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A Study on Life and Works of Philip Larkin

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Abstract – One of the reasons Philip Larkin is maligned so harshly is because he is so easily understood, or at least appears to be so without exerting much effort to glean any deeper meaning from his poems. There is no respite from the drudgery of everyday life that can be found in literature for a short time in his work. It is Philip Larkin's life and work that are the subject of this essay.

Key Words – The Movement, Philip Larkin, English Poetry, Life, Work

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INTRODUCTION

This body of work by Larkin is one of the most technically brilliant and resonantly beautiful poetry collections written in English in the last 25 years (1975–29).

After realising that his poems were lacking, Larkin decided to become a disciple of Thomas Hardy. It was only after Larkin happened upon Thomas Hardy's work by accident, in an essay from 1968, which the writer began to feel more confident in his own voice and writing style. Hardy considers smiling to be a fundamental emotion that connects one compassionately with other human beings. To Larkin, being sad is to become aware of one's own humanity as well as the humanity of those around you. The melancholy, the misfortune, the frustrating, and the failing aspects of life were well-known to Hardy. Hardy saw the value in suffering from two perspectives, and Larkin recognises this:

As a first step in proving that Ilardy's sensitivity to suffering and awareness of the causes of pain were correlated with superior spiritual character, he believed it to be the case.

English Poetry in the Works of Philip Larkin (1986), page 25 [1]

Larkin also agreed with Hardy on the importance of sadness and suffering in poetry as an essential part of the process of adolescent growth in poetry. He believed that spiritual growth could only be achieved through this kind of maturation. Throughout his life, Hardy relied on the randomness of everyday life and reality to supply the raw material for his poetry. In the same way, Larkin honed his poetic craft by drawing inspiration for his work from the same source: his immediate surroundings and the truth of them. [2-4] As Hardy taught him, poets should be able to write about the world in which they live using the language of the culture in which they are immersed. Liars manipulated him into feeling instead of writing. As a result, Larkin regarded sadness as a fundamental human emotion and a touchstone for all other emotions.

LIFE AND WORK

Philip Arthur Larkin was born on August 9, 1922, and had a very ordinary upbringing in England. His parents, Sydney and Eva Larkin, appear to have been nice, middle-class people with no more than the usual amount of child-rearing capacity. He was the younger of two siblings-his sister Kitty was ten years older-and his parents, Sydney and Eva Larkin, appear to have been nice, middle-class people with no more than the usual amount of child-rearing capacity. Sydney Larkin, his father, was the Treasurer of Coventry City Corporation and a highly intellectual man who seems to have had an equal interest in American jazz music. Philip Larkin was also influenced by his love of jazz. But he had no lasting affection or allegiance to the steady keel of his upbringing, nor to his parents or sister, as he made apparent in later years. [2]

Philip Larkin, a timid, isolated young man with a stutter he could never completely overcome, did not enjoy his school years at Coventry's King Henry VIII Grammar School. But it was here that his literary skills blossomed. He co-edited and wrote for the school paper, "The Convention," in his final year, and had his first publishable poetry, "Ultimatum," published in a national weekly, "The Listener," around the same time. It was 1940, and

all young men Philip's age were expected to join and fight for their nation as the Second World War raged. His poor eyesight, however, kept him from serving in the war, and he was allowed to continue his education at St. John's College, where he studied English.

He truly thrived at Oxford, both as a writer and as a social figure. He was acquainted with rising literary luminaries, including Kingsley Arnis, John Wain, Bruce Montgomery, and Alan Ross, and had three poems published in "Oxford Poetry." Kingsley Arnis, who had the greatest impact on him in the development of his work, was a lifelong friend and correspondent. Philip Larkin was able to overcome his shyness and stutter with the help of these pals, revealing himself to be a clever and sharply hilarious man.

Following his graduation with a First Class Honors Degree in 1943, Philip found himself in a bit of a pickle. The Army didn't want him, and he'd been too preoccupied with his literary endeavours to have given any attention to something as dull as professional alternatives. [3]

His parents were kind enough to put up with their educated, jobless son, but the son was certain that he would not prolong his stay in the well of forgotten boredom. He applies for nearly every position that comes along, and he eventually lands a job as a librarian at the Wellington Public Library in Shropshire. It turned out to be an excellent career option for him. [4]

Larkin's passion for jazz led to his being assigned to write jazz music reviews for the Daily Telegraph during this period. "All That Jazz: A Record Diary" was eventually released as a collection of these. He also authored a number of articles, which were eventually published as' Required Writing: various pieces 1955–1982, 'and kept a lot of communication with a lot of people, which was also published. [5]

In 1973, The Oxford Book of Twentieth Century English Verse, a collection of poems he meticulously curated, was published to widespread acclaim. In 1984, the W. H. Smith Literary Award was granted for his required writing, and he had already received the CBE, the German Shakespeare-Priest, and the Library Association Honorary Fellowship by that time. He would have become British Poet Laureate as well, if the media circus that comes with the job hadn't put him off.

Despite his public accomplishments, Philip Larkin insisted on being a very private person. As a result, media misconceptions about lonely and reclusive peculiarities arose. This wasn't the case at all. He had a huge number of close friends and was a highly efficient librarian, a profession that required him to supervise a large staff of over 100 workers as well as have daily interaction with a large number of other people.

In terms of marriage, he believed that two people might live as foolishly as one. As a result, he never married. He was a womaniser, a misogynist, and obviously not a good citizen in many respects, yet the three key ladies in his life stayed faithful to him to the end. Monica Jones, a professor, was Larkin's lifelong partner and inspiration. She had a vacation home with Larkin at Haydon Bridge, where they spent many lovely summers together.

On December 2, 1985, Philip Larkin died of oesophageal cancer. He was 63 years old at the time. His secretary and former girlfriend torched all of his personal journals as per his desires.

Early work by Larkin indicates Yeats' influence, although his subsequent poetic identity was mostly inspired by Thomas Hardy. He is well-known for his use of colloquial language in his poems, which is partially offset by a comparable use of archaic words. His poetry is highly organised but never stiff, thanks to his mastery of enjambment and rhyme. Death and fatalism were frequent themes and topics in his poetry, as seen in the poem "Aubade." The Less Deceived, published in 1955, established Larkin as a rising poet. For a period, he was linked with "The Movement." [6]

The Whitsun Weddings, published in 1964, cemented his fame. The title poem is a masterful portrayal of England as viewed from a train during Whitsun. He composed "Going, Going" in 1972, a poem that conveys the romantic fatalism in his image of England that was characteristic of his final years. He predicts the abolition of the countryside and expresses an idealised feeling of national cohesion and identity in it. "I simply believe it will happen soon," the poem concludes with a doom-laden sentence. Despite the fact that his final book, High Windows, was published in 1974, it contains a number of his best-known works, including "This Be The Verse," "The Explosion," and the title poem.Also from that collection, "Annus Mirabilis" (year of marvel) is the oft-quoted comment that sexual intercourse started in 1963. ("rather late for me").

Aside from poetry, Larkin also wrote two novels, Jill (1964) and A Girl in Winter (1947), as well as many articles. Larkin was also a key figure in the revaluation of Thomas Hardy's poetry, which had hitherto been overlooked in favour of his work as a writer. Hardy obtained the longest selection (1973) in Larkin's eccentric and contentious collection, The Oxford Book of Twentieth-Century English Verse.

Larkin, on the other hand, was a prominent critic of modernism in contemporary art and literature; his scepticism is at its most nuanced and illuminating

in Required Writing, a collection of his book reviews and essays; it is at its most enraged and polemical in his introduction to his collected jazz reviews, All What Jazz, 126 record-review columns he wrote for the Daily Telegraph between 1961 and 1971, which contains an attack on modern jazz that is was offered the position of Poet Laureate, but he rejected it. [7]

Larkin started composing poetry as a youth and sold his first one to the Listener when he was 19 years old. At Oxford, he continued to write, with some of his work appearing in the Cherwell, the undergraduate journal, and William Bell's Poetry from Oxford in Wartime (1944). Fortune Press, which had published Bell's anthology, requested Larkin to submit a collection of his poetry based on those poems. As a consequence, The North Ship was born (1945). In The North Ship, however, Larkin's prose is often unmusical, repetitive, and full of romantic symbolism. His grammar is excessively sophisticated and his rhymes are much too predictable. He is excessive and unfocused. Furthermore, the poems show very little of his individuality. Larkin's posturing in The North Ship shows no sign of his becoming England's most prominent postwar poet, despite the lack of formal stuffiness one would anticipate from an Oxford poet. His themes of lost love are unmet, ambiguous, and dismal, and there is none of the sarcastic wit that distinguishes his mature writing. He was so dissatisfied with the poems that he refused to let the anthology be reissued in 1966.

Jill (1946) and A Girl In Winter (1947) were Larkin's first works of fiction (1947). Jill took about a year to make and is dedicated to his friend Amis.It is based on their time at Oxford. The protagonist of Larkin's story is John Kemp, a quiet scholarship student from a northern industrial region who is inexperienced. Kemp, according to James Gindin in his book Postwar British Fiction, is the earliest example of the displaced working-class hero popular in British literature in general and in Movement novels in particular.Kemp is torn between two worlds, feeling alienated and lonely. Kemp's personal dissatisfaction is typified by his closest Oxford companions: his unlikable womaniser and rugby player roommate, Christopher Warner, and an ill-mannered, sulky young scholar named Whitbread, who shares Kemp's proletariat upbringing. Kemp's seclusion is exacerbated when his village of Huddlesford is bombed. Despite the fact that his parents' home is still standing, he feels cut off from his history and the culture that raised him, so he creates an imaginary girlfriend called Jill. He sends her letters and creates a journal and a short narrative in her name, but when he meets a young girl in a bookstore, he tries to make his fantasy a reality. Her name, Gillian, is similar to that of his ideal girl, but she refuses to be called Jill. She is also Warner's girlfriend's cousin, and she is just fifteen years old.

Kemp is obsessed with his dream and the lady who might make it come true. He invites her to a sumptuous tea in the hopes of impressing her. Despite the fact that rationing is in force, Kemp is able to put together an enticing feast of cakes, tarts, and jellies. However, when her relative forbids Gillian from having tea with Kemp, he becomes inebriated. He discovers her party and demands a kiss, fueled by drink. With the aid of others, Warner knocks him down and tosses him in the school fountain. Kemp suffers from pneumonia as a consequence of his dousing and is unable to complete the semester. With his parents, he returns to Huddles Ford. Kemp learns the first lesson of maturity, that one has little control over one's own life, and is dismayed and disillusioned. [8]

A Girl Ill in Winter, albeit less corruc than Jill, expresses comparable thoughts. The composition, originally titled The Kingdom of Winter, was conceived by Larkin as a prose poem. It follows Katherine Lind, a 22-year-old immigrant from an undisclosed European nation, through one day in her life. Katherine is a librarian with little prestige, and she is only given odd duties due to her ethnicity. Her teenage daydream of a visit with Robin Fennel, a classmate, and his family takes up most of the narrative. Katherine had a crush on Robin as a youngster, but she had the impression he didn't reciprocate. Years later, as a soldier, he sneaks away from his post with the intention of sleeping with Katherine. He crudely pressures her sexually while inebriated. She is not deluded by any illusions of love for him since she does not resist him, and she starts to believe that life no longer contains any hope of romantic satisfaction for her.

Jill had a lot of local success in Oxford, and A Girl in Winter was even more well-liked. Larkin attempted to write a third book over the following five years, but he was unable to complete it. According to Kingsley Amis, whom Larkin consulted in depth about the work, it was a seriocomic description of the developing relationship of a rising young executive in the motor business, Sam Wagstaff, with a working-class lady who he knocks down in his automobile going home from the workplace. Though Larkin's novels were never as well received as his poetry, his interest in fiction must have prepared him in some way for the attention to detail and clarity expected by Movement poems. Larkin, ever the reductionist, differentiated the two genres succinctly: "A very rudimentary distinction between novels and poetry is that novels are about other people and poetry is about oneself," he said.

In January 1948, Larkin returned to poetry, submitting a book called "In the Grip of Light" to Faber. Maybe T. S. Eliot, then an editor at Faber, may or may not have seen the manuscript, but it was rejected within a month. In 1950, Larkin relocated to Belfast and started dealing in his trade. In addition to working at Queen's University, he

spent two hours each day writing, then drinking and playing cards. [9]

Poems, Larkin's second book, was published at his own cost in 1951. He only produced 100 copies, and the book attracted little attention. He sent review copies to a small group of journalists and reviewers, but at a time when postal rates had recently been raised. He used inadequate postage on the books, and many of them never made it to their intended recipients. Copies did, however, make their way to D. 1. Enright and G. S. Fraser, who both complimented Larkin's writing; Fraser included Larkin in his Springtime Anthology (1953). Despite being mostly disregarded, 13 of the 20 poems formed the basis of Larkin's debut book, The Less Deceived (1955), which received widespread critical acclaim.

Poems are definitely a transitional piece, written between the juvenile The North Ship and the accomplished The Less Deceived. It was in this collection that Larkin started to renounce Yeats' melody in favour of a more personal poem, adopting Hardy as a spiritual inspiration. From Hardy, he learnt to appreciate the mundane and to concentrate on moral matters. He started to write more from personal experience and in his own dialect, traits that would later enhance Larkin's most famous poetry. In XX Poems, Larkin discovers his own voice and bases his poems on the first-person "I." The contemplative narrator and the focus on observable elements-an empty hotel yard, damp cobblestones, a hazy sky-reveal Larkin's journey away from the obscure symbolism of previous poems and toward a more conversational poetic in "IX: Waiting for breakfast, as she combed her hair."

The poem was requested by George Hartley, editor of Marvell Press, to be included in the second edition of The Less Deceived, but Larkin rejected it. Instead, he included it in the reprinted version of The North Ship.

Larkin's pals started publishing in the Spectator and other publications, as well as in Oscar Mellor's Fantasy Press pamphlets; Larkin's collection of five poems (1954) was number 21 in the series. However, Larkin was not mentioned in the Spectator's "In the Movement" piece. The Less Deceived, published by Marvell Press the following year, received critical acclaim. Larkin submitted the typescript under the title "Various Poems," but Hartley was persuaded by Larkin to change the title to "Deceptions," a line from one of the volume's poems. The title, The Less Deceived, is appropriate since the book's main topic is self-deception, which was also at the heart of Jill and A Girl in Winter.

Another major topic in The Less Deceived and Larkin's two subsequent volumes is the problems of romance. In one poem, "Maiden Name," a woman's maiden name is portrayed as a symbol of her inability to find love.In another, "Places, Loved Ones," Larkin considers the difficulty of waiting for that one unique person whose love may make life redemptive and worthwhile. Finding her would free the poem's narrator from blame for his amatory failures, while refusing to love implies acknowledgment of personal responsibility. Are love-fancies the source of disappointment, or do they serve as a catalyst for letting go of self-restraint from time to time?

Larkin never married, and his poetry reflects a great deal of apprehension about the chances of sexual fulfilment and marital pleasure. I don't want to come out as nave, but I'm frequently perplexed as to why people marry. I believe they hate being alone much more than I do. Living with someone and being in love, I believe, is a tough thing in and of itself, since it nearly always entails placing yourself at the disposal of someone else and rating them higher than yourself.

The speaker's pragmatism clashes with his impulsive, idealistic side in Larkin's greatest poems.

"Because Larkin painstakingly represents his speakers," says Bruce Martin.

In "Church Going," possibly the most iconic Movement poem, Larkin's use of the self-critical character reaches a pinnacle. It was one of Larkin's contributions to New Lines, and it is the collection's most striking poem. The debate in "Church Going" isn't about whether or not to believe in God; rather, it's about what will replace God in modern awareness. Larkin implicitly acknowledges society's post-Christian state, yet he is unconcerned with the lack of God. "The days when one might claim to be the priest of a mystery are gone: nowadays, mystery signifies either ignorance or hokum."

In "Church Going," Larkin plays an agnostic bicycle who has stopped to visit a desolate rural church, wearing his usual mask of scepticism and wryness ("bored, uneducated"). Even God is absent from the poem, as the narrator turns sarcastic once inside the church, dropping an Irish sixpence in the collection box and climbing the pulpit to give a fake sermon. However, as the poem progresses, he grows more respectful. Even Larkin's language is respectful and dignified. The narrator's attendance at church does not connect him to God, but it does connect him to humanity. By perceiving a positive and social "hunger in himself to be more serious," he dispels isolating cynicism (Larkin CP, 98). The fact that this movement, this transformation in thinking, took place in a free thinker adds to the message's impact and appeal. The irony is definitely Larkinian: the church is significant because it sanctifies mankind, and the speaker's sardonic approach allows him to make sense of the world. As the first-person singular pronoun gives

way to the plural form in the last verse, he advances from solitude to soli darity.

Age has received little attention, maybe because, despite its appearance in The Less Deceived, it so clearly contrasts with the tone and emotions that seem to dominate this seminal book. Several other poems in The Less Deceived, on the other hand, combine a concern with ageing with technical elements that go back to Hardy. Skin, for example, has a more Hardyesque feel to it, both in terms of rhythm and resignation:

You can't always be obedient in your daily attire.

That unfakable young surface.

(Larkin, Collected Poems)

The initial words allude to Hardy's "1 glance into my glass" ('I look into my glass and behold my withering skin') in terms of topic, metre, and partially rhyme. 10. Like "Skin," it shows resignation while admitting sorrow for Hardy's young survivals in old age (the "throbbing of noontide" that "shakes this delicate frame at night") and for Larkin's squandered possibilities (the "brash festivals" he couldn't locate). [10]

In his 1965 introduction to the issue of his early collection, The North Ship, Larkin wrote of his youthful obsession with Yeats:

Every night after supper, before opening my large dark green manuscript book, I used to limber up by turning the pages of the 1933 plum-colored Macmillan edition, which stopped at "A Woman Young and Old" and meant that I always absorbed the harsher last poems. (Required Writing, p.29)

(Larkin, Collected Poems)

Larkin's familiarity with Yeats' harsher poems of ageing is discernible in what he wrote in the 1960s and 1970s, but criticism has never fully explored those new connections, so widespread is the belief that Yeats' influence underpins the Romantic and/or symbolist side of Larkin that he had tried to suppress when he turned to Hardy. Seamus Heaney has made a point of emphasising Larkin's continuing debt to his legendary Irish forefather, but he sees it as a "Yeatsian yearning for a flow of sweetness" that can be sensed under the ironies of Larkin's "anti-heroic, chastening" voice. In Heaney's view, Larkin's connections with the less-than-sweet elder Yeats remain a blind spot. Even the symbolist ideas of High Windows, according to Andrew Motion, are indicators of Yeats' enduring influence. But, apart from Yeats, Larkin had other sources of symbolism. His early studies of French symbolism and Eliot are more plausible origins for his obsession with absence and emptiness. Yeats' understanding of French symbolism was limited, and he was still too much of a Romantic to be lured by Larkin's illusions of absolute emptiness, which may sound like Mallarme at times. Yeats' symbolism was mostly based on esoteric codes and archetypal symbols, which he could use to further his nationalist or self-mythologizing goals. Such symbols are diametrically opposed to the "nothings" and "nowheres" of Larkin's "High Windows," which seek a purity in which all such concerns are rarefied into a "deep blue air that reveals/nothing" (Collected Poems, p. 165). The symbols created by Yeats' imagination also served as a method of transcending decay and mortality, providing an alternative to ageing and death. On the other hand, Larkin's images of nothingness foreshadow death's ultimate emptiness; the "absence" of a location is "cleansed" of the poet's presence (Collected Poems, p. 49).

The Yeats who appeared later in Larkin's poetry was neither a Romantic, a symbolist, nor the baffling, modernist bogeyman of Larkin's more well-known denunciations. If Yeats' influence on Larkin's writing became stronger following his explicit rejection in 1946, it was mostly due to his forthright and haunting pronouncements about ageing and the price paid for poetic privilege. Surprisingly, Yeats returned to replace Hardy in Larkin's most intimate work as a poet of human experience, particularly ageing.

CONCLUSION:

In the stories people tell about their own lives and the worlds they inhabit, one can often see how their own sense of self-expression is manifested in the material world, resulting in a unique view of the universe. It is through narratives that we can see the connection between people "a world outside of ourselves and the consciousness that resides within it. Individuals are also affected by this in a variety of ways "As well as being a place where consciousness manifests and manifests itself, one's own bodies serve as a source of consciousness. Consciousness comes to us in many different ways, and the body is one of those ways. The life and work of English poet Philip Larkin are examined in relation to these themes in this paper. The paper examines Larkin's life-story, which he wrote for himself and then physically inhabited, as a mode of cognition that makes experience meaningful.

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