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ARTICLE

Trees' Deep Incarnation: The Scarcity-Gift of Peter Larkin's 'praying // \\\ fir attentuate'

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In a context of ecological calling forth, with regard both to human impacts on otherkind and the agency of more than humans, this essay situates fir and their active relation to appeal/prayer in Larkin's 'praying fir // \\\ attenuate' in the contexts of: biblical trees, Ming dynasty artist Shen Zhou's 'Night Vigil', and plantation fir. The essay, then, describes fir's participation in the non-binary, indeterminate process of call-response at play in the poem especially through Larkin's trope of scarcity-gift. The ecotheological concept of 'deep incarnation', particularly as it relates to the cross, offers a way of approaching this concept of scarcity-gift and, moreover, opens to an ecological night of the soul, which rather than 'dark' could be described as 'a green night of the soul'. Larkin's poem offers an uncanny engagement in this 'night' through inviting the reader into a 'cloud of unknowing' with respect to both fir and writing. In this process of invitation, a reader finds herself called forth to a mode of attentiveness. This attention extends beyond the immediate but necessarily distant fir of the poem. By way of conclusion, the author marks her own being called forth by Larkin's 'praying fir // \\\ attenuate', to attend to local trees in writing.

Keywords: Peter Larkin; fir; trees; prayer; deep incarnation; cloud of unknowing

Introduction

In their postscript to a 2013 Australian collection of essays *Writing Creates Ecology, Ecology Creates Writing*, Deborah Bird Rose and Martin Harrison, who have both since left us too soon, speak about 'a kind of mindfulness ... that is something we are part of and orient ourselves in rather than something which we own or have'.¹ While the term 'mindfulness' can conjure up the self-help section of bookshops, here Rose

and Harrison are exploring the way our perceptions are both limited and participatory in wider other-than-human communications, 'caught in that moment of transfer between thing and thing'.² It is this being 'caught' in a more-than-human moment of encounter that I read in Peter Larkin's poem 'praying firs // \\\ attenuate'.³ In this moment, as Harrison argues, the manufactured gap between humans and other-kind is increasingly palpable, at the same time as the beauties of otherkind fill our screens and, as Rose responds, humans nevertheless wake from ecological nightmare to further nightmare.⁴ At stake are questions of more-than-human being, agency and intent, and the sway of these on the poet who admits their entreaties as something like prompts for writing, prayer or both.

This essay begins by situating prompting firs and their active relation to appeal/prayer in Larkin's poem in the contexts of: biblical trees, Ming dynasty artist Shen Zhou's 'Night Vigil', and plantation firs. Then I describe firs' participation in the non-binary, indeterminate process of call-response at play in the poem especially in the trope of scarcity-gift. I suggest that the ecotheological concept of 'deep incarnation', especially as it relates to the cross, offers a helpful way of approaching this scarcity-gift and opens to an ecological night of the soul, which could be described as 'a green night of the soul'. Larkin's poem offers an uncanny engagement in this 'night' through inviting the reader into a 'cloud of unknowing' with respect to both fir and poem, so that the reader is called forth in turn to a mode of attentiveness – and not only to the necessarily distant firs of the poem. By way of conclusion, I mark my own being called forth by Larkin's 'praying firs // \\\ attentuate' in my local Australian context, through my poetic response to/with tea tree and banyan figs.

Biblical Trees Animated

Scripted in matter, trees pray occasionally, even sparsely, in the pages of the Bible, pages themselves continuing to be constructed by the millions, if not billions, from other trees:⁵

let the field exult, and everything in it.

Then shall all the trees of the forest sing for joy.⁶

Biblical trees are cut down or torn up, burnt, and destroyed by drought, in the name of human wars or when the land enforces divine judgement on the people or their enemies. Trees appear as sources of food and prohibition, sites of execution, vessels, idyllic shelter, wood to fuel the fires of sacrifice, acacia in the construction of an ark, cedar for Solomon's temple, or with stone as the stuff from which other gods are constructed. They also serve as symbols of human flourishing.⁷ Biblical trees are simultaneously consumable and coagents in human and divine endeavours, and they shadow the unfolding of civilisations of the book.⁸

A biblical animism, of which praying trees are one example, sits next to a Christian tradition of the Book of Nature, read both alongside and, if the Earth Bible Team is correct, *within*, the Book of Scripture to reveal the divine/sacred.⁹ John Milbank comments, 'the book of nature has been rendered by Peter Larkin once more articulate, and its coding (as once intimated by the Celtic cultures) in the alphabet of the trees has become once more, through his writing, somewhat decipherable'.¹⁰ The tendrils of Larkin's praying firs reach into and radiate from the grounds of biblical animism and natural revelation, but are not rooted there.¹¹ They tend toward their own uncanny ground, where root, trunk and needle answer to and call forth soil, light and water, as part of their prayerful, undefinable 'yes' of being and being-toward, or perhaps that is what I want to read there.¹²

In 'praying // \ \ firs attenuate', prayer and trees, trees and prayer are ravelled into one another beyond the usual literary persuasions of allegory, simile, metaphor, metonymy, even found-ness. This ravelling resists a reader's (this reader's) instinct toward comprehension when the text writes a complex attentiveness that is saturated, that may be apprehended only provisionally. It is this quality of attention, as Harrison argues, that informs an eco-poetic ethics: 'In the current moment it is clear that we must listen to what is other than human and how it is speaking to us and that the act of attention between self and the environment is intertwined and interdependent and completely mutual'.¹³ This attentiveness itself has a quality that is prayer-like in the contemplative tradition.

Larkin's poetic, ravelled saturations work on the breath, holding, catching, releasing, shifting, perhaps akin to what Paul Celan describes as a breath turn,

Atemwende.¹⁴ Milbank is careful to distinguish Larkin's style from Celan's, but both poets share this attentive turn.¹⁵ Considering shifts of language and grammar, and the unsettling of a reader's expectations of meaning in Larkin's 'Leaves of Field', Jonathan Skinner writes: 'Naming of unfamiliar structures and processes adds layers to predications that would feel familiar were the phrases more sequential (as if we were reading Paul Celan in the language of woodlots)'.¹⁶ By way of language, Larkin and Celan face and encounter alterities, different in kind though these are, and do not flinch or turn away, inviting readers to participate as witness, if only to our own undoing, but perhaps also by our opening to other possibilities.

Chinese Trees Mediated

In Larkin's sequence 'Hollow Allow Woods' an introductory note situates the poem geographically.¹⁷ I was looking for something like this in 'praying // \ fir attenuate' to place materially, physically, located-ly the firs of the poem. So I googled English firs and found many images of Christmas trees and Christmas tree plantations. Firs, and conifers more generally, seem to be interchangeable in the 'mind' of Google. As part of thinking about firs in this context, I took a drive to nearby Keysborough Christmas Tree Farm in Bangholme, a suburb of Melbourne, Australia, where, in March–April 2018, the trees, still quite small, were dwarfed by the overlooking eucalypts. To think about praying firs on Bunurong/Boon Wurrung Country where I live in a bayside suburb, Seaford, Victoria, brings numerous other connections to mind, not only the imported notion of a Christmas tree, but the whole colonial enterprise, and how eco-poetry sits in relation to (post)colonialism. Later in this article, I offer some responses in poetry to trees in Australia, prompted by my encounters with Larkin's trees.

By email, I asked Peter Larkin if he had particular trees in mind in the poem, thinking there might be a wood or plantation of firs he visited in the vicinity of Warwick.¹⁸ He told me that the poem was prompted by an article of J.H. Prynne on a Chinese painting and I found my way to one version of Prynne's article on the Ming-dynasty artist Shen Zhou (1425–1509) and a painting called 'Night Vigil' or 'Sitting Alone at Night', where a text on contemplation stands above a painting of stylised pines, a small human habitation, and mountains.¹⁹ Prynne writes:

There, beneath a layer of hovering misty vapour, precipitated by the cooling of moisture-bearing air after sundown, and within the central shelter, sits the upright solitary scholar in meditation-posture on his low dais or kang, arms folded as the mark of bodily inaction, his books beside him on the table which also supports the candle-holder: a diminutive self-figure whose inner mind is fully disclosed in this outward scene, the interior of his shelter bright from the single candle, all held in motionless contemplation.²⁰

The contemplative sits in a shelter under the sparse but towering dome of two firs. Prynne comments:

He has his back to the mountains which are not in his immediate field of view, even were the moon bright enough to allow them to be glimpsed at least in profile; they are part of his familiar inward knowledge of companionable forms, in the general darkness outside, rather than visible to him as they are to us: we need to see what he already knows.²¹

The firs overhang his meditation, but as his gaze is turned downward they are, like the mountains, not in his view; rather the firs are offered to the gaze of the viewer as the contemplative's 'familiar inward knowledge of companionable forms'. In 'praying // \\\ firs attenuate', does Larkin similarly offer his 'familiar inward knowledge of companionable forms' – gained, in part at least, through attentive contemplation in relation with the physical being of firs in their situatedness – or does he unsettle such knowing?

Plantation Firs

While 'praying // \\\ firs attenuate' may owe a debt to Shen Zhou and J.H. Prynne at the level of prompting, the 'inward knowledge' of firs that Larkin's poem sequence gives to the page and to the reader is beyond two painted firs in a fifteenth-century Chinese painting. Section IV of Larkin's poem introduces 'the tooled plantation's deferring-to'.²² Perhaps Google was not so far off after all, calling up images of plantation firs. G.C. Waldrep writes, 'Positing prayer and industrial plantations of fir trees

as tangent regimens, it ['praying // \\\ firs attenuate'] deftly crisscrosses the seam of human and non-human endeavour, as if binding a wound'.²³ I will return to this image of the poem as wound-binder below.

The image of the plantation is one of enforced, planned relation, a human-tooled imposition of world, into which the tree nonetheless projects its own world negotiating relations of scarcity and abundance, poverty and grace, where these qualities of experience are not binaries but coincide or, better, interlace. 'Plantation' calls up not only notions of human intervention but also images more generally of plants and planting, so that prayer is subject to planting 'on its | raked slope', and the poem asks 'how' this might happen.²⁴ While 'prayer' may be 'not like a fir', it might 'become a neck of fir || pro-plantational'.²⁵ There is a circularity here, as the poem moves from 'how to plant prayer' through the image of 'a neck of fir', and slides through the spaces of stanza-break and indentation, toward

pro-plantational not in
solitary planted faction
and so conceding prayer²⁶

This implies, it seems, that the communality of the plantation, however much it does not resemble an old growth forest with its biodiverse understory, tends toward the (non-)activity of prayer.

The stanza following this concession asserts, 'it isn't virgin forest | pleads origin'.²⁷ This line, 'pleads origin', pushes me toward Genesis 1 and 2, and narratives of material creaturely origins, of the dual imaginaries of a self-revealing Earth putting forth vegetation and a deity planting a garden. On a self-revealing Earth, I am thinking of Catherine Keller's reading of Genesis 1.2, resisting doctrines of creation *ex nihilo*.²⁸ She does this through positing the *tohu va bohu* – as Robert Alter translates, 'welter and waste', rather than 'a formless void' in the New Revised Standard Version – to be both the originary matter and the repressed depths from which the created order emerges.²⁹ I am thinking, also, of Norman Habel's description of Earth's emergence in Genesis 1.9 as a 'geophany', a revelation of what was already there beneath

the waters.³⁰ On the divine gardener, I am thinking of Genesis 2.8, where God puts the human creature (a groundling, *ha adam*) moulded from the ground (*ha adamah*) into the garden God has planted. This is repeated in Genesis 2.15, when God places (or leaves) the groundling (*ha adam*) in the garden 'to serve' (often translated as 'till') and 'keep' (meaning also, 'watch' or 'preserve') it. In these narratives of creation, a definitive singular material origin is eschewed alongside a beginning of plantation, albeit plantation not as dominion but as a kind of 'divine service'.³¹

While I have feminist reservations about the use of the adjective 'virgin' in the vernacular to refer to a forest supposedly 'untouched' or 'unspoiled' by humans (men?), the poem's negation 'it isn't virgin forest' read in conjunction with a Genesis unsettling of origins, suggests likewise a rethinking of narratives of origin, as expressed in concepts of the pure wood; the pristine forest. The poem instead returns the reader to the tooled/raked treescape, living its poverties and scarcities with resilience:

but conifer stands
ripened to alienation
heeding their
intemperate spires³²

It is as if, as Milbank notes in another way, firs, in the particularity of their plantation possibilities and duress, also stand in for trees as always already at the behest of and responsive to the scarcities that are their inheritance whether as divine creations or Earthly emanations, or both together.³³ So, I suggest, that the firs of Larkin's 'praying // \\\ firs attenuate' are not only plantation firs; their identity is multiple and shifting. Moreover, while the problematics of ecological trauma to trees and much else are real, Larkin offers a perspective of co-attentiveness that sees trees as responsive to situation in ingenious ways that open in the poet-observer to prayer:

... to be
prayed not at a
shadow of prayer's poverty

but already expressive
*in the shadow*³⁴

Both firs and prayer, praying firs and poet praying share this relation to poverty, to scarcity, a co-relation that, as I will consider below, is encountered as gift.

A Vocation of Trees

In the worlds of a tree, which *contra* Martin Heidegger are not poor despite their relation to poverty, responsiveness to situation can be understood within the interlaced frame of call-response, where neither is prior to, but already prompting, the other.³⁵ I have in mind Jean-Louis Chrétien's notion of being as already a 'yes' to a call, the response to which is necessarily choral, but also Rose's evocation of flowering trees and fruit bats in Australia.³⁶ They mutually call each other forth through their 'yes' to one another; their interdependence is a mutual being-toward that is already 'yes'. Reading Samuel Taylor Coleridge's conversation poems, such as 'The Eolian Harp', Larkin, too, invokes Chrétien on call and response, commenting that 'calling out is a response to a prior call from the divine other which transgresses one's self-sufficiency, so that the need to call out is itself a response to that prior call, even though the provenience of the divine call only becomes present within the embodied nature of one's answering'.³⁷ In this doubled call, which constitutes call-response as non-binary and indeterminate, the return call cannot correspond to what calls; as Larkin comments, for Chrétien 'it is the inability to correspond which constitutes the condition of speaking'.³⁸ While Larkin is writing about Coleridge's work, the issue of 'noncorrespondence' is also vital for his own poetry, and the mutuality of 'yes', which I am reading from Rose, pushes up through the 'necessarily choric character at any attempt at an answering cry'.³⁹

In this vein, I read Larkin in Part III of 'praying // \\\ firs attenuate':

living a call forward
 of its echo where
 its own effect
 tapers into elation

... love remains before a cusp of firs⁴⁰

It is not surprising, in this (r)elation of the interlaced 'responsiveness of call' and 'calling-ness of response', that 'love' intervenes as something nonetheless already there. Is this the love that prompts and is fed by attentiveness, love that is integral to the already 'yes' of being? I mean by this question to invoke the kind of love which Rose entreats on her blog, 'Love at the Edge of Extinction', a willed refusal of destructive intent through the affirmation of being-toward the other.⁴¹

'Love' is mentioned earlier, in part I of Larkin's poem,

... at the least
ripe effort of gift

the order of love commits con-
tingency, ...⁴²

The line break interrupting 'contingency' emphasises the prefix 'con', which could be taken to be 'against' but in the context stresses the 'with', con-tingency, as accident, but also as always accident-in-relation, a happening-together-with, opening to the possibility of the mutuality of yes. In 'praying // firs \\ attenuate', this 'yes', however, is an unsettling affirmation infected with and graced by scarcity.

Scarcity-Gift

References to scarcity and gift indeed saturate Larkin's writing. In part I of 'praying // firs \\ attenuate', he writes:

to flood a poverty along
the vein of its scarcity
until tall commonality
is no longer sparse
but fellow continuance⁴³

Scarcity and poverty are co-descriptors of a shared reality, but they are not the last word. Here they open to possibility through communion, through that shared-ness of reality taken up by the poet, writing obliquely and abundantly not to erase or undo the tragedy of scarcity, but to witness to it in excess and 'with genuine humility,

from ever-new angles'.⁴⁴ As an angle on Larkin's abundant poetics of scarcity, I turn to a concept finding purchase in ecotheology, namely 'deep incarnation', as introduced by Niels Gregersen and developed by Denis Edwards.⁴⁵ The notion suggests an abundance of divinity not only as en fleshed in humankind, but enmattered in all creation. For theologians of 'deep incarnation' as for Larkin, creation is pervaded by the cruciform.⁴⁶

Cruciform Trees

Support for the concept of 'deep incarnation', as enmattering, can be found, in early Christian writings, for example, the prologue to the Gospel of John, and John of Damascus, as well as in the long Eastern Orthodox tradition of iconography.⁴⁷ As Deborah Guess points out, deep incarnation and the new materialism intersect where the concept of matter taken up by, infused with, and revealing, the divine is informed by the notion of material agency.⁴⁸ When I shift from the traditional term 'incarnation' and its qualifier 'deep' toward the term 'enmattering', I am pushing the notion of 'deep incarnation' beyond the work of Gregersen and Edwards. Their focus on a human being, Jesus of Nazareth, and so humankind, as the locus of incarnation, emphasises the embeddedness of humankind in a more-than-human Earth and cosmos, and the material interconnectedness and interdependence of humans as creatures among creatures. Albeit without Gregersen's or Edwards' expertise in systematic theology, I am pushing the idea of 'deep incarnation' toward the creaturely-ness of the human being Jesus of Nazareth as shared with all creation and, by both implication and extension, toward matter itself as a/the locus of divine enfleshment/enmattering.

Gregersen coined the term which he describes as follows: "deep incarnation" according to which God has not only assumed human nature in general but also a scorned social being and human-animal body, at once vibrant and vital and yet vulnerable to decrease and decay'.⁴⁹ This deep embodiment of the divine in creation, with all that implies of suffering and tragedy, points for Gregersen to the crucifixion and its central place in ecological Christology: 'In this sense the cross of Christ becomes a microcosm of the whole macrocosm of evolutionary history'.⁵⁰ While Gregersen focuses on the cruciform aspects of evolutionary processes, deep

incarnation also allows for an ecotheology where human-induced ecological trauma is understood christologically. Both evolutionary processes and human-mediated ecological traumas are conditions of possibility for the kind of scarcity that threads Larkin's poems.

Nonetheless, Larkin notes for himself a 'theological objection to scarcity', namely that 'scarcity stands as preferentially opposed to divine abundance and asymmetric surplus'.⁵¹ This objection dovetails with, but is distinct from, Regina Schwartz's objection to scarcity, where she critiques a biblical tradition of only-one-ness, around the prescriptive imaginary of monotheism (only one God) and chosen-ness (only one people). She reads this 'only-one-ness' through the lens of the binary rejection of Cain's sacrifice in favour of Abel's as underwriting a violent legacy.⁵² For Schwartz, this only-one-ness is predicated on an imaginary of scarcity that needs to be unsettled.⁵³

At another level, the over-abundance of consumerist capitalism produces scarcities. As Larkin writes in an essay on William Wordsworth's 'Ruined Cottage':

The apparent autonomy of capital, whose main problem has been seen to be the absorption of over-abundant production, has in its turn generated such new scarcities, once the shortage of pure air, clean water and access to open space becomes implicated in a loss of function, or in a mutually diminishing rivalry of functions that is the reality of a degraded environment.⁵⁴

Larkin discusses, too, a 'nihilistic objection to scarcity', that 'scarcity insists on a tenuous relation with the essential, with a hyper-natural'.⁵⁵ I wonder if this is precisely a nihilistic objection, or rather one that is related to the impossibility of meeting otherkind on their own terms without the imposition of world, whether the case be that this imposition is more or less colonising, more or less benign. A key concern for Larkin is a kind of 'poetics of scarcity' that responds to and calls forth 'an ethical yearning for a good and secure life amid nature', but is both unsettled by and unsettles such desire, and is open to the complexities, the multiplicities and 'unequal dependencies and liabilities' that underscore any attempt to reply with a mutuality between human- and other-kind.⁵⁶

By way of answer, though, Larkin signals a 'patience of scarcity' the purpose of which is 'to intercede its recessive differences so as vertically to overdetermine it rather than laterally exceed it'.⁵⁷ I admit to being troubled by this apparent preference for the vertical over the horizontal, especially in the context of prayer, historically in Western Christianity an activity oriented toward the heavens/skies. I have in mind an orientation that has in the past signalled (and for some continues to mark) a diminishment of the claims of Earth, in what Habel refers to as a problematic 'heavenism'.⁵⁸ But this is not quite what is happening in 'praying // firs \\ attenuate', though the risk is there; rather Larkin's emphasis is on intercession and overdetermination. The kind of vertical-horizontal/Heaven-Earth/creator-creation binary system that could be at issue is unsettled at every moment by a poetics of relation where it is trees that suggest the image of verticality in relation to their rootedness in ground and their variety of limbic and leafy spread or otherwise. In this context verticality signals perhaps a mediated relation between sky and ground, through the tree's photosynthetic processes that actively receive from sun and soil, negotiating a transformation that is nourishing. The being of trees themselves is an answer, though not a certain or readable one, to the objection of essentialism. Larkin, continually, freshly, and with a kind of insistent singlemindedness, responds to this tree-y unreadability in his poetry and poetics.

He writes of a 'scarcity of relation', describing something of the (im)possibility – and I mean this to echo Jacques Derrida's notion of 'the impossible', and 'the gift' as 'the impossible', as simultaneously possible and impossible⁵⁹ – of the human-nature relation. 'Scarcity of relation' also evokes: 'finitude's openness to where it cannot go, but before which it stands and is not demeaned: scarcity of relation preserves the horizon of finitude, an encounter with a mode of being not fully itself, but becomingly itself rather than locked into any accelerative becoming'.⁶⁰ Scarcity, though not a synonym of finitude, is a privileged expression of it.

Scarcity-in-relation is the experience of a poet attentive to the otherness of fir. Moreover, scarcity describes the reality of multiple lacks embedded in the relations of habitat-tree and habitat-tree-human found in degraded soils and monocultural plantations. While Larkin's firs experience these scarcities, during his poem's

performance and calling forth of a posture of being-toward-fir, scarcity is recast as gift. In relation to finitude, scarcity is affirmed not so much in preference to the abundance of an ecosystem in imagined harmony (albeit subject to the different scarcities and hardships of evolutionary becoming) but as the gift – ‘the impossible’ – of being-here-and-now, the ‘aneconomic’ present that while never quite present stands to one side of human accounting.⁶¹

Creation's interplay of origins/non-originary, emergence/plantation, discussed above, settles-unsettles in the approach of the gift that is neither scarce nor scarcity but *scarcens* in order to open to ever more gifting. The fifth poem of Larkin's 2015 sequence ‘Slant Gift, Given Slender Rift’, a sequence which plays on the rhymes gift/rift and given/riven, begins ‘That gift is never rife ...’, and closes

scarce provision ransacking
creation, one first meagre gift
so that insufficiency offers
a purely groundable⁶²

The following sequence moves to ‘unscarring in gift: that a rift | opens the ground of reception’,⁶³ and the next, the seventh, begins:

Meagre but no longer bare
of furrow, driven through gift
to chisel out flakes of ground⁶⁴

Then, the poem refers in the next stanza to ‘a scorched creation’. With the rhymes of gift-rift echoing as I read, I ask: does unknowable ‘ground’ itself or the poet ‘[sign] a scorched creation’ and ‘[write] up ash’?⁶⁵ Together riven? Together in relation?

A ‘scorched creation’ suggests the tragedy and trauma not only of ecological devastation but also of human war and genocide, especially during the Shoah, and ‘writes up ash’ points beyond the name of a tree to the witness of poets, especially Celan. This is the inescapable ‘real’ that infuses but sometimes eludes

the trope of scarcity in Larkin's work. At one point of 'praying // \\\ firs attenuate', Larkin refers to scarcity that is not received as gift and so provokes 'resentment' and a sense of divine absence.⁶⁶ Gift, and prayer as its shoot, cannot be read as naïvely good or as participating simplistically in something that might be called 'the good'. Scarcity, encountered provisionally and persistently through located tree-y epistemologies, becomes for Larkin a space of possibility for the advent of the divine as gift/giving/giveness.⁶⁷

Crucifixion describes this relation of scarcity-gift:

a crucible of collision
 (prayer at fir) known
 even less rampantly
 than the self's sub-
 orned own crux⁶⁸

Milbank argues that in Larkin's poetry 'any posthuman immanentism is still more radically countered by the overwhelming thematic of unaccountable verticality: the betraying of ground by a searching for height, even if this quest is doomed to a sacrificial termination that renders every tree indeed a cross'.⁶⁹ Emma Mason writes of this crucial relation to scarcity in 'praying // \\\ firs attenuate':

the broken and ruined landscape reveals and gives forth more of the divine than the pastoral, connected as it is with a sense of scarcity shared by the trees that survive within it and the God to which they reach. His poetry thus lays bare what Tarlo calls a 'non-linguistic world' that speaks by 'pushing at the inadequacies of language' to 'make it do more and be more, even as it expresses frustration at the difficulty of this "saying"'.⁷⁰

The relation to inadequacy called up by this shared scarcity, where the cruciform enmattering of divinity and the tree as a kind of cross – not coincident but co-invocational – is a quality of language at the threshold of the non-linguistic worlds of alterity: tree, prayer, divine.

My sense personally was of 'divine absence' – in the traditional mode of there not seeming to be a personal presence at the other end of the address 'you'. But my poetic attentiveness to wind, trees, creek, birds and so on, in the area where I live, and to vegetables, food preparation, bodies, the everyday world of domesticity, felt like a different kind of 'night' – a different divine withdrawal – than the divine absence which 'dark night of the soul' suggests. Here, divine 'missing' seems more connected with the impossibility of undoing ecological damage as well as the kinds of cruelty governments practice (such as on asylum seekers and refugees in detention on Nauru and Manus) and the ensuing withdrawal of divine comfort or a feeling for/from the sacred, except as grief. So, a green night is more connected with this divine missing, and the ground of this missing in an attentive and ethical orientation to more-than-human (including human) others.

My free verse, however, does not hold the quality of saturation of Larkin's work, nor share his skill, and it is his skilled saturated poetics that both calls to and unsettles the reader, performing – and at the same time setting up a space for – an impossible relation that might be called prayer, but might also be something else. This something else is what intrigues me in Larkin's work, the possibility of standing before a tree open to its otherness, with all that costs in terms of self-surrender and a principled unknowing.

In relation to a biblically-inflected political ethics, Mark Brett writes of 'kenotic hospitality' toward those whose lives are, in this context let me write, *scarced* by ongoing colonialist and imperialist interests and power.⁷⁶ I would like to borrow the concept of 'kenotic hospitality' from Brett and apply it to my consideration of 'praying // \\\ firs attenuate'. As in Brett's notion, here, too, kenosis and welcome form a doubled movement of hospitable receptivity: to the tree as host requiring a stance that is marked in the poet/reader by kenosis (self-emptying) and plenitude (tree-filling-self). This doubled movement at once self-emptying and tree-filling is echoed through the plenty of Larkin's poetic relation to scarcity, as a kind of poetics of density.

A Cloud of Unknowing

Through a poetics of density, 'praying // \\\ firs attenuate' invites the reader into a 'cloud of unknowing' with respect to the tree. *The Cloud of Unknowing* is itself a book that resists meaning even as it means to describe a process of divestment of meaning. There are problems from an ecological perspective with the anonymous writer's concept of 'a cloud of forgetting' where the contemplative is to put aside 'every created thing': 'Just as the *cloud of unknowing* lies above you, between you and your God, so you must fashion a *cloud of forgetting* beneath you, between you and every created thing'.⁷⁷ While the *Cloud's* hierarchical, vertical imaginary is problematic, as is its advice to forget creatures, the notion of a cloud of unknowing is useful when enlisted to describe the relation between self and other, poet and fir. For example, the cloud of unknowing can be adopted to describe *both* the intermediary, permeable 'space-between' where the impossibility of the poet's knowing firs is acknowledged and lived, *and* the orientation toward fir that the poet's contemplative stance entails. This is not necessarily to say fir is divine, but to allow that in attentiveness toward firs, and their own fir-y capacity for attunement to divinity, the divine might be approached as if on the other side of a cloud of *unknowing*.

In relation to this 'cloud of impossibility' – and hear once more the echo of the Derridean impossible as gift – Keller writes of a tradition of 'apophatic relationality', which unsays 'any separative transcendence', but in ways which she needs to relate through complex entanglements of theopoetic language.⁷⁸ At the heart of 'apophatic relationality' is love, intense and transformative, enmattered in the beloved of the transfiguration.⁷⁹ The cloud that descends in the transfiguration enfolds Jesus and his companions – biblical ancestors, Moses and Elijah, as well as disciples, Peter, James and John – in hospitality.⁸⁰ The transfiguration narrative is an icon, or perhaps a theopoetic model, for the enfolding of 'pressing difficulties' and their impossible entanglements so that they/we might unfurl like young growth opening to what comes, as: 'Scarcity precipitates new sacraments'.⁸¹ In a context of planetary, ecological, social, political traumas, Keller proposes in saturated language, that incarnation

be reimagined as 'intercarnation' in ways that open to a divine becoming which may be more than human: 'no creature lives outside of bodied participation in its fellows. And *therefore* ... in God. But some creatures more than others *answer to* the truth of that participation'.⁸²

In reading Larkin's 'praying // \\\ firs attenuate'— sometimes with breath held, as surface meaning is withheld – my embodied knowing as reader is directed, not away from the unknowable other but toward the density of bole-and-branch, root-in-ground and tree-in-wood.⁸³ The agency of firs becomes part of the dense reciprocity of poet and word, poet and matter, poet and world, so that as reader I can never quite tell who is praying: poet or tree, both or neither, or who it is that might 'beseech || co-earthing'.⁸⁴ The palms of the hands joined in prayer // \\\ become the spires of firs, or vice versa, and tapering firs evoke tapering candles. Larkin writes:

prayer with no tangible swarm
 many exchangeable surfaces
 every layer a first to
 laminate a given-to

suddenly arboreal in
 nexus, a window for
 prayer without exit
 the shutters blown wide
 thrash a taper's gust⁸⁵

Tapering: The Reader Called-forth

Tapering takes me back to Shen Zhou, and Prynne's description of the contemplative artist's shelter 'bright from the single candle'.⁸⁶ The metonymy of tapering-fir // \\\ tapering-candle // \\\ tapering-hands // \\\ prayer-as-tapering, recurs in 'praying // \\\ firs attenuate', and calls the reader forth. Perhaps more precisely, the reader is called 'into' this tapering void that does not so much illuminate the activity (in its 'impassivity') of attention to fir/otherkind, but rather makes a space – makes many spaces over and over – for vigil lit by the taper of fir:

most a givenness
 but less in givingness
 pulled through knots
 of branch exception
 quite given-over to a
 with beyond withinness

tapered impassivity
 reclining at the least
 ripe effort of gift⁸⁷

Responding to Larkin's 'Leaves of Field', Sophie Seita writes of the tree's resistance to language and the poet's response: 'Resistance, for both Larkin and Prynne, can only be overcome through attention and imagination. The inherently given resistance of the object I encounter is its clearest form of existence to me'.⁸⁸ For Seita, 'Larkin encourages giving attention voluntarily, and that in itself is a process of gift'.⁸⁹ In 'praying // \\\ firs attenuate', this is an uncanny process of kenotic givenness to an *other*, always unsettled by its knots of giving, being-given-over (and in gospel passion stories this is both betrayal and self-giving), and an ingiveness, which has echoes of Gerard Manley Hopkins' notions of inscape and instress.⁹⁰ Moreover, all of this unsettled givenness, which a reader might suppose to describe the poet-contemplative-reader, issues as description of fir, not so much as metaphor but as densely woven invocation and – I venture, with an ear to Timothy Morton – co-being, co-existents, perhaps also co-intention.⁹¹

This co-intention becomes invocation; in the face of ecological distress it is a plea:

Be lessened in world so as not to assuage its brunt taken at the full let
 new tallnesses taper with the close-grown over every leached
 place a spine of outliving become the norm ...⁹²

In the appeal 'be lessened in world' – and the nod to Heidegger needs to be heard – I read a wound-binding poetics, drawing on Waldrep, as Larkin's invocation of a

kenotic hospitality. David James Miller reads this as the nearest approach to an apex in the poem.⁹³ Miller, also referencing Chrétien, describes the 'wound' in language, where divine silence, divine kenosis leaves space for, is hospitable to, speech/speaking.⁹⁴ This 'wound' is shifted in the poem toward a voluntary kenosis so that just as divine silence makes way for human speaking, human attentiveness that is prayer-like – perhaps silent, perhaps greeting – makes room for recognition of and respect for the world of the fir, so as to 'let new tallnesses taper' in, and in spite of, 'every leached place'.

By Way of Conclusion: Antipodean Encounters

When I suggest greeting as well as silence as ways of making room for the worlds of otherkind, I am thinking in particular of Australian First Nations' practices of calling out to Country.⁹⁵ 'Be lessened in world' could also serve as a plea made to contemporary Australian beneficiaries of settler-migrant-invader violence, in their relationship with First Peoples. Shen Zhou's written record of a night vigil that the painting incorporates and depicts was made, he writes, in 1492, a year when to the far West and into what would become the 'New World', a coloniser, Cristóbal Colón, Christopher Columbus was venturing and reputedly 'discovering' the Americas, as if First Nations peoples did not already know their own lands were there.⁹⁶ Ventures of colonial 'discovery' and invasion repeated themselves in many places, including the continent known colonially as Australia. Reading Larkin's 'praying firs // \\\ attenuate' in this context, where many firs, in gardens or plantations, are legacies of colonial invasion, calls me in a number of ways, one being an engagement with a tree that is indigenous to the place where I encounter it, albeit where it too, like Larkin's 'firs', is constrained by 'tooled' scarcities. So, I offer these poems by way of response:

Tea tree aptitudes

after/for Peter Larkin

In slow eruption
from ample sand

tree angles
to hydration –

dress of wind
and sewer burl

elated by
instance. Any

swell from thigh
of ground

wrestles genius –
the thousand

spills of bend
cambium informs

– air to land
and back.

A locus asbestos
nestles at the rear.

Another imported tree species answers to the verticality of Larkin's tapering, praying firs, namely the Banyan fig from India, and considered sacred there, imported to North Queensland.⁹⁷

Banyan Fig Trees at Townsville South State School

Ficus benghalensis

sent from
limbs
at first

tendrils
finger
toward
ground

thickening in twines
roped to delve & anchor

then abundant of bole
this surprise spill

is both-way a habit
& spread that preferences

neither verticality nor expanse
taking up horizon

having built themselves
through aerial practice
concentration
plunges

to a multiplicity
of shafts
none
tapering
they form an interlock like
forest itself

entangled here
heritage and screen
at a schoolyard's
edge

These imported figs resist the verticality of Larkin's firs through a practice both horizontal and vertical, neither privileging one nor the other, a practice that in age seems to mimic a kind of forest community – of which Peter Wohlleben writes⁹⁸ – albeit in a 'single' tree that is in fact multiple, one might say 'catholic', in its spread.

For Mason, Larkin's writing is informed by a Catholic and Teilhardian sacramentality.⁹⁹ In saturated language – the kind that Jean-Luc Marion might describe as counter-experiential¹⁰⁰ – the reality of ecological trauma (as a kind of scarcity) is taken up and answered. But this occurs in a context where poetic witness itself is also a mode of 'the impossible', a gift whose giving remains necessary, partial, and ungiven. Larkin writes of 'the singularity of firs', and a vertical-horizontal shift where 'vertically reversed swoop || scalar rapture out of | fluctuations beckon'.¹⁰¹ This upward-outward movement opens toward the capacity to 'hide | givingness among gifts', and

... to taper the
refusal of witness
until a vertical tells
no other shyness
in the rivenness¹⁰²

What is this rivenness but wound, the wound of plantation, of baring ground in order to colonise, with the violence and the privileged inheritances of violence they entail, where to describe wound/rift as gift is both offence and calling forth.

In trees' 'deep incarnation', the crux of scarcity-gift in relations under ecological trauma opens to an ethics of attentiveness where I am turned toward firs in their situatedness (in forest, garden, or plantation, perhaps for paper production or Christmas trees) and to what they call forth from there of other trees and poetic practices of attention to them, hearing Larkin's kindly imperative:

do not pray
in the guise of another
instilment let the

firs be their own
surplus of salience¹⁰³

Notes

- ¹ Martin Harrison and Deborah Bird Rose, 'Postscript: Connecting: A Dialogue between Deborah Bird Rose and Martin Harrison', *TEXT* Special Issue 20: *Writing Creates Ecology and Ecology Creates Writing*, ed. by Martin Harrison, Deborah Bird Rose, Lorraine Shannon and Kim Satchell (October 2013), http://www.textjournal.com.au/speciss/issue20/Harrison&Rose_Postsc.pdf [accessed 2 June 2019] (p. 2).
- ² Harrison and Rose, pp. 2–3.
- ³ Peter Larkin, 'praying firs // \\\ attenuate', in *Give Forest Its Next Portent* (Emersons Green: Shearsman, 2014), pp. 161–93.
- ⁴ Harrison and Rose, p. 3.
- ⁵ Anne Elvey, 'The Matter of Texts: A Material Intertextuality and Ecocritical Engagements with the Bible', in *Ecocritical Theory: New European Approaches*, ed. by Axel Goodbody and Kate Rigby (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2011), pp. 181–93.
- ⁶ Psalm 96.12; see also Isaiah 55.12.
- ⁷ Biblical references to trees are too numerous to cite. I offer just a few: Genesis 2:16–17; Deuteronomy 21.22; II Kings 3.25; I Chronicles 16.33; Psalm 105.33; Isaiah 10.19; Jeremiah 11.19; Hosea 2.12; Micah 4.4; Job 40.22; Daniel 4.14; Song of Songs 2.3.
- ⁸ Robert Pogue Harrison, *Forests: The Shadow of Civilization* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), pp. 1–58.
- ⁹ The Earth Bible Project began in the 1990s in South Australia under the leadership of Norman C Habel with the aim of reading the Bible from an ecological perspective; the first of its many publications was: *Readings from the Perspective of Earth*, ed. by Norman C Habel, *The Earth Bible*, 1 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000).
- ¹⁰ John Milbank, "'The Beckoning Obstruction": On the Theme of Scarcity in the Poetry of Peter Larkin"', in *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, curated by Amy Cutler, and published online in 2018, <https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/arts/english/research/currentprojects/poetryatwarwick/onlinepublications/werexatree/milbank> [accessed 2 June 2019] (last para.).
- ¹¹ Sophie Seita critiques the nature as book metaphor for its moving encounter with nature into the scholastic realm, and asks if a more appropriate metaphor than 'reading' nature can be found for our attentive encounters with otherkind. 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 2 June 2019] (p. 1 para.6).
- ¹² On the notion of 'yes', which I discuss further later in the essay, I am in debt to Deborah Bird Rose, 'The Goodness of Creation and the Darkening World of Extinctions', paper given at Climate Change – Cultural Change: Religious Responses and Responsibilities Conference, Centre for Theology and Ministry, Parkville, Victoria, 29 October 2011.
- ¹³ Martin Harrison, 'The Act of Writing and the Act of Attention', *TEXT* Special Issue 20: *Writing Creates Ecology and Ecology Creates Writing*, ed. by Martin Harrison, Deborah Bird Rose, Lorraine Shannon and Kim Satchell (October 2013), <http://www.textjournal.com.au/speciss/issue20/Harrison.pdf> [accessed 2 June 2019] (p. 11).

- ¹⁴ Paul Celan, 'The Meridian', trans. by Rosemarie Waldrop, in Paul Celan, *Selections*, ed. and with an introduction by Pierre Joris (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), p. 162.
- ¹⁵ Milbank, para.1.
- ¹⁶ Jonathan Skinner, 'Thoughts on Things: Poetics of the Third Landscape', in *((Eco (Lang)(uage (Reader))): the eco language reader*, ed. by Brenda Iijima (Lebanon, NH: Portable Press at Yo-Yo Labs and Nightboat Books, 2010), pp. 9–51 (p. 36).
- ¹⁷ Larkin, *Give Forest Its Next Portent*, p. 104.
- ¹⁸ Email conversation: 10 April 2018 (cited with permission).
- ¹⁹ Shen Zhou (1427–1509), 'Sitting Alone at Night', Hanging scroll, ink and colour on paper, 84.8 x 21.8 cm, National Palace Museum, Taipei, China Online Museum <https://www.comuseum.com/painting/masters/shen-zhou/sitting-alone-at-night/> [accessed 2 June 2019].
- ²⁰ J H Prynne, 'The Night Vigil of Shen Zhou', *Glossator: Practice and Theory of the Commentary 3* (2010): pp. 1–18 (p. 4) <https://solutioperfecta.files.wordpress.com/2011/10/prynne-night-vigil.pdf> [accessed 2 June 2019]
- ²¹ Prynne, pp. 4–5.
- ²² Larkin, *Give Forest Its Next Portent*, p. 179.
- ²³ G C Waldrep, 'On *Give Forest Its Next Portent*, by Peter Larkin' in 'Recommendations from our Editors', West Branch Wired, Bucknell University, *Marginalia* (Winter 2015), <https://www.bucknell.edu/west-branch-wired/past-issues-of-wired/winter-2015/marginalia-winter-2015#GCW> [accessed 2 June 2019] (para.2).
- ²⁴ Larkin, *Give Forest Its Next Portent*, p. 163.
- ²⁵ *Ibid.* p. 163.
- ²⁶ *Ibid.*
- ²⁷ *Ibid.* p. 164.
- ²⁸ Catherine Keller, *Face of the Deep: A Theology of Becoming* (London: Routledge, 2003).
- ²⁹ Robert Alter, *The Five Books of Moses: A Translation with Commentary* (New York: Norton, 2004), p. 17; Keller, *Face of the Deep*.
- ³⁰ Norman C. Habel, 'Geophany: The Earth Story in Genesis 1', in *The Earth Story in Genesis* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), pp. 34–48.
- ³¹ In the context of Larkin's poem, the double entendre on 'divine service' is deliberate; I refer specifically to Genesis 2.15 but note also the liturgical character of Genesis 1 which precedes it.
- ³² Larkin, *Give Forest Its Next Portent*, p. 164.
- ³³ Milbank, para.21.
- ³⁴ Larkin, *Give Forest Its Next Portent*, p. 166 (emphasis in original).
- ³⁵ Martin Heidegger, *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*, translated by William McNeill and Nicholas Walker (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), p. 196; cf. Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Sense of the World*, translated by Jeffrey S. Librett (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), pp. 59–63.
- ³⁶ Jean-Louis Chrétien, *The Call and the Response*, translated by Anne A. Davenport (New York: Fordham University Press, 2004); Rose, 'The Goodness of Creation'.
- ³⁷ Larkin 'Coleridge Conversing: Between Soliloquy and Invocation', *The Wordsworth Circle* 38(3) (2007): pp. 113–17 (p. 113); Chrétien, p. 30.
- ³⁸ Larkin 'Coleridge Conversing', p. 113; Chrétien, p. 6.
- ³⁹ Larkin 'Coleridge Conversing', p. 113; Chrétien, p. 32.
- ⁴⁰ Larkin, *Give Forest Its Next Portent*, p. 176.

- ⁴¹ Deborah Bird Rose, 'Love at the Edge of Extinction', <http://deborahbirdrose.com/> [accessed 2 June 2019].
- ⁴² Larkin, *Give Forest Its Next Portent*, p. 166.
- ⁴³ *Ibid.* p. 165.
- ⁴⁴ Milbank, para.10.
- ⁴⁵ Denis Edwards, *Ecology at the Heart of Faith: The Change of Heart That Leads to a New Way of Living on Earth* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2006), pp. 58–60; Niels Gregersen, 'The Cross of Christ in an Evolutionary World', *dialog: A Journal of Theology* 40 (3) (2001): pp. 192–207; *Incarnation: On the Scope and Depth of Christology*, ed. by Niels Gregersen (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015).
- ⁴⁶ E.g., Peter Larkin, *Introggression Lakewood (Shelter Partials)* (Emersons Green: Shearsman Books, 2017), p. 65.
- ⁴⁷ Anne Elvey, *The Matter of the Text: Material Engagements between Luke and the Five Senses* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2011), pp. 21–24.
- ⁴⁸ Deborah Guess, 'Oil beyond War and Peace: Rethinking the Meaning of Matter', in *Ecological Aspects of War: Religious and Theological Perspectives*, ed. by Anne Elvey, Deborah Guess and Keith Dyer. *A Forum for Theology in the World* 3 (2) (Adelaide: ATF Theology, 2016): pp. 73–93; on material agency, see Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010).
- ⁴⁹ Gregersen, 'The Cross of Christ', p. 193.
- ⁵⁰ *Ibid.*
- ⁵¹ Peter Larkin, 'Scarce Additive, Nearest Unconditional', in *Were X a Tree*, <https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/arts/english/research/currentprojects/poetryatwarwick/onlinepublications/werexatree/larkin> [accessed 2 June 2019] (para.5).
- ⁵² Regina M. Schwartz, *The Curse of Cain: The Violent Legacy of Monotheism* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1997), p. 71. I discuss her use of 'scarcity' in Anne F. Elvey, *An Ecological Feminist Reading of the Gospel of Luke: A Gestational Paradigm* (Lampeter: Edwin Mellen, 2005), pp. 199–201.
- ⁵³ Schwartz, pp. 3–4, 52, 119, and throughout.
- ⁵⁴ Peter Larkin, 'Relations of Scarcity: Ecology and Eschatology in "The Ruined Cottage"'. *Studies in Romanticism* 39 (3) (2000): pp. 347–64 (p. 356).
- ⁵⁵ Larkin, 'Scarce Additive', para.5.
- ⁵⁶ Larkin, 'Relations of Scarcity', p. 358.
- ⁵⁷ Larkin, 'Scarce Additive', para.5.
- ⁵⁸ The Earth Bible Team, 'Ecojustice Hermeneutics: Reflections and Challenges', in *The Earth Story in the New Testament*, ed. Norman Habel and Vicky Balabanski, The Earth Bible, 5 (London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002), pp. 1–14 (pp. 3–4).
- ⁵⁹ Jacques Derrida, *Given Time: 1. Counterfeit Money*, translated by Peggy Kamuf (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), p. 7.
- ⁶⁰ Larkin, 'Relations of Scarcity', p. 364.
- ⁶¹ Derrida, p. 7.
- ⁶² Larkin, *Introggression Lakewood*, p. 65.
- ⁶³ *Ibid.* p. 66.
- ⁶⁴ *Ibid.* p. 67.
- ⁶⁵ *Ibid.*
- ⁶⁶ Larkin, *Give Forest Its Next Portent*, p. 177.
- ⁶⁷ Peter Larkin, 'Tully From, All Scarce To', in *((Eco (Lang)(uage (Reader))): the eco language reader*, ed. by Brenda Iijima (Lebanon, NH: Portable Press at Yo-Yo Labs and Nightboat Books, 2010), pp. 52–59 (pp. 57–58).

- ⁶⁸ Larkin, *Give Forest Its Next Portent*, p. 177.
- ⁶⁹ Milbank, para.3.
- ⁷⁰ Emma Mason, 'Entanglement in Fir: Thinking Matter in Peter Larkin's "praying // firs \\ attenuate"', *Religions* 9 (1) (2017): pp. 1–10 (p. 1), doi:10.3390/rel9010001; Harriet Tarlo, 'Radical Landscapes: Experiment and Environment in Contemporary Poetry', *Jacket* 32 (2007), <http://jacketmagazine.com/32/p-tarlo.shtml> [accessed 11 July 2019] (para.4).
- ⁷¹ Mason, p. 2.
- ⁷² Larkin, *Give Forest Its Next Portent*, p. 177.
- ⁷³ Ibid.
- ⁷⁴ Ibid. p. 182.
- ⁷⁵ Anne Elvey, 'Things fall away', *Overland* 236 (Spring 2019): p. 23.
- ⁷⁶ Mark G. Brett, *Decolonizing God: The Bible in the Tides of Empire* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2008), pp. 183, 197, 204.
- ⁷⁷ *The Cloud of Unknowing and The Book of Privy Counselling*, newly edited and with an Introduction by William Johnston (New York: Image Books, 1973), p. 53.
- ⁷⁸ Catherine Keller, *Cloud of the Impossible: Negative Theology and Planetary Entanglement* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015), p. 58.
- ⁷⁹ Keller, *Cloud of the Impossible*, pp. 68, 303–304; she refers to the transfiguration of Jesus as narrated in the gospel of Matthew (Matthew 17.1–8).
- ⁸⁰ Keller, *Cloud of the Impossible*, p. 304.
- ⁸¹ Ibid. pp. 304, 316.
- ⁸² Ibid. p. 296, emphasis in original.
- ⁸³ 'Anne Elvey reviews *Give Forest Its Next Portent* by Peter Larkin'. *Plumwood Mountain: An Australian Journal of Ecopoetry and Eco-poetics* (October 2017): <https://plumwoodmountain.com/anne-elvey-reviews-give-forest-its-next-portent-by-peter-larkin/> [accessed 11 July 2019].
- ⁸⁴ Larkin, *Give Forest Its Next Portent*, p. 189.
- ⁸⁵ Ibid. p. 181.
- ⁸⁶ Prynne, p. 4.
- ⁸⁷ Larkin, *Give Forest Its Next Portent*, p. 166.
- ⁸⁸ Seita, p. 2 (para.10).
- ⁸⁹ Seita, p. 4 (para.4).
- ⁹⁰ Gerard Manley Hopkins, *Poems and Prose*, selected and edited by W H Gardner (Middlesex: Penguin, 1963), pp. 127, 134.
- ⁹¹ Timothy Morton, 'Coexistence and Coexistents: Ecology without a World', in *Ecocritical Theory: New European Approaches*, ed. by Axel Goodbody and Kate Rigby (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2011), pp. 168–80. Regarding invocation, see Larkin, *Give Forest Its Next Portent*, p. 173.
- ⁹² Larkin, *Give Forest Its Next Portent*, p. 178.
- ⁹³ David James Miller, 'Reciting Silence', in *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, curated by Amy Cutler, and published online in 2018, <https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/arts/english/research/currentprojects/poetryatwarwick/onlinepublications/werexatree/miller> [accessed 11 July 2019] (para.3).
- ⁹⁴ Miller, para.1.
- ⁹⁵ Deborah Bird Rose, *Nourishing Terrains: Australian Aboriginal Views of Landscape and Wilderness* (Canberra: Australian Heritage Commission, 1996), p. 6.
- ⁹⁶ Shen Zhou, 'Night Vigil', translated by Richard Edwards, cited in Prynne, p. 2.

- ⁹⁷ My thanks to Sebastian Paris, Senior Arborist Office, Townsville City Council, Queensland, for his advice regarding the species and provenance of these trees.
- ⁹⁸ Peter Wohlleben, *The Hidden Life of Trees: What They Feel, How They Communicate*, translated by Jane Billinghurst (Carlton: Black Inc., 2016).
- ⁹⁹ Mason, p. 8.
- ¹⁰⁰ Jean-Luc Marion, 'The Banality of Saturation', translated by Jeffrey L. Kosky, in *Counter-Experiences: Reading Jean-Luc Marion*, ed. by Kevin Hart (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007), pp. 382–418.
- ¹⁰¹ Larkin, *Give Forest Its Next Portent*, p. 179.
- ¹⁰² *Ibid.*, pp. 179–80.
- ¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 177.

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Competing Interests

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