetic reader to probe into the deep layers of the text. The poet makes “the stained fringes of the shore/remember the water”. She grants the hard ‘stones’ soft “skins” as if they were living beings. In Lang’s ecopoetic diction, the aesthetic reader of her poetry may be surprised once he/she knows that “the skins of the stones/sketch their memories of the waves” (Lang, 2017a). Pree debates over the harmonious balance between what’s outside the skin of ‘*Glass*’ and what’s inside its deep layers. That writer argues that:

What is glass but sand, broken down and recomposed into the possible

illusion of a level plane? Its transparency is both deceptive and a means

by which a more complete perception of whatever it covers may be obtained. Just as stones contain water, so their own intrinsic elements are held in by a surface that despite its visibility remains imperceptible.

These re-animated self-objects resist isolation or definition other than by

shifting their constituent parts (Pree, 2018, p.1).



To critic Martin Duwell, the second section of the collection *SkinNotes* entitled *The Fragile Mind* casts the light on “the mind by focusing on it at moments of vulnerability and extremis” (Duwell, 2018). In other words, man’s mind looks like “a small house” (Ibid) which is like glass is vulnerable to be damaged easily. There is a hidden code of ecology when the aesthetic reader takes the matter of fragile ecosystem into account. Such point may refer to the glassy nature of things when man deals with them as brittle items. The poem focuses not only on the personal experience of that solitary woman; it may talk about a collective experience of frustration and disappointment of modern people. Duwell aesthetically argues that “*Glass* uses drought as the correlative of a woman’s inner state but the poem’s end concentrates on the frustration of her friends at their inability to break this drought” (2018) : “We tell her none of us/are angels, all of us moving stones/to quench the need for water....And we wait. And we forget. In the vines/of our own weather” (Lang, 2017a). Critic Wallace-Crabbe aesthetically acknowledges that “the angels are not ourselves”, but these sure-footed poems locate personal apprehension in a physically delicate, common world. Readers will surely delight in the subtle, varied command of *SkinNotes*” (The Tasmanian Writers Centre, 2015).

2.3-Kristen Lang’s “The Weight of Light: Poetics of Woman between Ecological Lyricality and ‘Sublime’ Spirituality

As a conscious aesthetic reader, Amelia Walker reviews Lang’s *The Weight of Light* in a significant essay in *Text Review*, saying in the following extract:

Quiet on the surface, each poem screams volumes...The Weight of

Light matters to our [aesthetic] world in it. Without ever preaching

to its [aesthetic] readers, it reminds us of all we could be doing to live more gently, more sustainably. It is a book that needs to be



[aesthetically] read and re-read. I recommend it most especially for our course in creative writing/or literary criticism, where it could serve as an illustrative example of how contemporary poets address crucial issues of our fragile, precious world (Walker, 2018).

“Sublime” as a Sample Poem

The Text: Sublime

As a sample poem for the collection of The Weight of Light, we read in “Sublime”:

Some of the notes
the birds chisel out
from the air the trees hook
in the tips of their branches
have escaped from the downward pull
of the earth – you can hear
the float of the melody,
a note without the husk
of the sound itself. (Lang, 2017b)

In this poem the aesthetic reader could feel that kind of ecological language watered with water of lyricality. The poet’s harp attracts our ears and souls to listen to ‘the notes’ that the birds chisel out from the air’. The aesthetic reader joyfully ‘can hear the float of the melody’. Such lyrical celebration makes the aesthetic reader soar, as a bird, in the sky of ‘sublime’. The poet and critic Chris Wallace-Crabbe argues that,

Lyric poetry is the lightly orchestrated voice of true feeling. Its shape and its language persuades us, as [aesthetic] readers, that soul or spirit has become fully incorporate. In Kristen Lang’s own words, again and again “we are all/this embrace”: all in her gathered



moment of love or of loss. She has written of our inevitable transience...

(The Tasmanian Writers Centre, 2015)

In the second part of that lyrical poem, the poet is still weaving her ethereal language when she addresses either the poet inside her or her aesthetic reader:

You look up, thinking
of the tree you will climb
and the words you will cast
into the ether.
And you realise:
the perfect poem, the poem
no-one has written,
though the birds breathe into it
with their songs, the sublime
rise of their souls. In the branches:
the poets. In our chests,
the hum.

The aesthetic reader of this poem be in harmony with lyrical tone and musical melody. Kristen Lang is quite able to make her reader involved in the mesh of her striking poetry. She weaves the threads of her “poetry as a way of listening amid the noise of the modern world” (www.kristenlangbooks.com). The aesthetic reader that she always puts in her mind is sharing her the poetic game when she invites him/her to think of the tree before climbing it, to think of the poetics of casting the words in the ethereal space, to ‘realise the perfect poem which bears the breath of birds’. Lang bestows her aesthetic reader the grace of the sublime souls that rise on the branches of poetry; in such aesthetic universe both poets and birds will sing their sublime songs in a way reminding us-the aesthetic readers of ecstasy of woman poetics when it works as an aesthetic bridge between ecological lyricality and sublime spirituality.



Conclusion

In terms of aesthetics of the potential energy of feminist ecopoetics, the Australian poet Kristen Lang's poetic discourse plays a key part in constructing an aesthetic affinity with nature and the non-human world. She creates an aesthetic area in her ecopoem to attract her reader to be aesthetically involved in her poetic experience. The poet works as an aesthetic defender of both woman and nature. Although Lang doesn't like to be classified as feminist or ecopoet, the shade of ecofeminism is dominating in her poetic discourse. Consciously or unconsciously, the poet deals with such a kind of ecocentric philosophy. In other words, she tackles a very sensitive and crucial issue of 'domination of woman' by man which has a common ground with 'domination of nature'. Lang deals with her poetic discourse, as a creator and creative thinker, in terms of aesthetic physicality. Her ecopoem is a body or a skin of human and non-human experience. The paper, therefore, has debated over such a significant issue in some selected poems from her three published collections: *Let me show you a ripple*, *SkinNotes* and *The Weight of Light*. Kristen Lang is keen to focus on the emotional and intellectual engagement of the reader with her poetry. She thinks that the role of the aesthetic reader in that modern poetic experience is quite significant. In spite of her strict stance towards the politics of gender or identity, woman plays a central part in the setting of her poetic canon. Her aesthetic reader is aware enough that her poetic discourse has obvious ecological elements. In her ecopoem, Lang abridges the gap between the mind of woman as a house and her heart as a nest for real and poetic sparrows. In her ecopoem, the reader can feel the harmony between nature's elements and human body's organs: breeze and human lungs, music of water and song of stone, house of woman's mind, and nest of her heart. She gives her reader a chance for contemplation and emotional participation in her poetic diction as well. In conclusion, the reader, by means of aesthetic distance, is invited to feel and see the aesthetic moment of her ecopoem whose words are a way of seeing. She makes her skin a house for night and stars, for the sounds of wind; beneath her skin she makes the rock breathe



when it is rolling 'into veins of snow'. In her ecopoem, the aesthetic reader feels that even the light is bleeding. Moreover, her photographic and poetic lens records, in a very special moment- that of a spellbound photograph of a 'cloud-bodied woman'. There is a kind of aesthetic reciprocity and musicality between the nest of nature and the birds of her feelings and vice versa. Thus, Kristen Lang, by means of aesthetic ecopoem, establishes a poetic discourse that works as a storehouse of innovative notions and ecological thinking and education. She invites her aesthetic reader to be a conscious partner and performer on the stage of her poem's theatre and that of the environmental culture.

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