



GLOBAL JOURNAL OF HUMAN SOCIAL SCIENCE
LINGUISTICS & EDUCATION

Volume 12 Issue 12 Version 1.0 Year 2012

Type: Double Blind Peer Reviewed International Research Journal

Publisher: Global Journals Inc. (USA)

Online ISSN: 2249-460X & Print ISSN: 0975-587X

A Analytical Study of the Philip Larkin's Selected Poetries

By Ruchika

Scholar of CMJ University, Shillong, India

Abstract - Philip Arthur Larkin was an English poet and novelist. His first book of poetry, *The North Ship*, was published in 1945, followed by two novels, *Jill* (1946) and *A Girl in Winter* (1947), but he came to prominence in 1955 with the publication of his second collection of poems, *The Less Deceived*, followed by *The Whitsun Weddings* (1964) and *High Windows* (1974). He contributed to *The Daily Telegraph* as its jazz critic from 1961 to 1971, articles gathered together in *All What Jazz: A Record Diary 1961–71* (1985), and he edited *The Oxford Book of Twentieth Century English Verse* (1973). He was the recipient of many honours, including the Queen's Gold Medal for Poetry. He was offered, but declined, the position of poet laureate in 1984, following the death of John Betjeman.

Keywords : *A Girl in Winter, High Windows, Jill, The North Ship, The Whitsun, Weddings.*

GJHSS-E Classification: FOR Code: 160503, 160502



Strictly as per the compliance and regulations of:



A Analytical Study of the Philip Larkin's Selected Poetries

Ruchika

Abstract - Philip Arthur Larkin was an English poet and novelist. His first book of poetry, *The North Ship*, was published in 1945, followed by two novels, *Jill* (1946) and *A Girl in Winter* (1947), but he came to prominence in 1955 with the publication of his second collection of poems, *The Less Deceived*, followed by *The Whitsun Weddings* (1964) and *High Windows* (1974). He contributed to *The Daily Telegraph* as its jazz critic from 1961 to 1971, articles gathered together in *All What Jazz: A Record Diary 1961-71* (1985), and he edited *The Oxford Book of Twentieth Century English Verse* (1973). He was the recipient of many honours, including the Queen's Gold Medal for Poetry. He was offered, but declined, the position of poet laureate in 1984, following the death of John Betjeman. Despite the controversy Larkin was chosen in a 2003 Poetry Book Society survey, almost two decades after his death, as Britain's best-loved poet of the previous 50 years, and in 2008 *The Times* named him Britain's greatest post-war writer. A major poet of the post-World War II period, Larkin attempted to capture ordinary experience in realistic and rational terms. Larkin's poetry both avoids romanticizing experience and moves away from the abstract, experimental language of Eliot and the modernists. Although Larkin's poetry follows the cadences of everyday "plain speech," it is composed in strict meters and forms. It is executed in the poet's own voice, which can be self-deprecatingly humorous or cynical, thoughtful or softly humorous. To some critics, his poetry, reflective of the life of a near-recluse, seems too grim, "bleak, if not black," but to Clive James, "It made misery beautiful.... the voice was unmistakable."

Keywords : *A Girl in Winter, High Windows, Jill, The North Ship, The Whitsun, Weddings.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Philip Larkin (1922-85) was one of the most highly regarded and respected poets of post-World War II Britain. He achieved considerable popularity although he was never an "easy" poet, and many of his poems offer intriguing insights to the mind of a complex and flawed personality.

By profession Philip Larkin was a librarian (as is the current reviewer) and he spent much of his career as the chief librarian at the Brynmor Jones Library of the University of Hull. Larkin moved to Hull from Belfast in 1955 and he spent the rest of his life there. He did not find Hull to be an easy city to get to like, and it was some years before he felt himself to be well settled there. His poem"

Here" was written some six and a half years after his move to Hull, when he had come to appreciate the city for its peculiarities and its remoteness. Hull's position in East Yorkshire makes it a place that few people visit unless they have a particular reason to do so, as it is not on the route to anywhere else.

The poem is a response to his statement in his earlier poem "Places, Loved Ones" (written in 1954 before he left Belfast) that: "No, I have never found / The place where I could say / This is proper ground / Here I shall stay". Now, in 1961, he feels ready to say that he has found his "Here", although his feelings towards Belfast had changed in the interim.

"Here" was the opening poem of his 1964 collection "The Whitsun Weddings", which is largely concerned with questions of identity and belonging. By concentrating on how a place accords with one's personality, and becomes part of one's identity, "Here" is an appropriate introduction.

The poem comprises four eight-line stanzas with an ABBACDDC rhyme scheme. However, Larkin makes considerable use of half-rhymes in this poem (e.g. solitude/mud, stands/ascends) and there are "rhymes" that are scarcely rhymes at all, such as dwelling/museum and trolleys/driers. The effect of this is to give the poem a relaxed, informal tone. Although the poem has structure it is not overplayed and one is barely aware of it as the poem proceeds.

"Here" is a survey of Hull and its surrounding countryside, viewed almost as though the poet is flying overhead in a helicopter, although it is clear in the opening stanza that Larkin is describing the approach to Hull from the west by rail from the "rich industrial shadows" of the Leeds conurbation. He uses the word "swerving" three times in this stanza to describe the train sweeping through "fields too thin and thistled to be called meadows" and passing the occasional "harsh-named halt". This is an unpromising journey, from "rich" to "thin", and in contradiction to the flow of "traffic all night north" (the rail line crosses the A1 London to Edinburgh road shortly after leaving Leeds). The poet is travelling into an unknown country, marked by "solitude".

However, the second stanza expresses the "surprise of a large town" which the train journey culminates in. Hull is off the beaten track as far as major UK cities are concerned, and it is indeed something of a surprise to find here a bustling port with its "domes and statues, spires and cranes". Hull is not a particularly

Author : Scholar of CMJ University, Shillong, Meghalya, India.
E-mails : ruchika_balhara@rediffmail.com,
pushpakdaggar@yahoo.co.in

beautiful city (although it has been considerably "cleaned up" in the 50 years since Larkin wrote this poem) and the poet does not spend long in trying to describe it.

Instead, he is more interested in the crowds of working-class people, the "residents from raw estates", who "push through plate-glass swing doors to their desires", which Larkin lists with enthusiasm as "cheap suits, red kitchen-ware, sharp shoes, iced lollies, / Electric mixers, toasters, washers, driers". There is no snobbery on Larkin's part, merely a recognition that the people of this city are "a cut-price crowd, urban yet simple" whose concerns are the everyday ones of getting and spending.

Larkin again stresses the isolated position of Hull when he describes the people as "dwelling / Where only salesmen and relations come / Within a terminate and fishy-smelling / Pastoral ...".

He mentions one or two features that might set Hull apart from other cities, namely "the slave museum" (Hull was the home town of William Wilberforce, the 19th century anti-slavery campaigner) and its consulates, which would be there because Hull is a port of entry for North Sea ferries coming from continental Europe, but these are mixed in with "tattoo-shops" and "grim head-scarfed wives" as though they are nothing special. In other words, whether isolated or not, this is an ordinary city that is getting on with things and, in more ways than one, minding its own business.

But then Larkin continues his west to east journey and moves into the countryside to the east of Hull, which is the district of Holderness characterised by flat open fields intersected by drainage channels. If few people visit Hull, even fewer go as far as Holderness, which has no settlements of any size and forms a peninsula with the North Sea on one side and the Humber Estuary on the other.

Larkin uses language very expressively to convey the solitude of this piece of land that is on the way to nowhere. This is "where removed lives / Loneliness clarifies" (the break comes across the third and fourth stanzas). "Here silence stands / Like heat". He uses words such as "unnoticed", "hidden" and "neglected" to emphasise its remoteness and quietness.

When the land ends the sea begins "suddenly beyond a beach of shapes and shingle". For Larkin this is a matter of rejoicing rather than regret, for it offers "unfenced existence". He ends the poem with a summary of the region, seen from its edge, as "facing the sun, untalkative, out of reach".

Larkin's journey throughout the poem makes it clear where he prefers to be. He is not hostile to the crowded city, but he can let it alone to get on with things without his presence. For him, the better existence is "unfenced" and "out of reach", both in physical and mental terms. He seeks solitude in which to be himself, and a place where that is possible.

However, there is a final unanswered question posed by this poem. If Larkin is seeking a "Here" where he truly himself, has he achieved that end when he admits that such a place is "out of reach", and is therefore not "here" but "there"? That is the question of identity that Larkin continued to address in other poems in "The Whitsun Weddings" and elsewhere.

II. CRITICAL RECEPTION

Larkin has been viewed largely as a gloomy poet, misanthropic, and pessimistic about human endeavors. Although the author of only four volumes of verse, these, along with his two novels, continue to be reprinted, and Larkin finds British rivals only in Ted Hughes and Dylan Thomas. His accessible style, which often uses concrete images to move to symbolic celebration and expression of freedom, as well as the first-person speaker of many of his poems, have won him his following over the years. He is the "urban modern man, the insular Englishman," as Seamus Heaney remarked in *Critical Inquiry*, whose "tones are mannerly but not exquisite, well-bred but not mealy-mouthed. If his England and his English are not as deep as Hughes's or as solemn as Hill's, they are nevertheless dearly beloved."

III. ANALYTICAL STUDY OF SELECTED LARKIN POETRIES

a) "The Less Deceived" (1955)

i. *The Political and Social Context of the Poems*

The title of this volume was adapted by Larkin from a remark made by Ophelia in Shakespeare's play Hamlet: "I was the more deceived." Larkin wished to convey through this title his intention not to be "more deceived" by the realities of life but to be "less deceived" by them. **In other words**, he wished to convey through this title his view that poetry was a realistic interpretation of life, and that his own poetry would represent what he called his "sad-eyed" realism. He also wanted his poetry to be "clear-eyed". Larkin's realistic approach to life is evident in this volume in which his poems explore modern attitudes to work, leisure, love, and death; and this approach is evident also in his philosophical preoccupations with **questions** of belief, knowledge, and perception. All these concerns were prompted, and also reinforced, by the conditions of post-war **England**. Larkin's poems seem to be asking what people could believe in during the period of the post-war reconstruction which had begun immediately after the end of World War II in 1945. Larkin knew that **the human** senses sometimes deceive human beings because the expectations which our sense-experiences arouse in us do not always tally with what we subsequently experience. It was exactly this view which shaped the portrayal of the male protagonist in the poem **Deceptions** in this volume. But, in a more general

way, the effort to verify experiences and propositions is a recurring motive behind the whole of this volume.

The poets of the so-called Movement were believed to be empirical in their approach to life and in their representation of it. In the case of Larkin, this empiricism means a desire to see things clearly and truthfully. In this connection, we must remember that his poems in this volume were written in a particular political context, and that the ideas expressed in these poems were part of the general revaluation of beliefs and values in post-war Britain. The political context in post-war Britain ranged from the concept of the British Empire to the concept of the Welfare State which had begun to take shape. The idea of the Empire represented a glorious past, while the concept of the Welfare State represented an austere and mediocre domestic present. The feeling, that Britain had lost most of its glory and power, shows itself in the wistful melancholy and elegiac lyricism of the poems of Larkin in the volume entitled "The Less Deceived"; and this feeling helps us to understand Larkin's "sad-eyed realism".

ii. *The Poems Going and Wedding-Wind*

The war had inflicted severe damage on traditional religious ceremonies and rituals in Britain, and Larkin's poems of the immediate post-war period express an uneasy agnosticism. The poem *Going* is about death, but it also raises existential problems and constitutes, in fact, an ontological riddle. It offers a negative image of "being". Larkin's agnostic attitude even shaped his attitude to sexual relationships. The poem *Wedding-Wind* is a clear example of this. The wedding-night is depicted in the poem as a time of unique happiness; but the anxious questions of the second stanza of the poem imply a certain degree of doubt about whether such happiness can endure. The happiness of the newly-married woman offers hope, but the poem ends with a question mark.

iii. *At Grass*

One of the critics has expressed the view that Larkin's poem *At Grass* became one of the most popular post-war poems because the retirement of some of the horses from horse races, and their lives of idleness and leisure, symbolized Britain's loss of her past glory. Thus this poem expresses much more than a simple feeling about race-horses in their old age. Another critic, agreeing more or less with this view, says that the horses in this poem are an emblem of a lost heroism and a lost social order. *At Grass* is, according to an eminent critic, an essentially English poem. Its Englishness is to be found not merely in its memories of "cups and stakes and handicaps" but also in its modified use of the pastoral convention. There are hints of eighteenth-century pastoralism in the elegiac mood of this poem. In addition to that, there is an elegant formality in the stanzaic and rhythmic structure of the poem; and there is also an appealing conversational

quality in the casual "perhaps" and in the wistful question: "Do memories plague their ears like flies?"

iv. *Wires*

A more or less similar use of an animal fable has been made in the poem called *Wires*. Just as the poem *At Grass* is more than a poem about retired race-horses, so the poem *Wires* is something more than a statement about the effective control of cattle. Indeed, this poem too has an allegorical significance. It is a kind of parable so far as the technique of this poem is concerned. The poem's rhyme-scheme sets up a pattern of internal reflection, thereby reinforcing the concern with **containment** and enclosure. The shift from "widest prairies" in the opening line to "widest senses" in the closing line encourages the idea that freedom is an imaginary condition with no real existence. The familiar quatrains and the loose iambic lines convey a sense of authoritative wisdom so that the poem acquires the look of a well-established fable.

v. *Myxomatosis*

The poem *Myxomatosis* is another animal fable. It was prompted by the outbreak of a rabbit disease in certain parts of Britain in 1953. This poem too has its allegorical significance. Here the rabbit asks: "What trap is this? Where were its teeth concealed?" The reflections of the speaker in this poem suggest that the poem is seeking to establish a parallel between the fate of the diseased animal and a certain aspect of human life. The words "caught", "trap", and "jaws" suggest that the common experience being described is one of suffering and helplessness.

vi. *The Poem Toads*

Some of the poems in this volume express resentment at the limitations of contemporary social experience, and some of them even express an attitude of rebellion. The poems *Toads* and *Poetry of Departures* are of this kind. In *Toads*, the element of fable once again appears in the nature of the question about freedom which is asked in the poem. The use of the word "toad" for work in the opening line seems to show that work is something unappealing and yet something natural. It is a poem which emerged from the post-war context; and, in its anxiety about work, it shows a similarity with a good deal of the literature of the nineteen-fifties. This poem is a sort of debate about individual rights and responsibilities in a modern democratic society. Furthermore, this poem may be read as an "utterance;" and, as such, it reveals one of the most innovative and culturally significant aspects of Larkin's poetry. Larkin makes ample use of colloquial English within the traditional lyric forms of writing. The opening stanza of *Toads* consists of two abrupt questions, the first of which is a rush of monosyllables; and, from the very outset, we are given a strong impression of a speaking voice. The language is

vigorous and colloquial. Syntactically as well, the poem takes the form of an argument, with conjunctions and exclamations providing the necessary cohesion and linkage. All this shows that poetry may be regarded as social discourse. Then there is the ludicrous alliteration of "lecturers, lispers, losels, louts," etc; and this suggests how social types may arbitrarily be classified. Thus the poem indicates the division and the differences within a social context. There are people who live on their wits, and there are people who live like gypsies. In respect of its socio-linguistic range, this poem very skillfully combines both conformism and non-conformism; it begins in a mood of rebellion and defiance, and it ends in a mood of quietism and apparent acceptance.

vii. *Church Going*

Church Going, written in 1954, clearly reveals the social context of the time when it was written. It was a time of general decline in the attendance in churches which had begun to take place in 1945. This poem expresses the view that faith and belief in religion must die but that the spirit of tradition represented by the English Church cannot come to an end. Larkin's agnosticism becomes more understandable if we look at this poem in the national and the international context of the post-war years. The poem refers both to the erosion of the Church as an institution and to the perpetuation of some kind of ritual observance. In other words, the poet here explores different perceptions of the same event (the event being the decline of attendance in the churches).

viii. *The Poem Next, Please*

Several poems in this volume are more existential than empirical in the sense that they are basically concerned with modes of looking at death, destiny, contingency, and nothingness. The poem Next, Please, for instance, can well be read in terms of the existentialist dictum that human life in its entirety is life facing death. This poem too is written in a colloquial style. Its title is a piece of black comedy, and its dominant image—a ship—is based on a popular phrase. Besides, this poem seems to have been written from a gloomier philosophical position than *Wires* or *Toads*; and the final stanza of this poem is reminiscent of the work of the French symbolist poets, though its stylistic features are, on the whole, the same as those of the other poems in this volume.

ix. *Poetry of Departures*

Poetry of Departures is, like *Toads*, a quietistic poem which manages to subdue its own rebellious feelings. Besides, the remark "Then she undid her dress" in this poem carries the same emotional thrill for the speaker as the line "He walked out on the whole crowd" in the same poem.

x. *Some of the Love-Poems*

Although the sexual act is generally believed to bring about fulfilment and relief, a sexual act in Larkin's poems is deceptive, and its promise proves to be empty or false. In the poem *Places, Loved Ones*, for instance, the speaker admits, with a mixture of disappointment and relief, that he has never met that special person who could claim everything which he owned. Similarly, the speaker in the poem *If, My Darling* insists upon his own realistic judgment of life's deficiencies, and carefully avoids any idealization of womanhood. Indeed, Larkin's so-called love-poems are often disappointed reflections on failure, impotence, and helplessness. The poem *Marriages* cynically announces that in many cases marriage is a matter of accepting an undesirable partner in whose company such words as liberty, impulse, and beauty can never be mentioned. The poem addressed by Larkin to his imaginary wife is an unflattering poem. To marry means losing one's freedom, and giving a permanent shape to boredom and failure. In Larkin's poetry, then, love promises "to solve and satisfy", but it also threatens the independence of the individual. Sexual desire is also the subject of the poem *Dry-Point*. Here the physical experience is presented as a struggle accompanied by fear and panic; and the aftermath is one of disappointment and disillusionment. In the poem called *Lines on a Young Lady's Photograph Album*, we come across a series of erotic fantasies about the woman's body, especially when it is "yielded up" and when it is "once open". Like *Dry-Point*, this poem offers a particular statement of sexuality in which an emerging liberal attitude is balanced against traditional ideas of sexual courtship and conduct. However, by the year 1974, when the volume entitled "High Windows" was published, this oblique eroticism in Larkin's poetry had given way to candid and even obscene vocabulary.

xi. *A Critic's Comment Upon the Poems*

As the eminent critic already quoted says: "There is a complex and distinctive relationship between the linguistic structure of the poems and the changing social structure of the post-war years, and this is clearly evident in the extent to which the poems modify traditional lyric forms by incorporating the vocabulary and phrasing of contemporary English speech. The interest and appeal of the poetry for many readers is a consequence of its significant and decisive revamping of English poetic diction."

b) *"The whitsun weddings" (1964)*

i. *The Influence of the Changed Social Climate on These Poems*

The poems in the volume entitled "The Whitsun Weddings" clearly show the influence of the changing social and cultural climate of England in the late nineteen-fifties and the early nineteen-sixties. The

poems show the impact of mass consumerism which had come into vogue during that period. This may be seen in *Here*, the opening poem in this volume, where we come across the following lines:

- ii. *Cheap suits, red kitchen-ware, sharp shoes, iced lollies, Electric mixers, toasters, washers, driers*

This may be seen also in the poem *Mr. Bleaney* in which the speaker disapproves of the radio-set which is described as "the jabbering set" which Mr. Bleaney had compelled his landlady to buy. The same thing is evident in the poem *Afternoons* in which there is a reference to the new recreation-ground, the husbands in skilled trades, "an estateful of washing," and the television-set near which lie the albums containing family photographs. Other poems in which we find evidence of mass consumerism include *The Large Cool Store*, *Sunny Prestatyn*, and *Essential Beauty*. The attitudes of the poet in these poems range from cynical resentment to a subdued kind of melancholy, while the language and the syntax modulate with increasing tension between the colloquial and the lyrical. There are also, in these poems, elements of irony and parody as distancing devices of which the poem called *Naturally the Foundation Will Bear Your Expenses* is a conspicuous example. Several poems in this volume have been written in the form of imaginary dialogues. *Mr. Bleaney*, *Dockery and Son*, and *Reference Back* are obvious examples. Certain other poems create an immediate and dramatic impression of colloquial speech as, for instance:

- (i) That Whitsun I was late getting away...
(ii) Two girls came in where I worked.

What proves to be most interesting in the poems of this volume is the dynamic and complex relationship between textual structure and the social circumstances of the time. In fact, the poems in this volume function as social discourse. Several poems here show the new consumerism to be in conflict with the social ideals of the Welfare State. Larkin surely celebrates the affluence of the time but he also feels troubled by the increased materialism which this affluence signified and encouraged. The result is that both integration and alienation greet us in these poems. The motivating impulse behind many of the poems is the search for an unalienated existence. This is clearly the case in *Here*, *Mr. Bleaney*, and *Dockery and Son*. The poem *Here* moves from night to day (towards the rising sun), and from the industrial scene and motor-roads to the fields and the meadows. We get the feeling from this poem that industry had begun to overshadow the landscape in England; but there is also a faint suggestion of England's industrial heritage. As for the technical side of this poem, we find here an abundance of compound nouns and adjectives, and a tumbling catalogue of objects.

- iii. *Differences of Class and of Culture, Depicted in These Poems*

Differences of class and of culture are very much in prominence in the poems of this volume. The poem *Here* depicts a restlessness arising not only from different conceptions of place but also from an implied contrast between the solitary spectator and the collective lives of those whom he describes in the poem. Similarly the poem *Mr. Bleaney* depicts in a dramatic manner the cultural differences not only between the new tenant (the poet) and his predecessor (*Mr. Bleaney*), but also between the tenant and the landlady. Technically, the poem's colloquial effects derive from strongly marked pauses (the use of caesura) and rapid enjambment within and between the stanzas. The chief contrast in the poem is between the intellectual interests of the speaker and the manual work which Mr. Bleaney used to do. The term "Bodies" stands for a factory which manufactured car-bodies. The use of this term indicates that Mr. Bleaney was a worker in such a factory. Differences of class and of culture are evident in the very manner in which the speaker proceeds to describe the life-style of Mr. Bleaney. In the poem *Home is So Sad*, we witness a deserted room: Look at the pictures and the cutlery. The music in the piano stool. That vase..... The widow in the poem *Love Songs in Age* finds her songs while "looking for something else". What the songs contain is an ideal of love: mStill promising to solve and satisfy, And set unchangeably in order. In Larkin's view, human aspirations to something better are always frustrated. The Inevitability of Death for All Classes of Society

The poem *Nothing to be Said* implies that life for all classes of society and at all levels of culture is ultimately the same because all life inevitably ends in death. From this point of view, the lives of "cobble-close families in mill-towns" are really no different from the lives of the "nomads among stones" or from those of "small-statured tribes." All human activity—work, play, and prayer—is darkened by the shadow of death. The stubborn fact of death seems to nullify any thoughts of a better life. In the poem *Selves the Man*, a comparison between two kinds of life-style seems to reveal essential differences, but in the end proves very, little. In the poem *Days*, an over-confident assertion of what we do with time shifts into a more sombre reflection with the insistent question: "Where can we live but days?" At the end we are told that asking such existential questions would' intrude upon the lives of the priest and the doctor who are ultimately responsible for our spiritual and physical welfare. *Dockery and Son* is also a meditation on alternative ways of living. The alternatives are to have a wife and a son, and to have no wife and therefore no son. People are swayed by fashion and habit rather than by any ideas and inclinations of their own. At the end, however, this difference between the poet himself and *Dockery* is reduced to a minimum by the thought of old

age and death which inevitably must come to both of them. Unhappiness and death are the fate of almost everyone and every class of society. The young couples in the poem *Afternoons* find that something is pushing them "to the side of their own lives." In the poem *Ambulances* the impossibility of escaping from disease and death is emphasized. The poem *Faith Healing* complains that "all is wrong," and expresses scepticism about the practices of an American evangelist with 'he concluding phrase: "and all time has disproved."

iv. *The Title Poem of This Volume*

The title poem of this volume had its origin in a railway journey which Larkin made from Oxford to Hull. The breadth and energy of this poem result partly from its search for coherence and unity not only among the changing landscapes of post-war England but among the lives of the people who live there. The poem makes an extended use of the urban pastoral perspective to impose a sense of unity and continuity upon geographical and historical divisions. In this poem an "important idea is the writer's recognition that weddings are moments of painful loss as well as of joyous celebration. Marriage is like "a happy funeral" and "a religious wounding". However, the specific occasion of this poem was Whitsun (or Pentecost) as described in the New Testament. Whitsun, therefore, serves here as a symbol of unity and coherence, and has a secular rather than any narrow religious significance.

c) *"High windows" (1974)*

i. *A Close Link Between These Poems and the Social Conditions*

The poems in this volume proved to be very provocative and disturbing to many people in England not only because of their contents but also because of their style and technique. These poems record the author's impressions of the breakdown of the ideas of social unity and coherence in England, and they also provide evidence of what seemed to be the fractured linguistic style of the author. Between 1964 and 1967 England passed through an acute economic crisis. Larkin's ironic poem *Homage to a Government* recognizes the economic crisis but interprets it in terms of the idleness and the greed of the people. The poem *Going, Going* depicts the environmental deterioration going on in England of the time, and expresses the poet's fear that England would become the "first slum of Europe." But here again the real cause of the misfortune is money, with the auctioneer's cry of "going, going" to suggest that the countryside was being sold off. In its anxiety about the environment, this poem makes a cynical approach to the whole modernizing and commercializing ethic of successive post-war governments in England. Although Larkin's later poems have been thought to be deeply conservative in their outlook, yet the political tradition to which his poetry

clings is that of liberal humanism. Thus the poem *Show Saturday* upholds the social value of the annual agricultural show. This poem gathers its momentum by assembling the speaker's various impressions of the events of one whole day. The sheer amount of detail contributes emphatically to the significance with which the agricultural display is endowed in the final stanza. In this stanza we find an alliterative and hyphenated collection of miscellaneous people and things: The men with hunters, dog-breeding wool-defined women, Children all swaddle-swank, mug-faced middle-aged wives...The poem called *Vers de Societe* refuses to recognize any easy distinction between creative solitude and social obligation, but at the same time it succeeds in discarding its own hardened attitude. The poem opens with a crude dismissal of "company": My wife and I have asked a crowd of craps To come and waste their time and ours: At the end, however this same company seems preferable to meditating on "failure and remorse." Growing old makes companionship more desirable and more necessary. The poem *Sad Steps* invokes a symbolist idiom: "Lozenge of love! Medallion of art!" But this attitude is quickly dismissed because, as very often in this volume of poems, the moral urge drives away the aesthetic impulse.

ii. *A Freer Attitude Towards Sex*

In *These Poems* The poems in this volume express a much freer attitude towards sex. Already permissiveness had given way to sexual inhibitions in England; and Larkin acknowledges this fact in the following ironic lines of the poem *Annus Mirabilis*.

Sexual intercourse began In nineteen sixty-three (Which was rather late for me) Between the end of the Chatterley ban And the Beatles' first L.P. The assertion in the poem that life was never better than In nineteen sixty-three is diluted by the speaker's regret that he himself arrived on the scene too late, and also by the rhetoric of the middle stanza. The suggestion that "life became a brilliant breaking of the bank" is just one of many money metaphors in this volume of poems. These metaphors represent Larkin's cynical reaction to the economic mismanagement of the time in Britain.

The poem *High Windows* is an ironic tribute to the sexual freedom of the nineteen-sixties, though the closing lines of this poem lift it beyond irony to a more intense, though puzzling level. The speaker's observation, "I know this is paradise," and his exaggerated view of endless happiness anticipate the poem's stylistic and rhetorical transition. The poem suggests the idea of a place inaccessible to language, a place where ultimate meaning resides: "The sun-comprehending glass, and beyond it, the deep blue air." The remoteness of high windows sums up that distant imaginary region, but the intervening glass of the window-panes also marks the limits of vision. The poem visualizes some bright element of existence, but its final

bright image is one of extreme yearning rather than of transcendent fulfilment. What gives this poem its impressive modernity is not only its blunt colloquialism but its radical disjunction between word and world. According to one critic, this poem begins as if it were a poem about sex but then it becomes a poem about religion. There is a parallel throughout the poem between the sexual freedom of the new generation and the free-thinking agnosticism of the old generation: No God any more, or sweating in the dark About hell and that.....

In the end, both are found to be an illusory notion of freedom. According to another critic, beyond the immediate concern with sex and religion, there is also a political dimension to this poem. The poem is in keeping with the ideas of liberal politics. Larkin recognizes oppression, and yet conceives of freedom in individual and imaginative terms. Similarly it is a combination of liberal humanism and agnostic feeling which gives to the poem *The Building* a special prominence in this volume ("*High Windows*"). Some other Concerns in the Poems of This Volume Furthermore, this volume shows an unusual interest in moments of historical change or imagined scenes from the past. Such poems as *The Card-Players*, *How Distant*, and *Living* explore the values and beliefs of contrasting social groups, but also go back in their search for something elemental and lasting in human existence. Besides, anxieties about a culture apparently dominated by money pervade the later poems, as has already been indicated in the remarks about the poems *Homage to a Government* and *Going, Going*. The poem having the title of *Money* is wholly and purely a statement of alienation. Two Poems Without Any Element of Conflict in Them Two of Larkin's later poems are characterized by an intense elegiac lyricism. These are *Dublinese* and *The Explosion*. The imaginative release in these two poems is not into some nihilistic element but into a vision of social solidarity. There is no conflict in these poems between the individual and society, or between the disillusioned intelligence of the poet and the urgent demands of other people. These are poems profoundly concerned with social ideals and beliefs. In the ultimate analysis the values of Larkin's poetry are deeply in opposition to the rigid monetarism and economic individualism which came to dominate the late nineteen-seventies.

IV. CONCLUSION

Before Larkin moved to Hull, he wrote and published *The North Ship* (1946) and a pamphlet, *XX Poems* (1951), which he published himself. The former book is widely considered to reflect the poet's early influences, W. H. Auden and W. B. Yeats; the latter, his emergent mature voice. "I felt for the first time," he said, "that I was speaking for myself." In his next work, *The Less Deceived* (1955), the poet expressed his lifelong need to expose false ideals and illusions. *The Whitsun*

Weddings (1964) has been said to express the prosperity of Britain's post-war mass culture and is colored by a wide range of tones. In *High Windows* (1974), the poet, ever cynical and introspective, had now entered middle-age and was poised to look at death, or, as he wrote in the final lines of "*High Windows*," eternity. After *High Windows* Larkin wrote no new poetry except for the famous "*Aubade*." *Required Writing* (1983) is a compilation of prose written between 1955 and 1982. One who could not "live a day without jazz," Larkin contributed music reviews to the *Daily Telegraph*, which were collected in *All What Jazz* (1970). His two novels, *Jill* (1946) and *A Girl in Winter* (1947), featuring naive, female protagonists, were for Larkin "oversized poems." *Collected Poems* (1988) appeared posthumously, edited by fellow "Movement" poet Anthony Thwaite, who decided to include some of Larkin's unpublished verse to demonstrate his editorial ability, his development as an artist, and problems he solved over days, months, or even a decade, in various verses.

Pithy, wry and understated, Philip Larkin was the master chronicler of the ordinary, suburban human experience, using the rhythms of everyday speech to memorabl eeffect.

REFERENCES RÉFÉRENCES REFERENCIAS

1. Banville, John (2006). *Homage to Philip Larkin*, *The New York Review of Books*, 23 February 2006.
2. Bloomfield, B. C. (2002), *Philip Larkin A Bibliography 1933–1994*, London: British Library,
3. Bowen, Phil (2008), *A Gallery to Play To: The Story of the Mersey Poets*, Liverpool: Liverpool University Press,
4. Bradford, Richard (2004), *First Boredom Then Fear: The Life of Philip Larkin*, London: Peter Owen,
5. Brennan, Maeve (2002), *The Philip Larkin I Knew*, Manchester: Manchester University Press,
6. Chatterjee, Sisir Kumar (2006), *Philip Larkin: Poetry That Builds Bridges*, New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers,
7. Cooper, Stephen (2004), *Philip Larkin: Subversive Writer*, Brighton: Sussex Academic Press,
8. Corcoran, Neil, ed. (2007), *The Cambridge Companion to Twentieth-Century English Poetry*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,
9. Crawford, Robert (2000), *Devolving English Literature*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press,
10. Gilroy, John (April 2008), *Larkin in the Dock*, "About Larkin", *The Newsletter of the Philip Larkin Society* (Hull) (25): 25–27,
11. Goodman, Richard (October 1997), *'My particular talents': Philip Larkin's 42-year career as a Librarian*, "About Larkin", *The Newsletter of the Philip Larkin Society* (Hull)
12. Hartley, Jean (1989), *Philip Larkin, the Marvell Press and Me*, Manchester: Carcanet Press, Hawkes, Terence (1994), *Textual Practice*, Cambridge: Routledge,

13. Ingelbien, Raphael (2002), *Misreading England: Poetry and Nationhood Since the Second World War*, Amsterdam: Rodopi,
14. James, Clive. An Affair of Sanity: Philip Larkin, *The Observer*, 25 November 1983.
15. Johnson, Matthew (2007), *Ideas of Landscape: An Introduction*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing,
16. Moran, Eugene V, (2002), *A People's History of English and American Literature*, New York: Nova,
17. Motion, Andrew (1993), *Philip Larkin: A Writer's Life*, London: Faber and Faber,
18. Motion, Andrew (2005). "Philip Larkin" in Bayley, John and Carey, Leo (eds). *The Power of Delight: A Lifetime in Literature: Essays, 1962–2002*. W. W. Norton & Company.
19. Orwin, James (April 2008), *Serious Earth: Philip Larkin's American Tape (The Watershed recording)*, "About Larkin", *The Newsletter of the Philip Larkin Society* (Hull) (25): 20–24, Osborne, John (2008), *Larkin, Ideology and Critical Violence: A Case of Wrongful Conviction*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan,
20. Paulin, Tom (1990). "Into the Heart of Englishness," *The Times Literary Supplement*, July 1990, reproduced in Regan, Stephen (ed.) (1997). *Philip Larkin*. Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 160–177.
21. Powell, Neil (1980), *Carpenters of Light*, Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield,
22. Regan, Stephen (1997), *Philip Larkin*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan,
23. Sheppard, Robert (2005), *The Poetry of Saying: British Poetry and its Discontents, 1950–2000*, Liverpool: Liverpool University Press,
24. Stojkovic, Tijana (2006), *Unnoticed in the Casual Light of Day: Philip Larkin and the Plain Style*, New York: CRC Press,
25. Swarbrick, Andrew (1995), *Out of Reach: The Poetry of Philip Larkin*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan,
26. Thwaite, Anthony, ed. (1982), *Larkin at Sixty*, London: Faber and Faber,
27. Tuma, Keith, ed. (2001), *Anthology of Twentieth-Century British and Irish Poetry*, New York: Oxford University Press, **Audio and television**
28. Courtenay, Tom (author and reader) (21 April 2005). *Pretending to be Me: Philip Larkin, a Portrait* (Audio CD). Time Warner AudioBooks.
29. Philip Larkin, John Betjeman, Patrick Garland (director) (12 December 1964). "Down Cemetery Road". *Monitor*. episode 140. Hull, England. BBC. BBC One.