

international conference in the work of Philip Larkin.  
Cottingham: The Lawns Centre, 1997.

Ellmann, Richard and Robert O'clair, eds, The Norton Anthology Of Modern Poetry  
New York: W.W Norton and Company ,Inc, 1988.

King, Peter R., Nine contemporary Poets . London:  
Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1979

Larkin, Philip. Collected Poems, ed. Anthony Thwaite  
.London: Faber and Faber,  
1988

Morrison, Blake. The Movement: English Poetry and  
Fiction of the 1950s

Cambridge: The University press, 1980.

Petch, Simon. The Art of Philip Larkin Sydney: Sydney  
University press, 1981.

W.W.W.Ondix.com, Imagery.

21 Richard Ellman and Robert O' Clair, eds. The Norton Anthology of Modern Poetry ,(New York: W.W Norton and Company ,Inc., 1988), p.1058.

22 Ibid., p.1059

23 Ibid.

24 King, p. ,34.

25 Ibid.

26 Ibid., p.35.

27 Ibid., p.37.

### Bibliography

Baker, Stephen. "Landscape and Nationhood" as quoted in  
New Larkins or Old .irst

4 Larkin, The collected poems , ed. Anthony Thwaite, (London: Faber and Faber ,1988), p.173.

5 Stephen baker, "Landscape and Nationhood" as quoted in New Larkins or Old first international conference in the work of Philip Larkin (Cottingham: The Lawns Centre,1997),p.3.

6 Ibid.

7 W.W.W.Ondix.com, Imagery, p.1.

8 Ibid.

9 Ibid. ,P.2

10 Ibid.

11 Ibid., p.3

12 Ibid.

13 Peter R. King., Nine contemporary Poets , (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1979),p.27.

14 Ibid.

15 Ibid., p.28.

16 Ibid.

17 Ibid.

18 Ibid., p.29.

19 Ibid.

20 Ibid., p.30.

The journey is a symbol of the change that is taking place in the lives of the couples. "Church Going" refers to the need for some symbolic faces for life's most serious moments with its attendant rituals and this is the subject of 'Whitsun Weddings'. In some ways it seems that Larkin can see all sorts of social rituals as bearers; of a traditional sense of community and harmony. The poet knows that such occasions cannot entirely overcome time's insidious attack upon individuals and societies but nevertheless they are to be welcomed and celebrated as:

Something people do,  
Not noticing how  
time's rolling smithy-smoke  
Shadows much greater  
gestures; something they share  
That breaks ancestrally  
each year into  
Regenerate union. Let  
it always be there.<sup>27</sup>

### Notes

1 Blake Morrison, The Movement: English Poetry and Fiction of the 1950s , (Cambridge: The University press,1980),p.178.

2 Simon Petch, The Art of Philip Larkin, ( Sydney: Sydney University press,1981),p.21.

3 Ibid. p.132.

In parodies of  
fashion, heels and veils,  
All posed  
irresolutely, watching us go,  
As if out on  
the end of an event  
Waving  
goodbye  
To something  
that survived it.<sup>26</sup>

The attitudes and feelings of younger sisters and girlfriends of the bride are sketched in—their mixture of sharing the bride's happiness and the re-aroused anticipations of their own marriages – together with the innocent but clumsy attempts to look fashionable and their unsureness on such a formal occasion. Similarly the fathers' hearty attempts to make things go with a swing, the mothers' proudly shouted joys and the relations smutty jokes are captured in the fourth stanza. They give the solidity and reality to the scene. The final lines show the domination of the poet's personal interpretation of events. As the various newly married couples are blended into a shared harmony in their brief journey, their common hopes of fulfillment are blessed by the narrator's affirmation. The tone of detachment shows unsolemn prayer for their future. As the train approaches London, he thinks of the city 'spread out in the sun/Its postal districts packed like squares of wheat'

The first stanzas are a wholly successful reenactment not only of a train journey but also of a complete panorama of English rural and city landscapes. The Whitsun heat, the holiday mood, the sights and smells of a hot afternoon – even the reek of a hot carriage cushions – are caught in a series of snapshot details taken from the train window. The very moment of the train is caught as the scene flows from the backs of houses, "a street/Of blinding windscreens and the smell of the fish –dock in the city, through the 'level drifting breadth/Of Lincolnshire farmland/to the 'Canals with floatings of industrial froth'. The 'slow and stopping curve southwards' is perfectly realized in a description of scenes which capture the variety of English landscape from the terraced housing, suburbs and industrial buildings of old cities, the featureless faces of new towns ('An approached with acres of dismantled cars' Odeon went, past, a cooling tower, /And someone running up to bowl') to the farms of rural England.<sup>25</sup>

In the third stanza the wedding parties catch the observer's keen eye that he realizes occurring on several station platforms and which are gathered to see off the newly married couples. The details he saw embodying the emotions these weddings trigger in the guests:

...  
grinning and pomaded, girls



the implications of the church in decline and the underlying meaning of what the church has traditionally stood for and might be made to represent in a secular future.

The speculations began in the third stanza, wondering whether churches are going to be merely museums, 'A few cathedrals chronically on show/Their parchment, plate and pyx in locked cases' will be left to moulder as ruins, "Let ...rent-free to rain and sheep," will be ravaged by "Some ruin-bibber, randy for antique". The poet feels that religion is in decline and soon we shall see the last church-goer to seek out the church for its original purpose. While the final two stanzas replacing the ironically possible future visitors by serious questioning. 'Will there always be some who, like the poet himself, cannot help but stop because although they are 'bored, uninformed' and know the old instructionalized religion is dead, nevertheless it comes:

...to this  
cross of ground  
Through suburb  
scrub because it held unspilt  
So long and  
equally what since is found  
Only in  
separation—marriage, and birth,  
And death, and  
thoughts of these—for which was built

this poem the lion-faced sun (an image born of the sun's appearance but also suggesting its fierce heat and its ruling over the whole of life) becomes a source of both delight and awe, two responses almost unique in Larkin's poetry.

The second group of poems, the group that represents the search for the positive view of life like "the Whitsun wedding" and "Church Going" that are just examination of hope and meaning. The first two stanzas of "Church Going" describe an actual visit made by the poet, his own church-going:

Once I'm sure  
there's nothing going on  
I step inside,  
letting the door thud shut.  
Another church:  
matting, seats, and stone,  
And little books  
;sprawling of flowers, cut  
For Sunday,  
brownish now; some brass and stuff  
Up at the holly  
end; the small neat organ;  
And a tense,  
musty, unignorable silence,  
Brewed God  
knows how long. Hatless, I take off  
My cyde-clips in  
awkward reverence.<sup>22</sup>

In the remaining part of the poem it is the opposite side of the title's meaning that is explored –

whole weight of the poem. What normally applies to a human response as a word is transformed here to the inanimate 'brick work' which effectively drenching the scene of the speaker's feelings. Then the final image expresses both the unexpectedness and the transitoriness of the experience. The image which likens the speaker's mood to his childhood moments of brief and inexplicable encounters with adults happiness.<sup>20</sup>

Listening to the jazz music in "For Sidney Beeches" the speaker of the poem experiences another moment of affirmation and happiness in which the music is "greeted as the natural noise of good/Scattering long-haired grief and scored pity"<sup>21</sup>. But the choice of 'scatter' and 'scored' creates a submerge of ambiguity in its suggesting that although the music has the power to overcome grief and express pity, it nevertheless also expresses the suffering which is the source of blue music and is therefore scattered in the notes that are scored for the player (and the experience which is their source is also scored in the player's personality) It is as if the affirmative mood must not be allowed to escape the realities of life.

In "Solar" Larkin to express the positive side. This poem is a brief hymn to the sun that is a "suspended lion face/ spilling at the center / of an unfurnished sky". In the final part of

-is like a sudden visitation of grace to the poet to allow him to enjoy the scene and season without his fully understanding the reasons for such an unexpected accession of delight. In the carefully selected details of description, the translucency of the images and the power of particular keywords, the whole poem moves towards the spontaneity of that last line.<sup>19</sup>

The poem is in two parts, which pivot on the repeated middle lines. The first part is a description of the scene, the moods and feelings of the speaker. While the second part that catches up that mood and sweeps it through the commentary explaining its quality and importance in relation to the speaker. In the description of the lengthening evening and birdsong, the emphasis falls on the light and sound refreshing the scenes-the houses are bathed in a cool serenity of light which suggests a washing clear of winter and the old moods of care being surrendered to the naked open, raw mood of joy suggested by 'fresh-peeled!' This sense of newness and surprise is caught up in the middle lines, which are repeated both to suggest the bird's reiterated call and astonishment of the speaker who can hardly believe in his mood. These lines are the pivot on which the whole harmony of the mood is delicately poised and effectively underline the importance of the preceding astonishing which collects in itself the

But perhaps it is the brief and beautiful lyricism of "Coming" which is one Larkin's rare "epiphanies" (a term used to celebrate the poet's infrequent moments of delight). It is brief enough to quote in full:

On longer energies,  
Light, chill and  
yellow  
Bathes the serene  
Foreheads of hoses.  
A thrush sings,  
Laurel-surrounded  
In the deep bare  
garden,  
Its fresh-peeled voice  
Astonishing the brick  
work,  
It will be spring soon,  
It will be spring  
soon—  
And I, whose  
childhood  
Is a forgotten  
boredom,  
Feel like a child  
Who comes on a scene  
Of adult reconciling,  
And can understand  
nothing  
But the unusual  
laughter,  
And starts to be  
happy.<sup>18</sup>

The momentary grasp of delight at the reaffirmation of spring, of the possibility of new growth—the short intermission of positive meaning

All is the wind

Hunting through  
clouds and forests, thrashing  
My apron and  
the hanging clothes on the line.  
Can it be born,  
this bodyling-forth by wind

Of joy my  
actions turn on, like a thread  
Carrying beads?

16

The immediacy of her happiness is felt in the movement, the 'thrashing' energy, but the simile of the wind is carrying her happiness like a thread carrying beads hints at the frailty of the experience: a thread may easily snap. But, for once, the final image implies a hope of sustaining the dream of happiness, although the interrogative leaves a stander doubts:

Can even death dry up  
These new delighted  
lakes, conclude  
Our kneeling as cattle by  
all-generous waters?  
There is a spirit of  
humble gratitude borne along  
With great joy which is  
rare in this poetry.<sup>17</sup>

Arrows might suggest Cupid's darts; less fancifully, Larkin uses the metaphor of arrows to extend the image of life's being projected from the present into the future. That it is an image of procreation and growth is made clear by the shower.... Rain metaphor of fertility. The journey itself is a metaphor for time and change. The marriage ceremonies are a symbolic expression of change. The poem is a real triumph is in the way in which the shape and feel of expression are precisely rendered.<sup>14</sup>

Larkin's short lyrical poems that express a sense of fulfillment unusual to him are to make frequent use of images drawn from nature to celebrate a sense of power and purpose as in "Wedding Wind", "Coming", "For Sidney Beeches", "Water" and "Solar".

"Wedding Wind" is one of the very early poems (written in 1946), it is a dramatic monologue expressing the feelings of a new bride on waking the morning after her wedding night on the farm she is no share with her new husband. To her it seems as if the whole of nature echoes to the rush of happiness and energetic fulfillment that she now experiences. The poem's success lies in the way the mood of the women washes over the landscape and, in particular, invests the wind with a joyful force whose power to overcome the resistance even the women hardly dare to believe<sup>15</sup>:

similar theme of memory, in the same poem, that "warflight about, like doors". By using the metaphor of a door it helps the reader understand the predicament of not being able to unlock his memories or realizes forgotten dreams. Although on a similar theme the second line given as an example is a simile. This is not strange, as many poets utilize all forms of imagery and often many of them are contained in one poem.

Another highly effective complex symbolist poem is Larkin's "The Whitsun Weddings" (the poem's realistic tone will be explained below). Larkin controls his metaphors well, more startling still is his ability to convey exalted emotional states with astonishing simplicity and accuracy. He uses the conventional elemental symbolism of water and light. "The Whitsun Wedding" concludes with procreative image of rain to suggest how the couples' futures lie before them waiting to burst into life. The prelude to this is set out in the previous verse, "I thought of London spread out in the sun / Its postal district packed like squares of wheat; "<sup>13</sup> The idea of harvest time and spring are eluded to in these: "Which are a time of new life and reproduction" The image of the arrow-shower is complex, rain does not fall in a parabolic curve and what Larkin is asking us to imagine is a flight of arrows which falls out of sight; somewhere in the future as rain.



the scene he describes is brought out strongly by the simplicity of the imagery, "Turning over their failures/By some bed of lobelias/Nowhere to go but indoors/No friends but empty chairs" Although he is talking about memories they are having of failures by the use of a concrete metaphor he is giving physical existence to an abstraction, this enables the reader to visualize the way which he retired man's thoughts are working.<sup>11</sup>

The last line of this verse symbolizes how the persona feels about retirement and the image is an empty, lonely one-strait foreword but extremely effective imagery, the final versus sums up the persona's weariness and his acceptance of the reality of his situation. Each line seems to further emphasize that he is nearly at the end of his working life, "when the lights go on at four, at the end of another year? /Give me your arm, old toad, /Help down Cemetery Road,"<sup>12</sup> The first line signifies that it is the time of the year when the lights come on early and the second line reiterates it, Winter is the season of the year and also used to describe human lives in their vintage years, the final line states that the persona feels that there is nothing else in his life, ultimately at the end of his working life is death. Another time Larkin uses a concrete metaphor is in poem "Dockery and Son" ---- "I try the door of where I used to live". And on a

refers to the playground noise as 'Blurred'. Here he is making use of the synaesthetic metaphor, which transfers the meaning from one domain of sensory perception to another<sup>10</sup>. The description used is normally associated with the sense of sight not hearing but by using it in this context it gives emphasis to the feeling that the persona is getting away from everything by being in the park. The noise is not distinct, where he lies it is peaceful. He goes on to describe the people he sees in the park after stating lazing in the park does not suit him. The description he offered of the people who pass are derogatory and give the reader a strong sense of the persona's disapproval, for example, "Hare-eyed clerks with the jitters" by using the term 'Hare-eyed' reinforces the image he wants the reader to see ,as he uses it in conjunction with 'jitters' you are able to picture the clerks displaying the same fighty characteristics of a Hare-using a dehumanizing metaphor reflects the contempt the persona feels for these men. This feeling is reiterated as he goes on to describe their day, which he manages succinctly by using descriptions of activities suggestive of certain points in the day, watching the bread delivered, "The sun by clouds covered, The children going home / think of being them". It also emphasizes the emptiness of their day. The seventh verse brings this feeling to a head and the poignancy of

representation of the negative nationalism, for there is a damning caricatures of modern England and wistful evocations of an illusionary rural past. Concomitant to many negative nationalists Larkin reverts to an idyllic concept of England to prove his point. Larkin's nationalist streak may be connected with his involvement with The Movement poets of the 1950s.

A different kind of nationalism is articulated in "The Whitsun Weddings" and "To the Sea" because they are not concerned with boundaries or artificial distinctions but with the positive sense of nationalism that is created by a symbiotic relationship between the natural landscape and social rituals.

There is a divide in Larkin's poems between those that expound a secular patriotism and those where the British sense of nationhood is created by the affirmation of social rituals.<sup>9</sup>

Larkin is unobtrusive in his use of metaphors, he does not only name the things familiar to us in our world, he also endows phenomena with a symbolic resonance. For example in his "Toads revisited", at a simple level, a toad becomes a symbol of work, it squats oppressively. At the beginning of the poem, in the first two verses of this poem, the reader gets the impression that the persona is lying on the grass, in the sunshine, he

The awareness that nature is in a constant process of birth and death (mutability), the two ultimate realities of man's life is presented in his High Windows (1974) where he was preoccupied with themes of old age and death of which he was very much terrified.

As opposed to the heritage of Wordsworth and Hardy, Larkin's preference for the immediate and the every day is re-interpreted within a much broader European philosophical tradition. For he sees everything around him as a metaphor for an untested reality. Such a thing is created by the unfolding structure of his poems which moves from narrow, or ordinary beginnings to end on a note of visionary dispersal. "Church Going" is an example where the finite enclosure of the church becomes a kind of clearing in which the truth of the poem comes into being. In such a way Larkin unveils a new and strange holiness in things.<sup>8</sup>

There is a specific connection between landscape and national identity in Larkin's work. He is very much fascinated by the changing details of the rural and urban existence of this change on the general populace. Larkin's work is an exemplification of the ideological distances between negative and positive nationalism. His "Going, Going" and "MCMXIV" are a

The site of all those people triggers memories of coming to the beach as a young boy with his parents so long ago, the happiness he felt of being on his own discovering his surroundings while his parents listened "To the same seaside quack". Then he goes back to observing the seaside in his compassionate detached manner:

...I watched  
cloudless scenes:

The same clear water over  
smoothed pebbles,

Down at its edge, and then  
the cheap cigars,

The chocolate-papers, tea-  
leaves, and, between

**The rocks, the rusting  
soup-tins, till the first**

Few families start the trek  
back the cars.<sup>6</sup>

As the families start to  
leave, and the beach becomes empty,  
the speaker is left in the midst of what  
is left behind: "cheap cigars" and  
"chocolate- papers," he realizes that:

It may be that  
through habit these do best,

Coming to water  
clumsily undressed

Yearly; teaching their  
children by a sort

Of clowning; helping the old,  
too, as they ought.<sup>7</sup>

Before—

The miniature gaiety  
of seaside.

Everything crowds  
under the low horizon:

Steep beach, blue  
water, towels, red bathing caps,

The small hushed  
wave's repeated fresh collapse

Up the warm yellow  
sand, and further off

A white steamer stuck  
in the afternoon -<sup>4</sup>

Larkin describes the beach  
with great accuracy, noticing the  
activities on the beach as a kind of  
heritage that is known for so long:

Still going on, all of it,  
still going on!

To lie, eat, sleep in  
hearing of the surf

Ears to transistors, that  
sound tame enough

Under the skylior  
gently up and down

Lead the uncertain  
children, frilled in white

... Or  
well

The rigid old along for  
them to feel

A final summer,  
plainly still occurs

As half an annual  
pleasure, half a rite,<sup>5</sup>

## مقدمة

reminds him of his mortality and death.

"The Trees" from The North Ship (1945) does not only hint at death of the season and the death of spring's beauty by the final warning refrain "A drum taps: a wintry drum", yet also explains in such a clear and metalanguage that the leafing and shedding of the trees is a reminder of the two major events that govern the continuity of birth and death.

In two other poems in this same collection: "To the Sea" and "Show Saturday" Nature is used symbolically to show the awareness of "human ritual and natural continuity"<sup>2</sup>. Larkin here renders his vision through the words of a detached but a symbolic speaker who is an observer of all the details of his surroundings.

In "To the sea" which is considered a social poem in which Larkin extends his sympathies to people around him, he talks about a day's visit to the seaside where he looks at the people and their children. It is a reminder of his youth, which is now gone long ago, and the joy of summer days on the beach.<sup>3</sup>

To step over the low  
wall that divides  
Roads from concrete  
walk about the shore  
Bring sharply back  
something known long

إن وجهة نظر لاركن، كونه شاعر واقعي، لا تتبلور عبر إضفاء طابع مثالي على ما يحيط بقصيدته، وإنما عبر رؤيته للواقع على نحو واقعي تماما، إذ هو يتقاضي وصف الطبيعة التي عكف الرومانسيون على وصفها، ليست من خلال إظهار جمالها ولا عن طريق توضيح النشوة التي يحس بها عند وقوفه في حضرة الطبيعة وبالتالي فهو يصف الصورة الخارجية الجميلة للطبيعة التي تذكره بسر مديتها وبالموت. أن صورة الطبيعة هي حقا تذكرنا باستمرارية حدثين أساسيين في حياتنا وهما الولادة و الموت وفي أحيان أخرى فإن الطبيعة تذكرنا بالشباب الذي مضى منذ وقت طويل. فبالنسبة للشاعر أنها حقا صورة الطبيعة التي استخدمت لأغراض واقعية فعلا أكثر منها رومانسية.

## Nature Imagery in Philip Larkin's poetry

According to Larkin the poet is not a sear or a visionary like the Romantics but a "civil servant, a responsible citizen responsibly employed"<sup>1</sup>. To say that Larkin unlike the Romantics is not to make the surroundings of his poem ideal, he sees the world realistically. Consequently he deals with time and place as real dimensions, instead of expressing prophecy or vision. He avoids describing nature the way the romantics do. In his poem "The Trees" which is about spring, Larkin neither describes the beauty of trees and the countryside, nor does describe the raptures he feels in the presence of nature's majestic view. Instead of that, spring presents for him the beautiful outward and

## Nature Imagery in Philip Larkin's Poetry

### صور الطبيعة في شعر فيليب لاركن

سحر عبدالاميرحرج  
جامعة القادسية/كلية التربية  
قسم اللغة الإنكليزية

#### Abstract:

Being a realistic poet, Larkin's view of the poet is not to make the surroundings of his poem ideal, instead he sees the world realistically. He avoids describing nature the way the Romantics do; neither by showing its beauty nor by describing the raptures he feels in the presence of nature. Consequently he describes the beautiful outward of nature that keeps reminding him of its mortality and death. Nature images are reminders of the continuity of the two major events in life: of birth and death. Sometimes it is a reminder of the youth that has gone long ago. It is really the image of nature that has been used for realistic purposes rather than romantic ones.