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## ARTICLE

# Scarcely Translated: Peter Larkin's Eco-poetic Entanglements

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This paper explores Peter Larkin's poetry within a framework of eco-poetics, attention, and translation. Seeking to provide an overview of the ecological intertwinements in his work, it draws on Larkin's 'poetics of scarcity', which implies a precarious relation between abundance and absence. The resulting notion of being insufficiently with the givenness of the natural world finds its echo in an experimental creative-critical edge of language entangled in a philosophical, theological, and poetical discourse. Resisting economic consumption, Larkin's alienated poetic register resonates with an eco-poetic decentring of language that pushes against its human limitedness. His poems thus require an increased attention, which, in line with an ecological approach to attention, can stretch towards a horizonizing ethical attention to endangered external landscapes. Emerging notions of transformation, interrelatedness, and moving beyond borders are subsequently reinforced by an expanded framework of translation with reference to Larkin's cycle 'Spirit of the Trees'. As romanticised poems are recomposed in a new environment during a forceful, yet creative act, an-other layer of alienation is revealed with regard to the eco-poetic context of Larkin's work. Translation is ultimately seen as motion, relation-making, and approximation, which can be extended to the insufficiency of poetry and language itself: From a scarce position, the entanglements in Larkin's poetry respond to the manifold entanglements of the natural world, their uncanny poetic resistance pointing towards a horizon where a necessarily existential human scarcity opens up spaces for reparative attention.

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**Keywords:** Eco-poetics; Translation; Peter Larkin; Scarcity; Attention; Horizon

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Corresponding to a growing social awareness of a more and more acute climate emergency, the last years have witnessed an increasing research interest in environmental topics. Evolving disciplines as varied as Environmental Humanities, Animal Studies, Sustainability Science, and Ecological Economics raise practical

and moral questions concerning the systemic exploitation of human and natural resources concomitant with global inequality in a yet ever globally dominating growth-oriented consumerist economy. In line with a stronger interdisciplinary and intersectoral approach, ecopoetics forms an open field 'where different disciplines can meet and complicate one another' to critically engage with (more-than-)human/nature/language issues.<sup>1</sup> As it embodies the manifold entanglements making up the 'mesh' of the twenty-first century, ecopoetics approaches local/global, human/animal, self/other dichotomies from a multi-artistic perspective and generates itself as a self-reflective poetic inquiry.<sup>2</sup> It is in this vein that I attend to Peter Larkin's poetry; not in an attempt to categorise his work, but rather to seek out ecological concerns across his poetry and make sense of his cellular, 'protoplasmic, vacuolar' language in an ecopoetic environment.<sup>3</sup> Challenging and uncannily confusing as his poems may be, I argue that the resistances his poetics of scarcity sets up at an interconnected micro- and macro-level align to a radical ecopoetic resituating that can translate into a horizoning ecological attention, to language and beyond.

The first part of this paper outlines the existing research landscape around Larkin and provides general insights into his poetics of scarcity. As 'philosophical (and theological) companion and critique', a topological focus on tree-lives arguably likens it to ecological, decentred modes with a strong reliance on interconnectedness.<sup>4</sup> With regard to a necessary ecopoetic 'radical resituating of poetics' in the face of a global environmental crisis, an ethical attentional resistance will be discussed in line with Yves Citton's *The Ecology of Attention*.<sup>5</sup> Following this, I aim to sketch a horizon of attention with the possibility to propel attention in Larkin's eco-philosophical poetry forward into a more active stance towards the natural world. Formally and textually estranged, a poetics of scarcity echoes the ecopoetic concern of language itself being limited by the human skin, thus inherently insufficient to bridge the gap between language and the world.<sup>6</sup>

Based on this, the second part discusses a process where language is most bare, most pressured, and most variable: the process of translation. Focusing on Larkin's less discussed collection 'Spirit of the Trees' from *Terrain Seed Scarcity*, his septimal

poetic technique will be investigated in tandem with translation theories by Walter Benjamin and Federico Montanari.<sup>7</sup> As Larkin's collection draws on classic Nature poems as source texts, their re-composition in an eco-poetic context involves mutual transformation. Translation is subsequently expanded in its interlingual linguistic framework and linked to a wider ecological process of motion, interrelation, and attention. In line with the inevitable shortcomings of language, poems can arguably be regarded as translations as well, never fully sounding out the source, yet new entities with their own creative value. From a resistance to a sufficiency of language thus emerges the poem-translation as an approximation to the sheer existence of the natural world, leaving space for a horizon of attention that shimmers between lesser and fuller presences with the earth.

### **1. Eco-poetics: How to Stretch the Falling Short of a Tree?**

While in 2013 Sophie Seita noted a lack of attention to Peter Larkin's writing, his substantial body of work has inspired a number of critical and creative responses since, including the symposium that led to the publication of this special issue.<sup>8</sup> Descending from a tradition of loco-descriptive poetry and Romantic pastoral naturalism, his poetic 'thicket' includes woods, plantations, fields, trees, branches, and their transition into other forms of existence.<sup>9</sup> Although a sense and knowledge of place is especially present in collections inspired by specific landscapes of the English Midlands, Larkin's writing mode is less descriptive than 'loco-speculative', generating landscape as a 'process', in which broader socio-political and economic issues are mediated by a projective opening of the field.<sup>10</sup> Theoretically informed by ecocriticism, postmodern theology, Romantic ecology, European phenomenology, American Language poetry, and British botany, his poetics circle around notions of scarcity, gift, horizon:

Degradation of forest wave on wave of scraped field      the  
incomplete reproach of scarcity exceeds plenitude long each  
tuft of reach      only an horizon of the enormous propensity  
encroaches then.<sup>11</sup>

Larkin's much discussed 'scarcity of relation' moves from an economic and ecological context to an existential condition of scarcity that situates human life between rarity and plenitude.<sup>12</sup> Countering excess and 'modernity's sense of permanent climax', scarcity characterises a precarious relation to absence and abundance, since the unconditional gift is 'ill-received' under a condition of loss that evokes immanent desire:

The argument for the poetics of scarcity will be that the ethical yearning for a good and secure life amid nature, together with a hunger for the numinous presencing and co-presencing of non-human communities and earth-spaces, are not forms of indiscrete or emulative desire.<sup>13</sup>

Scarcity, not so much a concept as a 'sourceful form of poetic thinking' for Larkin thus underpins his idiosyncratic poetics, grounding an 'unnegotiable bond between human and nature, one in which the unevenness and instability of the relation make room for human self-dedication *to nature*'.<sup>14</sup> Spaces for ethical questions concerning responsibility, attention, and care emerge in a poetically fragmented conglomerate of theology, philosophy, and ecology, which poses a challenge to the reader. Linguistic innovation as a way of attention to decentering techniques merges with a scarcity practice of funnelling collected material from various sources into a poetic singularity resisting formal classification: often arranged in blocks of prose and numbered sections, investigative essayistic clusters are only clearly defined as poetry by virtue of their inclusion in a collection with a respective cover.<sup>15</sup> Similarly, prefaces and scattered notes, which seem to accumulate in Larkin's more recent, over the past thirty years otherwise stylistically relatively consistent collections, feature an urgent unfamiliarity that aligns them to the poetry itself, as for instance apparent in the preface of *Lessways Least Scarce Among*: 'A scarcity of relation doesn't effectively bask in the shuttle of detached plenitudes opaquely speculative of the world: where a meaning does occur it does so as gift and event, and so as unconditional but slighted'.<sup>16</sup>

Given the breadth of his poetic and critical interests, Larkin has been described and discussed as a theological, place-, post-pastoral, and ecopoet, among others.<sup>17</sup> Edmund Hardy notes that the leitmotif of scarcity 'suggests connections to ecopoetics,

economics, and biopolitics', and Larkin himself states that his work 'does impinge on things ecological'.<sup>18</sup> While I object to the idea of labelling, I am interested to further explore how his creative-critical writing connects to that very edge in eco-poetics and what the framework of eco-poetics as attention to more-than-human realms, experimental openness, and layers of ecological entanglements means in approaching his work.

If one can refer to a contemporary global eco-poetic conversation, which would include a thematic and formal critical and artistic engagement with geopolitical power hierarchies, multinational capitalism, nature/culture, human/animal, anthropocentrism/biocentrism, self/other dualisms, and a desideratum for greater ecological justice, Larkin's theologically informed poems of scarcity seem to strike an interesting note amidst it.<sup>19</sup> His work bears no direct trace of a specific external political dialogue, as for example embodied in the eco-poetics of Brenda Hillman, Evelyn Reilly, or Juliana Spahr; it does not include other non-human creatures or a tension between 'the beautiful bird' and 'the bulldozer off to the side that [is] destroying the bird's habitat'.<sup>20</sup> Gary Snyder's or Cecilia Vicuña's spiritual notions seem to diverge from his Western theological framework, and from a postcolonial perspective and the age of a 'Plantationocene', references to plantation or poverty might even initially appear slightly controversial.<sup>21</sup> Larkin's 'earth-sensitive' poetry pays attention to the natural world in a much more essentialist way veering towards the scarce.<sup>22</sup> As Milbank notes, Larkin writes 'always about specific woods, plantations and forests', and, what is more, Milbank claims, he 'only ever writes precisely the same thing about trees, about their nature or what it is that they are doing'.<sup>23</sup> He does so in 'seemingly infinitely different ways',<sup>24</sup> embracing a scarcity procedure in his writing that oscillates between an abundance and simultaneous lessening when composing the multiplicities of researched material into a singular poem as a multiplicity in itself:

How to stretch the falling short of a tree?      as fetches its  
layering of unleashed decompression?      true for the report  
of its sheath-fire onto occupied ravage?      to accelerate the  
scarcity only as it beckons across<sup>25</sup>

The page, the language, each word becomes the site of attention, desiring to 'stretch' across the blank spaces towards that which cannot be fetched – within the metaphysical idea of scarcity the wholly given; metaphorically, the language to articulate it. Ecologically, the event of the falling stretches beyond the single tree to be connected to its greater implications, unleashed in a paratactic relational field powered by acceleration foreboding 'post-extinction'.<sup>26</sup> In line with an ecopoetic resistance against economic expectations of language to convey information, it has to be noted how difficult it is to provide a summary of this poem or of its respective collection.<sup>27</sup> What can be retrieved is the engagement with and attention to tree-lives, their existence within a landscape of woods, fields, cities, their anatomy from the inflection point of branches 'until a root is lens by surround' to the tips of praying firs. Prompted to ground Larkin's unusual vocabulary intra- and intertextually, the reader is taken through the intricate fragile root-network of a tree: 'grow down the tree into long right root: at the end of any root it uncramps its vertical haul'. While the compression of the short-lined free-verse stanza reinforces the imperative's prompt to become tree-root, the tree itself stops such a human identification as 'it' gets in the way. Its release of the 'haul' – bringing to mind exploitative excess – is subsequently followed by a formal widening into justified blocks of text with tree as its subject: 'tree optimal cover at the deceleration, recompose natural verticals for its own root rate an unwinding route, how the patch at net steers towards the vertical no longer spooling it'. Net, together with 'crest' in the following section, can be led back to fit the associative realm of 'haul' in the fishing industry, against which the tree works as a natural homeostatic ecosystem at its own rate.<sup>28</sup>

Setting up an ecological orientation against habitual ways of reading and perceiving language as an effective communication tool, Larkin's poems offer scientifically descriptive close investigations of trees whilst implying an allegorical dimension. They do so by means of a range of registers that only gain their scarce value in relation to one another. As Robert P. Baird notes, this may result in a grammatical understanding of a phrase without grasping any of its meaning (and even grammatical expectations are often subverted, as will be outlined below): 'The sentence sounds like it means something, it *should* mean something, but even on a careful reading it's

nearly impossible to figure out what that something is'.<sup>29</sup> This evokes a mode of what Larkin calls 'vigilant counteranthropocentrism', a poetics subsuming all presumed familiarity with language into its speculative arboreality, avoiding Romantic praise of, or mimetic attempts to speak for nature to an extent it almost feels inhuman.<sup>30</sup> The disjointed perspective adds to the estrangement; if one encounters one of the rarely used pronouns, they often evade attention as they revolve around deep concepts or distancing abstractions hindering emotional identification: 'we stand on the threshold of a post-scarcity remit as the city expands faster than its own needlessness of site'.<sup>31</sup> 'We' – potentially we humans – encounter again the foreboding of a greater urgency, referring back to the ecological, spiritual, and economic ramifications of the introductory question of this section: 'How to stretch the falling short of a tree?' Writing can stretch, but writing falls short, language falls short, humans fall short, humans have fallen – spiritually from Paradise after the attempt to become like God. And since that fall, 'we' are confronted with a state of the earth that no longer resembles the preceding wholeness of its givenness, but one that is shaped by human will. The Anthropocene, in that sense, was already set off at that point, three thousand years ago in the Genesis narrative when subsequent events such as the great flood technically only affected a segment of the earth, yet reached cosmic dimensions. With each word containing multiple buried meanings, and in the absence of a unified governing perspective or narrative, the sections of this poem seem to be organised by an opacity of language itself. Each line stretches to resolve its inexplicability in the next one but never fully does, keeping the reader alert to its echoes, to every space, every 'root wing' in relation to the finite wholeness of the tree as a potent offering of infinity: 'every cast bud taking its spare tree-chance'.<sup>32</sup>

Evelyn Reilly frames ecopoetics as 'dissolv[ing] the self into the gene pool', thereby abandoning 'the idea of center for a position in an infinitely extensive net of relations'.<sup>33</sup> In line with this, Larkin's procedural scarcity practice leads the self through an abstracted gathering of material from 'all sorts of fragmentary discourses glimpsed via Google and other databases', thus a myriad of other selves.<sup>34</sup> On a textual level, it further challenges basic assumptions about morphological hierarchies: verbs, nouns are not given but fluidly created and can often be read as either:



'Horizon that unconditional fold enveloping time'.<sup>35</sup> The resulting uncertainty not only creates doubts concerning human control over language but further embeds ambiguous grammatical functions in a co-dependent transformative textual system, in which even commonly repeated words are not the same. While the reader's attention moves between small plant-plasma particles and a broader horizon of forest degradation, post-scarcity, and post-extinction, their level of complexity remains equal. A form of fractal poetics emerges from their intertwinement, one that seeks the reader's engagement with an unfamiliar 'poorly endowed patina on any convertible placing', as it refracts questions and multiple layers.<sup>36</sup> Going back to the falling short of the tree, plenty can be excavated at word-level already, but how does the question work as a whole, or first, what does it mean for trees to fall short? Do they fall short in their ability to enclose a field? In their inability to draw attention to their unconditional offering; their inability to make humans recognise their involvement in environmental destruction as they become 'pencil-phobes by|natural graphic scratch|scarce at a stretch'?<sup>37</sup> Or simply in their vertical shortcoming since they fail to reach the sky and make full contact with a sacral space that connects them to a presence on earth? The question branches out into adjacent meanings that support one another, guided by root-words such as scarcity, tree, or city, which evoke multiple potential relations rather than being definite centres themselves. What constitutes the smallest unit in Larkin's arboreal explorations? The single word, occasionally italicised, thus drawing attention to its unfamiliar, multi-layered usage? The possibility of other words as substitutes, indicated by brackets as 'adjacent crater (cluster) of branch cage but well forsworn of root'? The deictic syllables in 'time-for', 'given-to' that stretch towards a horizon of relation? The spaces, line breaks, or slashes? The slippage when misreading words that echo similarly sounding words as 'scars' of the omnipresent scarce?<sup>38</sup> I would argue that it is their entanglement in attention to similarly entangled more-than-human things itself. The meaning of clearly distinguished terms in the linguistic framework of the English language is no longer given but displaced and mingles uncannily with new surroundings. Supported by an underground network of etymological possibilities resounding a Zukofskyan mode, an infinity of relations emerges from his poetry, in which 'heath and wood|can

wrestle their|paper-thin recalcitrance'.<sup>39</sup> As 'urban tendrils' sprout across cities, forests, fields, and 'urban woods', they refute a prior production of landscape in any pastoral sense. Trees, roots, branches, horizons are not only written into being across one poem but across collections, encircled by yet different naturally immediate and linguistically distant environments hinging on a poetics of scarcity.<sup>40</sup> The emerging kaleidoscopic focus on their processes of transformation, their renewal, and their fragility pays an ecopoetic tribute to a cyclical natural world not set apart from human interventions but immanent, if scarcely so.<sup>41</sup>

If centre and periphery are flattened by interconnections between vacuoles of extended attentiveness, language simultaneously pushes against linearity. In an attempt to engage with the textual multiplicity, a form of ecological reading is encouraged, which is not so much goal-oriented but resembles a dynamic process based on un-reading, re-reading, and additional reading. Most of Larkin's collections open with or include quotes from thinkers and poets as varied as Luke the Evangelist, Henry David Thoreau, Emily Dickinson, Theodor Adorno, or John Kinsella, thus consciously situating themselves in a wider literary tradition. Framed by an intertextual chorus, the poem stretches towards a wider interdependent ecosystem whose makings are echoed and re-echoed across its composition. Within this wider cultural context, the term ecopoetics as a critical reflection on the implications of its own poetic makings prompts a review of a 'radical re-situating of poetics called for in the face of an ongoing disappearance of trees and ecosystems (and peoples, along with their houses and cities)'.<sup>42</sup> The earlier question comes to mind again, this time as whole: 'How to stretch the falling short of a tree?' If falling short is inevitable, if the tree always falls short and implies a desire, how can it be stretched towards a 'desirable horizon of an existence that has the potential to blossom'?<sup>43</sup>

Accompanying one of his key terms 'desire', the idea of stretching reoccurs in Larkin's poetry, and it includes the etymological roots of another essential component. Attention, literally a physical 'stretching toward' (from Latin *ad + tendere*), has been discussed alongside with scarcity, horizon, and gift as one of the central notions in Larkin's poetry.<sup>44</sup> Instead of examining its aesthetic implications, I want to take a step back here to approach attention in its broader relational structure and cultural

context. In its most rudimentary form, it is an initial interaction with someone or something, encompassing the active element of stretching. It is also, in the current consumerist culture of excess where the time to click and like and retweet is a scarce good, turning into a commodity itself: 'If a product is free, then the real product is you! More precisely: your attention'.<sup>45</sup> More complex than a quantifiable instrument, Yves Citton counters an economic view with an ecology of attention to illuminate its polyphonic dynamics and relationality with reference to Arne Naess's ecosophy: 'attention is a certain kind of connection between that which I am, that which surrounds me, and that which may result from the relation that unites these interested parties'.<sup>46</sup> In a state of constant movement, attention, as embodied orientation in everyday-life, cannot be accumulated but is momentarily situated, though reliant on attentional echoes of the past. As a multi-layered effort and thought-structure, attention exists in a correlative continuum and is not only passively steered but can elicit necessary questions in an ethical reorientation: 'whose needs and whose voice are we taking into consideration?'<sup>47</sup> Mapping out the environments of attentional behaviours and their inherently co-dependent structuring, attention thus yields an agency itself, foundational to notions of respect, tolerance, and care. If the eco-sophical kinship furthers in its suffix a relation to actions, then attention theorised in ecological terms must press the question how to redirect it in actively meaningful ways; how to counter consumerist growth and be more attentive, that is respectful, considerate, and responsive to life in its many forms: 'To grow sustenance about scarcity's lane of offering unhampered by outspread: the spurn in fruition quietens the gatherable'.<sup>48</sup> While I would argue that reading and engaging with poetry itself – which is often perceived to be of little economic value – can pose a form of attentional resistance, a poetic ethics of care and attention needs to take into account the implications and boundaries of its very medium, language. As emphasised by the eco-poetic call for resituating poetics, it needs to challenge its inevitable entanglements in power hierarchies and regimes of exploitation in order to push a resistant attentiveness further. To follow Jonathan Skinner's trail of thought: 'How can poetics be reconfigured to encompass the kinds of making that intervene with the *institutions* of biocide?'<sup>49</sup> As noted before, Larkin's poetry defies premade categories, economic expectations

of language, or any efficient attempts of summing up. In this sense, his poetics of scarcity with a dual limitedness in relation to abundance and rarity sets up a counterpoint against commodification and customer-oriented consumption. Scarcity presumes and fosters a set of relationality; something is only scarce in relation to something else. Testimony to the perversity of a growing consumerism, the evolution of scarcity from being tied to a specific good to a general condition underpins a society based on constant discontent and desire for more.<sup>50</sup> This signals a deficiency in the human relation to scarcity itself. The natural world however does not play by economic rules; it is abundant, plentiful in what it gives, organised around homeostasis instead of maximisation, and resistant to human attempts of appropriation. A scarce being with the world thus stretches toward a horizon of unconditional gift in its inability to be fully, healthily received, poetically embracing a radical attempt to prise open its sheer existence in the emerging relations of less-than, to be released by a reoriented ethics of attention:

where urbanisation dives  
for no human help, spell  
out the survival nodes

coalescent emergency ribbons  
a green inference: less of ours  
in the more to be given.<sup>51</sup>

Ecological attention, not accumulative but renewed with every reading, ties in with Larkin's interconnected poetics and presumes thinking about how a particular word such as 'emergency' precedes, follows, and correlates with the greater urgency of 'survival'. Survival nodes come knotted up as lumps in the flesh, notably referring to both human and non-human bodies. 'Urbanisation' and the title *City Trappings* root 'emergency' in an urban soundscape of frequently passing ambulances, their sirens producing the Doppler Effect for the observer. Mingling with the cityscape, the 'green' forest shines through, composing a blurry, coalescent green ribbon outside, as ambulances speed past to ensure survival for those inside it. Endangered, in

an emergency state itself, the emergency ribbons however demand 'no human help'. Echoing this is the formally marked inference following the colon. 'Less of ours': a relation of scarcity, a speculative ownership, almost a subjunctive desire stretching beyond the lines into an opening 'more to be given' that adds to the interfering [r] sounds.

Larkin's lens of scarcity reconfigures poetics within a framework of radical interconnectedness. Human life is merely one part of it, yet one that is not easily subtracted. Trees fall short, humans fall short, writing falls short. Even estranged by a procedural scarcity practice, an eco-poetical reflexivity must acknowledge that a complete ecological dissolving of the self 'into the gene pool' clashes against the limitations of the human skin. If trees are given agency within a poetic thicket, this happens through artificially fabricated texts stemming from a human point of view ultimately entrapped in human language. It is only against this entrapment that the resistances in Larkin's poems can be read as 'linguistically disobedient', as an attempt to 'stretch the field one tie-bit extra across pull of common pen' in order to liberate landscape.<sup>52</sup> A radical pastoral emerging from relations of self-insufficiencies made manifest in modes of scarcity works as a resistant (eco)poetics across his work: In Kinsella's terms, an 'active undoing of the tradition' instead of didactic imposition, a 'challenge to language's representational power', a textual resistance to be but attention to life as ecological entanglements.<sup>53</sup> Written from within the rural, Larkin's poetry follows a place-sensitive mode that questions poetic and linguistic habits and, in the absence of a nostalgic pastoral, meditates on trees in a variety of different registers. Prompting an open intertextual conversation, critical discourse is fused with poetic craft. As the poems subvert grammatical and lexical hierarchies, they construct their own abstract lyric contractions between human and natural world: 'Trans-facial the contractions go, to which horizon isn't distance but unthreadable implantation journeyed to the barrier's fluting, lightly stunned at duct'.<sup>54</sup> Against what feels like a denaturalised language resistant to reading spans the unavoidable human presence with the heaviness of constructed scientific terms. The poetics of scarcity orients the inability to escape a human perspective around a horizon structure that signals presence and absence as it situates things in relation to a 'more

of' or 'less than'. Acknowledging the human limits of language, ecopoetics is thus placed between material and spiritual notions before a horizon of dedication that en- and discloses the givenness of the natural world from a vulnerable state of scarcity.<sup>55</sup>

Spatially and perceptually outside and beyond a human eye's length, a 'horizon' was initially an attempt to divide the world, and is embedded in arguably very human-centred geographical, phenomenological, and hermeneutic theories.<sup>56</sup> While it suggests an axial ordering as a geographical and visual demarcation line, thus setting up relations approximate to its scope, Paul Virilio depicts the horizon as a continuous opening up of vision as process.<sup>57</sup> It therefore signals an invitation to cross borders into an unconditional state of immersion with the Other whilst reflecting the limits of one's own perception as a hindering symptom of a condition of poverty. With this in mind, a horizon of attention can be drawn from Larkin's poetics; one that elicits motion, reflection, relationality and seeks to stretch beyond the page. At first limiting, upon approaching it, a horizon widens and reveals new, other horizons, which are not only endpoints but the onset of unexpected, renewed presences outside of an economic framework of innovation. Spatially contested by human and more-than-human matter that shapes the view on it, horizon is less a fixed point than one moving with its spectator and can therefore be aligned to individual reading, thinking, and action choices. Conscious of its co-attentive interdependencies, such a horizon, simultaneously comprising a turning to something and turning away from something else opens up spaces to choose ecologically-conscious attention trajectories. From a state of transition between distance and full interaction, immersion is kept at a reflective distance along the horizontal axis that generates its respective relations. Among them, attention is acknowledged as a multi-layered embedded agent with intrinsic value, not paid but given as gift – present – presence, from which a changed ecological ethics may take its chance: 'Though the world isn't ours to offer, only by offering the whole of it as we trample among its givens|stalled retentions can we make any offering at all [...].'<sup>58</sup> Human presence on earth inevitably comes with violence, yet a horizon of attention as interaction, as an attempt to 'offer[ing] the whole' holds again scarcity's potential for a human dedication to nature, at micro- and macro-level formulated as both statement and possible question: can we make

any offering at all? In the context of ecopoetics, I am here reminded of Gary Snyder's line from 'For Nothing', which plants a natural offering, a flower, '[F]or nothing', as 'an offer|no taker', against the final enumeration that directs the reader's attention to commonly neglected palpable earthly residue: 'snow-trickle; feldspar; dirt'.<sup>59</sup> The human relationship with the world is characterised by deficiencies and contradictions and evades linguistic appropriation. In order to orient the human gaze to the wonders of the endangered natural world, an earth-sensitive attention to a scarce presence with language is necessary. This will be further explored within the framework of translation.

## 2. Translating the Spirit of Trees

The majority of poetic examples discussed so far stems from texts with a direct external reference outlined in their title, preface, or accompanying notes. I will now turn to a collection of poems that catalyse their attention to the external world through an alienating echo of other poems, thus reinforcing a notion of intertextual connectedness across Larkin's ecological makings. Concluding the book-length collection *Terrain Seed Scarcity*, the text 'Spirit of the Trees' takes its title from a 1947 anthology compiled by Ruth Alston Cresswell with a foreword by Vita Sackville-West. The source book was compiled as a contribution to the Society of the Men of the Trees with the profits of its sales intended for the Tree Planting Fund to help restore environmental damage of World War II. It contains over 350 poems by 270 poets in alphabetical order. Universal in its premise to 'appeal to tree-lovers everywhere', the contributions are predominantly from the Anglophone World, with a few classic English translations from Latin, Ancient Greek, Chinese, Russian, French, Welsh, and Irish. Covering an immense time period from the book of Genesis to Walter de la Mare, the source texts, including well-known sonnets, ballads, aphorisms, songs, elegies, nursery rhymes, odes, psalms, or extracts from larger pieces, are very distant from an experimental poetics of scarcity. Rooted in various lyrical traditions, they mainly adhere to strict form, metre, and rhyme. The foreword opens with Moses' quote 'the tree of the field is man's life', which, both in its practical and metaphorical sense, outlines the overall spirit of the collection.<sup>60</sup> Foregrounding the tree's utility

for the human being as well as its beauty and symbolic embodiment of youth, age, renewal and growth, the poems' attention to the tree is overall profoundly anthropocentric. In contrast to Larkin who writes about place-specific yet abstracted trees, the poems in the anthology are addressed to individual named species that primarily gain their value through their particular bond to the human. The beech tree in Thomas Campbell's 'The Beechwood's Petition' (1837) thus speaks:

Since childhood in my pleasant bower  
First spent its sweet and sportive hour;  
Since youthful lovers in my shade  
Their vows of truth and rapture made,  
And on my trunk's surviving frame  
Carved many a long forgotten name.<sup>61</sup>

Across the collection, the general approach to nature is largely at discord with a critically informed biocentric stance in ecopoetics. Corresponding to traits of Nature or classic landscape poetry, trees are anthropomorphised, used as a projection zone for human emotions, or praised through a romantic lens. Since the texts were composed before any consequences of an off-set global climate catastrophe were known on a wider socio-political scale, the occasionally addressed demolition of a tree is mainly regarded as a singular phenomenon and lamented as personal loss rather than linked to greater ecological implications – which is notably at odds with the actual political background of the anthology. A pastoral nostalgia is omnipresent, which produces Nature as a safe haven from civilisation and links it to a spiritual realm beyond the human sphere of influence:

Here for the Greeks the authentic Nymph might dwell  
With floody cloud-pale hair and lucent eyes  
Hermit might dream back into Paradise.<sup>62</sup>

Larkin's collection borrows its poetic technique from Peter Riley's *Small Square Plots* and arranges 44 poems from the source book into seven-line poems with seven syl-



lables to a line respectively.<sup>63</sup> The new poems are exclusively made up of words of the initial poem (although slight variations do occur), but they do not necessarily employ them in their initial linear appearance. They are also free in their use of punctuation. Except where the source poem is exceptionally short as well, this constraint naturally involves a drastic textual condensing, often resulting in unusual recombination, while concomitantly fostering an increased use of enjambments, often at word level: 'poplar lies screened, song's colonn-|ade its haste in cooler stead'.<sup>64</sup> It further adds to an increased use of colons to gather longer parts under one key aspect, and although Larkin's compositions do not conform to a fixed rhyme scheme, the rhythmic symmetry of the sources seems to be reflected by a notable amount of assonances and alliterations:

[...], with first light lives  
 so hollow: transience sweet-  
 ened ancient sides, new sun sent  
 stiffly out at soft spring's beck.<sup>65</sup>

Despite their condensed form, the poems frequently echo the linear running order of their sources, revealing an interesting dynamic between the two texts. Set apart by temporal distance and very different approaches to nature, the lexical overlap prompts an investigation into the resulting variances. While grammatical ambiguity, newly emerging juxtapositions, novel compounds, speculative questions, and decentering of a unified lyric I move Frances Cornford's, Walter de la Mare's, or Thomas Hardy's romantic narratives closer to a scarce Larkinese, the latter is nevertheless confronted with a constraint that alienates his poetic voice to an effect where the emerging poem can be considered as significantly different from his other texts. Stretching an intertextual openness to preserve an attentiveness to trees at various moments in times, I am interested in the arising layers of an ecopoetics that filters its radical ecological attempts through a very different style pertaining to someone else. With reference to Riley's septimal technique, Larkin draws attention to the etymology of the word 'sept' that evokes the idea of an enclosure, fence, or partition. Its rela-

tion to the Latin word 'sect' (from *sectus*) further implies a 'way, road, beaten track', or, deriving from 'secare', means 'to cut'. Shaped by a strategy that simultaneously cuts and encloses, the function of the new texts prompts a number of questions: Does it, as Larkin asks in relation to Riley's strategy, entail an 'overwriting', 'canceling out the old text', or 'writing into the source text'?<sup>66</sup> Or perhaps a commenting and reflecting on it? But the dynamics are not unidirectional – what is the source texts function with regard to an ecological poetics? Larkin's new poems are charged with aspects of appropriation, autonomy, and transformation, and I argue that an expanded framework of translation offers useful responses. These may further add to an increased attention stretching beyond an inevitable falling short before the natural world.

Before it was narrowed down to a primarily linguistic context, translation referred to a multitude of activities that fundamentally anchored wider notions of (physical) displacement, motion, and change. Since the cultural turn in Translation Studies in particular, its frame of reference was augmented yet again, and the interdisciplinary interest in translation as a metaphorical travelling concept grew to such an extent that a 'translational turn' was coined by Doris Bachmann-Medick.<sup>67</sup> Key ideas of its expanded use include its embedment in as well as its ability to conceptually disclose global regimes of power and hegemony, hospitality towards the Other, and relations to creativity, ownership, and attention. While the wide range of its application can feed back into a renewed linguistic understanding of interlingual translation as less of an invisible activity and more of a crucial process in a connected world, it simultaneously calls for a differentiation in use. My intention in linking it to the relation of the two 'Spirit of the Trees' texts builds on insights into the bond between source and target text in literary translation particularly.<sup>68</sup> Grounded in a double ontology as the latter is at once dependent on its source yet an independent new creation in a different linguistic, cultural, and historical context, motion is a central aspect. While a new text emerges, the source text does not remain unchanged either – its realm of existence is disrupted. One individual reading of it now reflects back on it in translation, extending its scope and altering its trajectory, thus securing its 'success'

and 'afterlife', in Walter Benjamin's terms.<sup>69</sup> In analogy, Larkin's technique extracts the poems from their traditional habitats and post-war anthology context, which can be seen as both a forceful act and a conservation strategy. His collection might inspire the reader to seek out the source texts, although the mere reference of the source poet's initials alongside the borrowed title arguably claims greater space for the independence of the target text. The alteration between source and target poem does not involve an interlingual move into an entirely new language system, but a fundamental change does take place under the poetic constraint. In comparison to their corresponding stanza in Aldous Huxley's source text (1918), the two lines 'Pierce blue rumour of the mute,|Let sky tune hued silences' from 'Song of Poplars' lose their archaic tone alongside with the pastoral figure of the shepherd:

Shepherd, to yon tall poplars tune your flute:  
 Let them pierce keenly, subtly shrill,  
 The slow blue rumour of the hill;  
 Let the grass cry with an anguish of evening gold,  
 And the great sky be mute.<sup>70</sup>

The variants of English used by Wordsworth, Huxley, or Hopkins differ not only greatly among themselves but naturally in comparison to Larkin as well. Language boundaries are, in fact language itself is, not at all clearly defined, and the notion of translation as a 'study of language' foregrounds this fuzziness.<sup>71</sup> Sensitive not only to the differences in languages across national but also across temporal borders, it prompts a focus on the relation between different individual poetic dictions. Within the porous boundaries of the dynamic linguistic entity English, which is constantly shifting and evolving, the source text is reassembled in a new poetic context, revealing a process that is necessarily violent.<sup>72</sup> In translation, there is no sameness – every word is uprooted and newly planted. Even words that are directly taken from the source are nonetheless charged with new meaning in their respective constellation, not to mention the different significance they gain with regard to wider contemporary poetics. With reference to Larkin's horizon motif, its use in

'The English Garden' stands out particularly: taken from an extract of his four-book length poem *The English Garden* (1783), William Mason's 'Ev'n to the far horizon's azure bound' turns into 'Horizon has no lender'. 'Lender' is presumably a variation of 'slender alder' from the previous line, the old English spelling resembling a /l/. In Larkin's version, the horizon changes from a demarcating landmark into an autonomous entity separated from an economic exchange system. Corresponding to the first line 'Whose lessening free space drops|distinction', this suggests issues of ownership and commodification of natural spaces, now laden with particular contemporary environmental relevance. Against the backdrop of an ecological catastrophe, the looming 'distant scene on a dark|curtain' is reinforced as a portent of human hegemony.<sup>73</sup> Similarly, the word 'scarce' goes fairly unnoticed in Edmund Beale Sargant's bucolic poem 'Cuckoo Wood' (1911/12), narrated by a lyric I that gets lost in the intoxicating wizardry of a forest: 'For what is autumn's gold to one|That hoards a life scarce yet begun?' Considering the hyper-romantic lushness the Georgian source poem creates through a plenitude of sounds and colours in a loco-descriptive register, Larkin's condensed version seems to embody the bond between abundance and poetically activated scarcity in itself. Accordingly, the expository line emphasises an obscure essentialist lack of the spring bird cuckoo as a siren of the Dionysian woods:

Scarce cuckoo so to renew  
rooting disfavour you lift  
high lair when undone.<sup>74</sup>

Instead of a wild, eternally giving cornucopia, a limitedness of the natural world comes into view. The lyric I is subsequently removed, which shifts the focus from (eco)sexual lusts experienced in the uncivil 'mystic place' to a sounding out of the wood and its hidden spatial underwood. Since a separation between the rational domestic human world and the impenetrable woods as a realm of spirits, imagination, and mystery is no longer present in Larkin's version, it is apparent how his ecological poetics works towards a cancelling out of the pastoral conception of Nature.<sup>75</sup>

Given that Larkin's poetic technique is intended as an experimental creative writing process, Benjamin's emphasis on translation as an independent art and literary form furthers the text as a new organism with an authorial function.<sup>76</sup> In close dialogue with its source, it offers itself as an original whole in its own right and generates new references, associations, and connections in the respective context. In that sense, the source text/target text model, which is entangled with an instrumental dualistic faithful/unfaithful paradigm, can be seen as a barrier to a validation of creative liberty in translation. It further silences an integral step in the translation process, which is crucial for exploring a mode of increased attentiveness as well as for suspending its status as secondary text production: translation as reading.

Regardless of whether in the literary realm or elsewhere, translation involves the fiercest and most intimate form of interaction, engagement with, and reading of foreign sources.<sup>77</sup> All nuances, cultural, and intertextual references have to be sounded out by the translator, whose reading influences every subsequent choice of the following transformative process. In case of the intentionally ambiguous genre of poetry in particular, traditionally the crux of an interlingual untranslatability debate, this is an even more essential step. Each reader brings their own individual perspective to the text, each translator will emphasise different aspects of the source material, depending on their personal and socio-cultural context, intention, and linguistic habitus. No source text, no single word has but one finite translation. In line with the hermeneutic tradition, a text arguably has as many translations as it has readers and can therefore result in a variety of co-existing target texts. None of these translations as interpretations will be perfect; none can capture the source in its ultimate depth. This does not impede their creative worth, but it means that translation emphasises insufficiency and interconnectedness. It always finds itself oscillating between two poles of lesser than and more of. Translation as an ultimately liminal practice is a form of relation-making, an approximation, a stretching of the source and a stretching towards elsewhere. Instead of a business-oriented source text/target text model that implies a straightforward trajectory pointing to one winning area to be hit with the right aiming, the Italian translation scholar Montanari introduces a source/mouth concept.<sup>78</sup> Denoting for instance the opening of a river, the source

text is opened up and branches out, thus underlining the co-existence of different versions in their continuous interrelated flows. Drawing attention to transformation and confrontation with otherness, the physical mouth is also an intimate border and physical threshold of the body; a potential opening where thoughts are given a voice, where private words enter the public and might suddenly sound unfamiliar to the speaker. It thus prompts looking further into the process of its changes rather than arresting it in a right/wrong notion that may easily deem a translation as having missed its target. Assuming more than one direction, a source/mouth notion suggests a reciprocal transformation that takes place within a wider environment. Even when previously appropriated and spoken through the mouth of someone else, once articulated, our own words can appear strange to us. The source feeds the mouth, but a change in the mouth of a river has impacts on the entire layout of the riverbed: In translation, the writer is confronted with the voice of someone else, which furthers a reflection on their own linguistic habitus. Adding to the inevitable falling short of a translation, a precarious existence with language as an instable, constantly fluctuating medium is emphasised. As previously outlined, Larkin's 'Spirit of the Trees' pulls out the source texts of their contexts, distances them from their origins and charges them with new meaning – but the resulting mouth texts also speak in an-othered tongue. For instance, it is noticeable how different 'The Willow', taken in its own right, sounds in relation to Larkin's overall corpus:

Sways mute memory: southern  
in whisper the wind leans fair  
until locked in swept willow.  
Sighs with delicate lash a  
sap of wintry green driven  
by void of the leaf: parches  
to a kiss midnight's upflow.<sup>79</sup>

Through Larkin's mouth, with Riley clocking the lines, Walter de la Mare's word pool significantly shapes the poem into an unusually descriptive tree scene with a roman-

tic undertone. Its register is less elevated and includes common poetic words such as 'kiss', 'midnight', 'memory', 'whisper'. The poem's economical brevity, alliterative coherence, and sense of closure implied by the full stop further distinguishes it from other Larkin tree-inquiries. Yet again, compared to the source poem, the difference in their approach to the willow is striking. Organised in two stanzas with eight lines and an intermittent rhyme, de la Mare's anthropocentric poem seems to feature many of the common prejudices against romanticised Nature poetry. The willow is rendered as female with 'locks of green'. It was 'parched and cold' during the in human eyes negatively perceived winter, but in spring is fertile again, now praising God 'in her beauty and grace'. De la Mare's last four lines read as follows:

A delicate wind from the Southern seas,  
Kissing her leaves. She sighs.  
While the birds in her tresses make merry;  
Burns the Sun in the skies.<sup>80</sup>

Recreating the repetitive fricative [s], Larkin's poem adds the airflow of the [f] to the tonal environment of hissing wind, rustling leaves, and soft whispering [w] sounds of the willow. The cohesive soundscape seems to drive the entire poem. Larkin cancels out the third person point of view with an ambiguous pulsing tree-perspective in the fourth line, where '[S]ighs' could relate to the willow or else be a free-floating noun. Instead of de la Mare's willow which does not remember the 'driving snow', the absence of winter in its cyclical connection to spring is present in the 'sap' driven by the void of the leaf. This close observation further adds to the renewing capacity of the tree or of the natural world in general, also implied in the anthropocentrically almost oxymoronic-looking 'wintry green'. Deriving from the suppressed 'mute' desire of the source text's female willow, Larkin's swaying memory is 'mute', thus unable to express itself or being insufficiently listened to. It is not absent however, and further widened in its frame of reference to include whispers and winds, thus fitting a secretive atmosphere that is 'locked in swept willow'. Instead of having its leaves kissed by Exotic Southern seas, the tree encompasses the energy of the natural

world; it is actively entangled in the movements of wind, the cardinal direction, and the upflow of air that merges with time in the final line.<sup>81</sup>

While the source is significantly altered, it cannot be fully cancelled out, writing a softer romantic note into Larkin's scarce poetics. The framework of translation reveals how the voices of both poets are altered by the transformative process of translation. At the merging point of the two different poetic horizons arises a language familiar and alien to both. A translation is an inherently invasive or even violent process, but simultaneously associated with a widening of horizon anchoring a heightened mode of imagination, attention, and textual intimacy that informs its expanded ecological poetics.<sup>82</sup> As constant movement, it is part of a continuum and intertextual exchange, confronted with constant thresholds. As relation-making, it is in conversation across time and space, fostering attentive modes of interaction with others, including the interaction of reading. As interdependency, it facilitates mutual transformation as creative approximation, unable to fully exploit the source. In this vein, a poem itself can be conceived of as translation, a beginning rather than an end, a carrying over into the falling short of language where it finds estranged scarce mouth-words for that which can be neither fully received nor fully articulated.<sup>83</sup> Inevitably emerging from a deficient human perspective, language can be seen as an approximation, activated through scarcity as it seeks to give existence to the manifold gift of the natural world. Fundamentally permeated by the precariousness of insufficiently being with an abundance of life that cannot be described but more and more attended to under a condition of lessening, Larkin's poetry asymptotically approaches this relation, his poetic interconnections themselves forming an infinite strange rhizomatic mouth-text. Although it will never be possible to stretch the 'falling short of a tree', ecologically, spiritually, or poetically, the multiple connections among resistant poetic coordinates may offer orientation towards a horizon of attention.

In its uncanny particularity, Peter Larkin's poetry reveals intricate entanglements with eco-poetic ideas related to decentred interconnectedness. Countering anthropocentrism with subtle place-knowledge and linguistic renewal, his writings contribute



to an endless search for languages that embody the manifold obscure attachments to earth: landscapes open up, poetry opens up, horizons unfold. At an interdisciplinary, creative-critical edge, the complex resistances of a poetics of scarcity are intertwined with an insufficient being with the complex world itself, informed by the human inability to completely immerse in it. The experimental septimal technique in 'Spirit of the Trees' can therefore be regarded as a further distancing strategy to suspend a necessary limiting perspective and push the self towards 'dissolv[ing] into the gene pool' of multiplicities. While 'the world will always overtake us', an ecological writing mode understands poetry as requiring the communion of a wider (literary) world to be activated.<sup>84</sup> Translation not only emphasises the intertextual embedment, but acknowledges the liminality of a precariously inhabited scarcity that signals abundance and absence and that is accelerated by existential desires of humans whose presence on earth gets overshadowed by Anthropocenic debris. At the cost of an inevitable invasiveness, translation involves moving into unfamiliar realms whilst eliciting change centrifugally and centripetally; at micro- and macro-level. It shares with eco-poetics a reflection on the condition of its makings, on language and on the self, thus fostering an ongoing 'investigation into how language can be renovated or expanded as part of the effort to change the way we think, write, and thus act in regards to the world we share with other living things'.<sup>85</sup> In intimate proximity to the gap between language and the world, Larkin's writings can replace an unlearning of both with a renewed attention as attentive interaction. Through eco-poetic 'layers of imitative|absence' read with an awareness of their interconnectedness and creative limitedness, this attention can begin to inform an opening horizon that may stretch beyond and translate – if only scarcely – into a greater attentiveness to the extra-textual unconditional gift: 'Reducing plenitude to a scarcity of receipt reveals again a fullness at the given but shares entering the poverty of the given-to'.<sup>86</sup>

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Jonathan Skinner, *ecopoetics* 01 (Buffalo: Periplum, 2001), Editor's Statement, pp. 5–9 (p. 6).

<sup>2</sup> I am drawing on Timothy Morton's use of the word 'mesh' here. Denoting both 'the holes in a networks and the threading between them', he constructs the term with regard to the interconnectedness of all living and non-living things. See *The Ecological Thought* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 2010), p. 28; cf. Lyn Hejinian, *The Language of Inquiry* (California: University of California Press, 2000).

- <sup>3</sup> Andy Brown, *Terrain Seed Scarcity: Poems from a Decade* by Peter Larkin (Cambridge: Salt, 2001), back cover.
- <sup>4</sup> Anne Elvey, review of Peter Larkin, *Give Forest Its Next Portent* (2014), *Plumwood Mountain*, 6.1 (2019) <<https://plumwoodmountain.com/anne-elvey-reviews-give-forest-its-next-portent-by-peter-larkin/>> [accessed 20 April 2019].
- <sup>5</sup> Jonathan Skinner, review of Jed Rasula, *This Compost: Ecological Imperatives in American Poetry* (2002), *ecopoetics* 03 (2003), 174–184 (p. 183); Yves Citton, *The Ecology of Attention*, trans. by Barnaby Norman (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2017).
- <sup>6</sup> Harriet Tarlo, 'Radical Landscapes: Experiment and Environment in Contemporary Poetry', *Jacket* 32 (2007) <<http://jacketmagazine.com/32/p-tarlo.shtml#fn19>> [accessed 5 May 2018] (para 5).
- <sup>7</sup> *Terrain Seed Scarcity*, pp. 183–199; Walter Benjamin, 'The Task of the Translator', trans. by Harry Zohn in *The Translation Studies Reader*, ed. by Lawrence Venuti (London: Routledge, 2000), pp. 15–23; Federico Montanari, 'Tradurre metafore? Metafore che Traducono', *Versus*, 85-96-97, (2000), 171–188.
- <sup>8</sup> Sophie Seita, 'The Ethics of Attention in Peter Larkin's "Leaves of Field"', *Cordite Poetry Review*, 1 December 2013 <<http://cordite.org.au/scholarly/the-ethics-of-attention/>> [accessed 20 July 2018]; see for example Emma Mason, 'Entanglement in Fir: Thinking Matter in Peter Larkin's "praying // firs \\\ attenuate"', *Religions*, 9. 1, (2018) <<https://doi.org/10.3390/rel9010001>> and *Were X a Tree: Commentary and Marginalia Beside and Between the Poetry of Peter Larkin: A Collection of Essays on the Poetry of Peter Larkin*, ed. by Amy Cutler (University of Warwick, 2018) <<https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/arts/english/research/currentprojects/poetryatwarwick/onlinepublications/werexatree/>> [accessed 24 February 2019]; *Peter Larkin: Poetry, Phenomenology, Ecology*, 26 April 2018, University of Warwick, organised by Oxford Phenomenology Network and Poetry at Warwick.
- <sup>9</sup> Cf. Peter Larkin, 'Fully From, All Scarce To' in *Eco Language Reader*, ed. by Brenda Iijima (Brooklyn: Portable Press at Yo-Yo Labs and Nightboat, 2010), pp. 52–59; John Milbank, 'The Beckoning Obstruction': On the Theme of Scarcity in the Poetry of Peter Larkin', in *Were X a Tree* <<https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/arts/english/research/currentprojects/poetryatwarwick/onlinepublications/werexatree/milbank>> [accessed 24 February 2019].
- <sup>10</sup> Edmund Hardy and Peter Larkin, 'Less Than, More At: An Interview with Peter Larkin', *Intercapillary Space* <<http://intercapillaryspace.blogspot.co.uk/2006/04/part-1.html>> [accessed 5 August 2018]; Jonathan Skinner, 'Thoughts on Things: Poetics of the Third Landscape', in *Eco Language Reader*, pp. 9–51 (p. 37); I am drawing on Charles Olson's influential essay 'Projective Verse' (1950) and its influence on experimental and radical landscape poetry, cf. Tarlo, 'Radical Landscapes'.
- <sup>11</sup> Larkin, *Give Forest Its Next Portent* (Bristol: Shearsman Books, 2014), p. 62.
- <sup>12</sup> See Hardy and Larkin, Mason, Seita, and Larkin: 'Innovation Contra Acceleration', *boundary 2*, 26.1 (1999), 169–74; Larkin, 'Scarcity by Gift: Horizons of the 'Lucy' Poems', *The Coleridge Bulletin: The Journal of the Friends of Coleridge*, 23 (2004), 49–62; 'Scarcely on the Way: The Starkness of Things in Sacral Space', in *Wordsworth and Coleridge: Promising Losses* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), pp. 107–117.
- <sup>13</sup> Larkin, 'Fully From', p. 57; *Terrain*, p. 86; 'Relations of Scarcity: Ecology and Eschatology in The Ruined Cottage', *Studies in Romanticism*, 39.3 (2000), 347–364 (pp. 357–58).
- <sup>14</sup> 'Fully From', p. 53; 'Relations of Scarcity', p. 358.
- <sup>15</sup> See for example Larkin, *Lessways*, p. 58.
- <sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.
- <sup>17</sup> See Mason's reference to Larkin as an 'ecopoet', p. 1; see also Mark Dickinson, 'Peter Larkin's Knowledge of Place', *Cordite Poetry Review*, 1 August 2010 <<http://cordite.org.au/features/mark-dickinson-peter-larkins-knowledge-of-place/>> [accessed 6 June 2018], Milbank, 'The Beckoning

- Obstruction' in *Were X a Tree*, Carol Watts, 'Zeta Landscape: Poetry, Place, Pastoral', in *Placing Poetry*, ed. by Ian Davidson and Zoë Skoulding (New York: Rodopi, 2013), pp. 281–304.
- <sup>18</sup> Edmund Hardy, 'Peter Larkin's Scarce Layers', in *Were X a Tree* <<https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/arts/english/research/currentprojects/poetryatwarwick/onlinepublications/werexatree/hardy>> [accessed 24 February 2019]; 'Larkin, 'Fully From'', p. 52.
- <sup>19</sup> In addition to the material referred to in this article, my primary understanding of eco-poetics is shaped by works such as *Eco-poetics and the Global Landscape: Critical Essay* ed. by Isabel Sobral Campos, (London: Lexington Books, 2019), Lynn Keller, *Recomposing Eco-poetics; North American Poetry of the Self-Conscious Anthropocene* (Virginia: University of Virginia Press, 2017), *The Eco-poetry Anthology* ed. by Anne Fisher-Wirth and Laura-Gray Street (San Antonio: Trinity University Press, 2013).
- <sup>20</sup> See for example Hillman, *Practical Water* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2009), Reilly, *Styrofoam* (New York: Roof Books, 2009); Spahr, *Things of Each Possible Relation Hashing Against One Another* (Newfield, NY: Palm Press 2003), p. 27.
- <sup>21</sup> See for example Snyder, *Turtle Island* (New York: New Directions, 1974); Vicuña, 'Death to the Pollinators, coTtonshirT, Spring Equinox Interview with J. Skinner', in *ecopoetics 01*; cf. Donna Haraway, 'Anthropocene, Capitalocene, Plantationocene, Chthulucene: Making Kin', *Environmental Humanities*, 6, (2015), 159–165; I am also influenced by Édouard Glissant's elaborations on the plantation, see *Poetics of Relation* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997), pp. 63–73.
- <sup>22</sup> Dickinson, 'Larkin's Knowledge of Place'.
- <sup>23</sup> Milbank, 'Beckoning Obstruction'.
- <sup>24</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>25</sup> Ibid.; Larkin, *Give Forest*, p. 61.
- <sup>26</sup> Ibid., p. 64.
- <sup>27</sup> Cf. Jill Magi, 'Eco-poetics and the Adversarial Consciousness: Challenges to Nature Writing, Environmentalism, and Notions of Individual Agency', in *Eco Language Reader*, pp. 237–252 (p. 238).
- <sup>28</sup> *Give Forest*, pp. 39–40.
- <sup>29</sup> Robert P. Baird, review of Peter Larkin, *Leaves of Field* (2006), *Chicago Review* 53.1 (2007), 186–188 (p. 186).
- <sup>30</sup> Larkin, 'Fully From', p. 54.
- <sup>31</sup> *Give Forest*, p. 61.
- <sup>32</sup> *Give Forest*, p. 39; p. 73.
- <sup>33</sup> Evelyn Reilly, 'Eco-Noise and the Flux of Lux', in *Eco Language Reader*, pp. 255–74 (p. 257).
- <sup>34</sup> Hardy, 'Less Than, More At'.
- <sup>35</sup> Larkin, *Lessways*, p. 64.
- <sup>36</sup> Ibid., p. 61.
- <sup>37</sup> Ibid., p. 65.
- <sup>38</sup> Ibid., p. 61; Larkin, *Lessways*, pp. 63–64; see for example Larkin, *City Trappings*, (Guildford: Veer Books, 2016); *Give Forest* p. 62.
- <sup>39</sup> Larkin, 'City Trappings: Housing Heath or Wood: 5', *Blackbox Manifold*, 15 (2015) <<http://www.manifold.group.shef.ac.uk/issue15/PeterLarkinBM15.html>> [accessed 20 February 2019].
- <sup>40</sup> Larkin, *Give Forest*, p. 63; Peter Larkin, *Leaves of Field* (Exeter: Shearsman, 2006), p. 61.
- <sup>41</sup> The cyclical aspect is particularly prominent in Larkin's ponderings on the process of a field becoming leaves, see *Leaves of Field*.
- <sup>42</sup> Cf. Magi, p. 248; Skinner, *ecopoetics 03*, p. 183.
- <sup>43</sup> Citton, *Ecology Attention*, p. 37.

- <sup>44</sup> See for example Seita; Skinner, 'Third Landscape', p. 47.
- <sup>45</sup> Citton, *Ecology Attention*, p. 9.
- <sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 79; Naess, *Ecology, Community and Lifestyle*, trans. David Rothenberg (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).
- <sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 58.
- <sup>48</sup> Cf. Naess, p. 37; Larkin, *Lessways*, p. 26.
- <sup>49</sup> *ecopoetics* 03, p. 183.
- <sup>50</sup> Cf. Nicolas Xenos, *Scarcity and Modernity* (London: Routledge, 1989); see for example pp. 20–27.
- <sup>51</sup> Larkin, *City Trappings*, p. 21.
- <sup>52</sup> John Kinsella, *Disclosed Poetics: Beyond Landscape and Lyricism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), p. 11, p. 127, p. 139; Larkin, *Lessways*, p. 26.
- <sup>53</sup> Kinsella, *Disclosed*, pp. 10–11.
- <sup>54</sup> Larkin, *Lessways*, p. 27.
- <sup>55</sup> Cf. George Hart: 'The physical eye sees material nature, but is reductive; the spiritual eye sees ideal nature, but is totalizing', 'A New Green Script: Reading The Book of the Green Man Ecocritically', in *Ronald Johnson: Life and Works*, ed. by Joel Bettridge and Eric Murphy Selinger (Orono: National Poetry Foundation, 2008), pp. 167–195 (pp. 189–90).
- <sup>56</sup> With regard to prominent figures in the latter realms in particular, the theories are not infrequently embedded in a problematic historic context that prompts ethical questions regarding their usage in a radical ecological way. My understanding of horizon is informed by Edward S. Casey 2001, 'Between Geography and Philosophy: What Does It Mean to Be in the Place-World?', *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 91.4, pp. 683–693 (p. 690); Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *What is Philosophy?* trans. by Graham Burchell and Hugh Tomlinson (London: Verso 1994), p. 38; Hans-Robert Jauß *Ästhetische Erfahrung und Literarische Hermeneutik* (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1982), pp. 657; Anna Ryan, *Where Land Meets Sea. Coastal Explorations of Landscape, Representation and Spatial Experience*. (London: Routledge, 2016).
- <sup>57</sup> *Bunker Archeology* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1994), pp. 9–10.
- <sup>58</sup> *Lessways*, p. 60.
- <sup>59</sup> *Turtle Island*, p. 34.
- <sup>60</sup> Ruth Alston Cresswell, *Spirit of the Trees: An Anthology of Poetry Inspired by Trees* (Dorset: Society of the Men of Trees, 1947); *ibid.*, foreword.
- <sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 67.
- <sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, Wilfred Childe, 'The Elder Tree', p. 77.
- <sup>63</sup> *Small Square Plots* (Sanderstead: Grille, 1996).
- <sup>64</sup> Larkin, 'Spirit', p. 186.
- <sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 195.
- <sup>66</sup> 'The Terrain across Texts: Poems Eliding/Guiding Poems: Peter Riley's Small Square Plots', *Black-box Manifold*, 17 (2016) <<http://www.manifold.group.shef.ac.uk/issue17/PeterLarkinBM17.html>> [accessed 20 February 2019].
- <sup>67</sup> Bachmann-Medick, 'Introduction: The Translational Turn.' *Translation Studies*, 2. 1 (2009) pp. 2–16.; see also Rainer Guldin, *Translation as Metaphor* (London: Routledge, 2015), p. 72; Mieke Bal, *Traveling Concepts in the Humanities: A Rough Guide* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002.); Michael Cronin, *Translation and Globalization* (London: Routledge, 2003).
- <sup>68</sup> Lawrence Venuti, *The Translator's Invisibility: A History of Translation* (London: Routledge, 1995); *Constructing Cultures: Essays on Literary Translation*, ed. by Susan Bassnett and André Lefevere (Clevedon:

Multilingual Matters, 1998); *The Translator as Writer* ed. by Susan Bassnett and Peter Bush (London: Continuum, 2006).

<sup>69</sup> Benjamin, 'The Translator's Task', p. 16.

<sup>70</sup> Larkin, 'Spirit', p. 190; Huxley, 'Song of Poplars', in *Spirit*, p. 204.

<sup>71</sup> George Steiner, *After Babel. Aspects of Language and Translation* (London: Oxford University Press, 1975), p. 45.

<sup>72</sup> On the notion of violence see Lawrence Venuti, 'Translation as Cultural Politics: Regimes of Domestication in English', *Textual Practice*, 7:2 (2008), 208–223 <<https://doi.org/10.1080/09502369308582166>>.

<sup>73</sup> Larkin, *Terrain*, p. 191; William Mason, 'The English Garden' in *Spirit*, p. 255.

<sup>74</sup> *Terrain*, p. 195.

<sup>75</sup> *Spirit*, p. 331; *Terrain*, p. 195.

<sup>76</sup> 'Translator's Task', p. 19.

<sup>77</sup> Cf. Gayatri Spivak, *Outside in the Teaching Machine* (London: Routledge, 1993), p. 183.

<sup>78</sup> Montanari, p. 175, see also Umberto Eco, *Mouse or Rat? Translation as Negotiation* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 2003), p. 101.

<sup>79</sup> *Terrain*, p. 187.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*; *Spirit*, p. 111.

<sup>82</sup> For further elaboration on an ecology of translation also see Michael Cronin, *Eco-Translation. Translation and Ecology in the Age of the Anthropocene* (London: Routledge, 2017).

<sup>83</sup> Cf. A. L. Becker, *Beyond Translation. Essays Towards a Modern Philology* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1995), p. 18.

<sup>84</sup> Larkin, 'Fully From', p. 255.

<sup>85</sup> Reilly, 'Eco-Noise', p. 255.

<sup>86</sup> Larkin, *Lessways*, p. 91; *ibid.*, p. 63.

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## Competing Interests

The author has no competing interests.

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