

**The Theme of Death and  
Time in Larkin's  
The Whitsun Weddings**

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Philip Larkin (1922-1985) is one of the prominent poets in the second half of the twentieth century. His name is associated with a group of poets called "the Movement Poets" along with Kingsley Amis, Donald Davie, Tom Gonne, Elizabeth Jennings, and others. This group of poets called for a new kind of poetry which denied the poetry of the modernists, post-modernists and the Apocalyptic poetry produced by Dylan Thomas. Larkin and his colleagues shared sociological and educational background. Thus, they all belonged to the middle-class writers; moreover they all graduated from Oxford. Larkin rejected the poetry of the modernists, especially that of T-S-Eliot, who insisted that modern poetry "must be difficult"<sup>1</sup>, and Ezra Pound among others who wrote poetry depending mostly on symbolism, myth and allusions. For Larkin such modern poetry does not convey real "life as we know it"<sup>2</sup>, it reduces poetry to reading material for the critic, and thus the highly educated widening the gap between the poet and the reading public. In a critical piece, "The pleasure principle", Larkin also states his views concerning this issue. He points out that the modernist writers seemed "to be producing a new kind of bad poetry"<sup>3</sup>. Larkin repeatedly stresses the need to establish a closer relationship between the poet and his readers. He firmly believes that poetry should aim at pleasing rather than mystifying, it should give pleasure to both the poet who writes it and those who read it instead of its turning into a

complex form explained by the poet himself to university students.

Larkin was preoccupied with the idea of the flux of time and the transience of life. He thought of time, in many of his poems, to be the bitterest enemy of man. Man is subject to be influenced by time before moving to the other side of life. This idea appears clearly in his volume The Whitsun Weddings (1964). This study, therefore aims at tracing the theme of death and time in Larkin's The Whitsun Weddings. In this volume Larkin's disillusionment increased with the realization that life offers man nothing, but death only. Thus, time and death are the most prominent themes in this volume. The world, or landscape of The Whitsun Weddings is pictured in the first poem of the volume entitled "Here"; it is a world of "traffic", and "fields/ Too thin and thistle to be called meadows". In fact it is "a large town" where people:

Push through plate-glass swing doors to  
their  
Desires,  
Cheap suits, red kitchen-ware, sharp shoes,  
iced  
lollies,  
Electric mixers, toasters, washers, driers-  
A cut-price crowd, urban yet simple,  
dwelling  
When only salesmen and relations come<sup>4</sup>.

Collected Poems, p .126.

Their "desires" are "Cheap", man-made articles and machines,

nothing real or serious enough to be called desires. The "lure town" In these lines, as in others throughout the volume, Larkin was able, in the words of Alan brown john, to "catch the physical feel of life in England of our time [with] captivating accuracy"<sup>5</sup>.

Department stores and billboards are very much a part of the city. Larkin examines their role in creating human illusion in three poems which portray "the human readiness to respond to the lure of unreal needs"<sup>6</sup>. In "The Large Cool Store", the speaker walks in to look at the merchandise, he finds, for example:

... cheap clothes  
Set out in simple sizes plainly  
(Knitware, Summer Casuals, Hoxe,  
in browns, greys, maroon and navy)  
conjures the weekday world of those  
who leave dawn low terraced houses  
timed for factory, yard and site.

CP,P .135.

The speaker sees clothes that are practical, low-price, dark coloured and unattractive; things that workers would need to get them through the hard day's work. On the other side of the store

...past the heaps of skirts and trousers  
Spread the stands of Modes For Night:  
Machine-embroidered, thin as blouses,  
Lemon, sapphire, moss-green, rose  
Bri-Nylon Baby-Dolls and shorties  
Flounce in clusters.



CP, P.135.

The "Modes For Night" are not in dull greys and browns", but in shades of "Lemon, sapphire, moss-green, rose", names for colours used by "Department stores... [to] glamorize their products"<sup>7</sup> in order to attract customers and create the feeling that they are buying garments in romantic or special colours. Even the arrangements of the two sets of clothes is not similar. The "weekday world" garments are piled in "heaps", or "set out... plainly", whereas the night ware is arranged to attract as they "flounce" in display<sup>8</sup>. The poet then speculates on human tendency to share a world of fantasy:

To suppose

They share that world, to think their sort is  
matched by something in it, shows  
how separate and unearthly love is,  
or women are, or what they do,  
or in our young unreal wishes  
seem to be...

CP, p .135.

He realizes the fact that human beings share a "need for fantasy"<sup>9</sup>, a need which department stores and designers increase with their "illusory images of modern life and love"<sup>10</sup>. Larkin exposes this tendency but does not reproach it.

In "Sunny Prestatyn" Larkin examines billboards and their role in creating illusion. The speaker in this poem sees a poster of a beautiful girl in "white satin" laughing in a place of paradise beauty where palm trees meet the sky in the background around a hotel. The caption of the

poster says: "Come To Sunny Prestatyn". A "couple of weeks" later, the speaker notices that the poster was defaced, the girl's face "Was snaggle-toothed and boss-eyed", and:

Autographed Titch Thomas, while  
Someone had used a knife  
Or something to stab right through  
The moustached lips of her smile.  
CP, P.149.

The girl in the poster represents the "advertisement's cliché sex symbol"<sup>11</sup>. Larkin, says that it represents "the universal symbol of happiness"<sup>12</sup>, of being on a beautiful vacation in a fascinating resort, of relaxation and freedom. This image of perfection was destroyed because it was unreal, it probably frustrated the passers by who saw it and could not free themselves from the dreary reality of their everyday routine, or could not afford to experience the sensational vacation the poster seems to promise.

The language which Larkin uses to describe the poster after its destruction is humorous, though explicit, indeed even "outrageous"<sup>13</sup>. Larkin himself says: "some people think it was intended to be funny, some people think it was intended to be horrific. I think it was intended to be both."<sup>14</sup> Day believes that Larkin would not have been able to achieve his aim without such directness, and Petch correctly asserts that Larkin uses :

The coarse colloquial for a particular  
effect... more Polite usage would have  
seemed silly and prim and

in appropriate. These words being violent themselves, enact the violence of the desecration.<sup>15</sup>

Titch Thomas's reaction was violet because the girl in the poster was an illusion he could not stand, and rejects, thus by destroying her in this way he can have the last laugh.

The speaker remains detached throughout the poem, all he does is reporting exactly what he sees. A few days later, the marred poster is replaced by another one declaring "Fight Cancer", a message that is "a stark reminder of pain and death in reality"<sup>16</sup>. The girl in the poster was "too good for this life" to be true, and thus with the Cancer poster "reality reasserts itself"<sup>17</sup>.

In "Essential beauty", Larkin also points out to the contrast between the large frames which hold advertisements, insisting on the perfectness of the products they portray, and the "slums" where the billboards, trying to show "how life should be", are hung:

High above the gutter  
A silver knife sinks into golden butter,  
A glass of milk stands in a meadow, and  
Well-balanced families, in fine  
Midsummer weather, owe their smiles,  
their cars,  
Even their youth, to that small cube each  
hand  
Stretches towards.

CP, P .144.

There is a clear contrast between the world of reality, "gutter" (on the ground), and that of illusion, "Silver knife" and "golden butter"(which one has to look up "High above" one's head). The beauty portrayed on the billboards does not actually exist, such billboards:

Reflect none of the rained –on streets and squares

they dominate outdoors. Rather, they rise serenely to proclaim pure crust, pure foam, pure coldness to our live imperfect eyes that stare beyond this world, where nothing's made as new or washed quite clean,

CP, p .144.

The real world is imperfect, and destructive, nothing in it remains as

it is, it is a world which consumes everything and everyone, a "world, where nothing's made/ As new or washed quite clean". All are finally brought "To taste old age", and then death; a fact which is very effective in "exposing the cruelty of an illusion which had promised salvation"<sup>18</sup>.

Not only advertisements and billboards foster illusions, In "A Study of Reading Habits", Larkin analyzes, (in a detached manner), the effect of reading fiction on one of his speakers. In his youth, the books he read:

Curd most things short of school,  
It was worth ruining my eyes  
To know I could still keep cool,



And deal out the old right hook  
To dirty dogs twice my size.

CP, p .131.

As he grew older the "Evil" in the books he read attracted him, he identified himself with the villains and enjoyed imagining himself in their positions. In the last stanza, we see a change in his attitude towards books, he even gets defensive about reading as a whole:

Don't read much now: the dude  
Who lets the girl down before  
The hero arrives, the chap  
Who's yellow and keeps the store,  
Seem far too familiar. Get stewed:  
Books are a load of crap.

CP, p.131.

This attitude is the result of his final awareness that: False expectation and wish-fulfillment are as he has got from books. Having identified wholly with what he has read and having lived a vicarious imaginative life of sex and violence he is left only with his own inadequacy, recognition of which forces him finally to snarl: 'Get stewed:/ Books are a load of crap'.<sup>19</sup>

Enright and Thwaite condemn Larkin's use of "Get stewed",

Timms, on the other hand, defends it by saying "These comments give information about the speaker, not books. In his maturity he can see that he is neither a hero nor a villain, but just one of the minor characters who is a little despicable"<sup>20</sup>. Reading books only reminds him of his failure and his inability to achieve anything distinguished, therefore the character expresses his anger towards himself when he justifies cries "Get stewed".

This tendency to measure one's accomplishments (this time by comparing the speaker's life with that of the others ) is seen in "Mr. Bleaney". The character in this poem is about to rent a room, he walks and looks around to see whether he will "take it". He notices:

Flowered curtains, thin and frayed,  
Fall to within five inches of the sill,  
Whose window shows a strip of building  
land,  
Tussocky, littered. 'Mr. Bleaney took  
My bit of garden properly in hand.'  
Bed, upright chair, sixty-watt bulb, no  
hook  
Behind the door, no room for books or  
bags-  
'I'll take it.'

CP, p.102.

By looking at the furniture, and hearing the land lady's remarks concerning Mr. Bleaney, the speaker tries to make an impression of the room's previous tenant's life. All these details point to the fact that Bleaney led a life that was "an unambitious

and awkwardly low-keyed existence"<sup>21</sup>. He kept minimal furniture, the bare essentials, He enjoyed a very limited scope of life: the landlady mentioned that he visited his sister or a friend once in a while, in addition to his taking care of her "bit of garden".

As the speaker lies down in the same bed Mr. Bleaney used to sleep in, he wonders about Mr. Bleaney and his habits. The speaker wonders whether it displeased Mr. Bleaney to know that this place (which clearly does not satisfy the speaker) is his home, whether "in such poor surroundings, Mr. Bleaney had a poor opinion of himself"<sup>22</sup>:

That how we live measures our own nature,  
And at his age having no more to show  
Than one hired box should make him pretty  
sure  
He warranted no better, I don't know.

CP, p.103.

Since the poem ends with a note of doubt, the speaker now sees himself in a new light. His critical attitude towards Mr. Bleaney changes, he figures that since he is the new resident in Mr. Bleaney's room he is not much better than him, that he has not achieved more than that previous tenant. Timms suggests that Mr. Bleaney did not think much of his surroundings and what would they mean because he is not an intellectual like the speaker of the poem (The speaker looks for bookshelves, but finds none. Bleaney had no need for them)<sup>23</sup>, but like all human beings, he must have faced such feelings once in a while, and tried

to give his existence meaning by looking after the garden ,and being helpful to the landlady.

The language of the poem conveys death in life for both Mr. Bleaney and the speaker. One gets this impression of Mr. Bleaney's life from the landlady's remark about him very early in the poem: "They moved him", as if he were a corpse and was carried out of the place instead of simply moving out because he was asked to move by "the Bodies" where he worked. As for the speaker, the death motif is conveyed in his description of his new residence at the end of the poem as a 'hired box'<sup>24</sup>, which brings to mind a coffin.<sup>25</sup>

A number of speakers in The Whitsun Weddings (who are now middle-aged) examine the choices they have previously made in their life to test their validity. In "Toads Revisited" (the sequel to "Toads" in The Less Deceived) the speaker, who has found some time to take a walk, again makes a comparison between himself and the unemployed people he sees in the park. At the beginning of his stroll, he seemed very pleased:

Walking around in the park  
Should feel better than work:  
The lake, the sunshine,  
The grass to lie on,  
Blurred playground noises  
Beyond black-stockinged nurses-  
Not a bad place to be.  
Yet it doesn't suit me,

CP, p .147.

His feeling of pleasure is soon disturbed, as if the black-stockinged nurses he saw moved his attention to other people in the park with whom he associates and compares himself:

Being one of the men  
You meet of an afternoon:  
Palsied old step-takers,  
Hare-eyed clerks with the jitters,  
Waxed-fleshed out-patients  
Still vague from accidents,  
And characters in long coats  
Deep in the litter-baskets—  
All dodging the toad work  
By being stupid or weak.

CP,P .147.

The people he sees are either old, injured, retired or tramps. They are people who are not needed anymore by society, or have managed to break free from the routine of work, and now are reduced to spend their remaining time with nothing to do or nowhere else to go to except the park or "indoors". They are very similar to the horses in "At Grass",but here in this poem Larkin displays his new ability to pick out details from daily life to use them as direct symbols of the idea he wants to put forward. The sight of the old people in the park is definitely more moving than that of the horses in "At Grass".

Clearly the speaker's opinion of the unemployed in this poem contrasts the one in "Toads" (in which he admired those who can break

free from the working routine and use their wits in order to make a living). In "Toads Revisited", he sees them as paralyzed people unaware of their existence trying to evade work by being 'stupid' or 'weak'. The people who fascinated him in "Toads" create in him the fear of loneliness and failure, he could never bear to spend time the way they do:

Think of being them!  
Hearing the hours chime,  
Watching the bread delivered,  
The sun by clouds covered,  
The children going home;  
Think of being them,  
Turning over their failures  
by some bed of lobelias,  
Nowhere to go but indoors,  
No friends but empty chairs-  
CP, p.147.

His decision is made, he refuses freedom, and until death comes he will rely on work to give him support and purpose in life. Work, now an "old toad", is treated like a friend who will walk hand in hand with him down "Cemetery Road":

No give me my in-tray,  
My loaf-haired secretary,  
My shall-I-keep-the-call-in-sir:  
What else can I answer,  
When the lights come on at four  
At the end of another year?  
Give me your arm, old toad;  
Help me down Cemetery Road.

CP, p .148.

He is convinced that "idleness is as bad as work if not worse"<sup>26</sup>; and that his fate is the same as that of the people in the park, all head down "Cemetery Road" (the road of death, and the grave)<sup>27</sup>, whether it is through idleness or work, but he decides that it is much easier to be helped by the "old toad" whom he befriends at the end.

Another problem the speakers faces in The Whitsun Weddings is whether their previously made choice to remain single was a right one, or whether being married would have proved more fulfilling. In "Self's the Man" the character compares his life with that of his married friend Arnold in a humorous manner. The character gives a "comic, cruel depiction of the 'happy' family life he has gladly escaped"<sup>28</sup>. By comparing himself with Arnold, he admits that his friend is "less selfish" because he gave up his freedom and "married a Woman to stop her getting away/ Now she's there all day", (as if Arnold's solution to stop the woman's departure was wrong and brought an opposite effect). The impression the speaker gives of his friend's life is amusing. In his opinion, Arnold wastes his life working for money that his wife takes:

...as her perk

To pay for the kiddies' clobber and the drier

And the electric fire,

CP, p .117.

Providing a living is not the last of Arnold's troubles, his life is full of other duties and

responsibilities. He cannot enjoy a quiet evening, or read the evening paper. He spends his time fixing things in the house, taking care of the children, and paying courtesies to his mother in law:

And when he finishes supper  
Planning to have a read at the evening  
paper  
It's put a screw in this wall-  
He has no time at all,  
With the nippers to wheel round the  
houses  
And the hall to paint in his old trousers  
And that letter to her mother  
Saying won't you come for the summer

CP, p .117.

Obviously Arnold's wife is a demanding, if not a nagging one! Yet, the speaker admits that when compared to Arnold he feels "selfish" and like "a swine". But not for long, "Any apparent sympathy for Arnold is soon lost"<sup>29</sup> as soon as he is struck by the realization that they are both alike, each one of them is convinced with a lifestyle of his choice.

But wait, not so fast:  
Is there such a contrast?  
He was out for his own ends  
.....  
And if it was such a mistake  
He still did it for his own sake,  
.....  
So he and I are the same,



CP, p.117.

It is by his own choice that Arnold is married, just as it is by his own choice that the speaker remains single, but with an advantage!

Only I'm a better hand  
At knowing what I can stand  
Without them sending a van-  
Or I suppose I can.

CP, p .118.

He feels better than Arnold because he is able to avoid "what might drive him crazy"<sup>30</sup>. His certainty about his life of quietness and solitude ends in doubt. After all he is not sure if his state of loneliness is more satisfying than the family life Arnold enjoys. Petch notes that "the ugly sarcasm" alerts us immediately to the fact that something is wrong, and draws our attention to the speaker rather than to Arnold"<sup>31</sup>, in other words, the sarcasm is used as a shield to hide his loneliness and to convince himself that he is better off single, or simply that he does not want to fool himself by thinking he is immune to error.

In "Dockery and Son", the speaker visits the college he used to attend. He is shocked to hear (from the Dean) that a former college friend has a son who happens to be attending the same college where his father, Dockery, and the speaker attended many years ago. He walks around, tries to open the door of the room where he used to live, but fails because it is "locked". He leaves the place, catches his train "ignored". "Locked" and "ignored", as P.R. king says, "emphasize his outsider status in a place

where he once felt very much at ease"<sup>32</sup>. Day stresses that "finding the door to his old room locked is a potent image of the irrecoverable past."<sup>33</sup> The locked door can also increase "the predominant sense of isolation"<sup>34</sup> which he feels, as well as of being excluded and left out, unknown and not welcomed there anymore.

This incident leads him to speculate (on his way back on the train) about Dockery's life and compare it with his own. As he is changing trains he walks about the train station, notices the train lines that join and separate and links them to his own experience as he:

...walked along

The platform to its end to see the ranged  
Joining and parting lines reflect a strong  
Unhindered moon. To have no son, no  
wife,  
No house or land still seemed quite  
natural.  
Only a numbness registered the shock  
Of finding out how much had gone of life,  
CP, p .152.

Like the train lines that join and separate, Dockery and the poet's lives joined when they were students together, then separated after graduation in opposite directions never to meet again. The speaker also sees the "moon", which though symbolizes height and freedom, "its movement, like our lives, is predetermined as it goes round the earth, and consequently the sun, in a fixed orbit"<sup>35</sup>



Dockery must have had his son when he was nineteen or twenty years old; when the speaker still felt it was too early for commitment. It signifies that Dockery must have known what he wanted and he pursued it at an early age.

...Dockery, now:

Only nineteen, he must have taken stock  
Of what he wanted, and been capable  
Of... No, that's not the difference: rather,  
how  
Convinced he was he should be added to!  
To me it was dilution.

CP, pp .152-3.

The speaker questions Dockery's conviction concerning marriage and parenthood which "he finds... difficult to understand"<sup>36</sup>. He also questions the nature of man's choices, what makes him choose a certain lifestyle. He reaches the conclusion that the way a man's life turns out does not stem from what "we think truest, or most want to do". They are simply led into their life styles as time passes:

...Where do these

Innate assumptions come from? Not from  
what  
we think truest, or most want to do:  
Those wrap tight-shut, like doors. They're  
more style  
our lives bring with them: habit for a  
while,  
suddenly they harden into all we've got.

CP, p .153.

In other words, Larkin seems to be saying that, we do not control our lives, but our unconsciously chosen habits "harden with the passage of time into the only life we have"<sup>37</sup>. From this point of view, Dockery and the speaker are the same, the outcome of their lives is the result "of neither choice nor desire but simply the fact of life happening, as it were, behind their backs before they had time to realize the situation they were in"<sup>38</sup>. Looking back on everything he concludes:

Life is first boredom, then fear.

Whether or not we use it, it goes,

And leaves what something hidden from  
us chose,

And age, and then the only end of age.

CP, p.153.

Choice is thus an illusion. Man is led by "something hidden from us" which seems to make all the choices. This incapability of choosing one's destiny entraps man in a life that may not satisfy him, leading him to wish for and dream about a more promising one when in fact, (as has repeatedly been said in a variety of Larkin's poems) life ends with "age, and then the only end of age", is death<sup>39</sup>.

Larkin also explains that even love does not exist in real life and if it exists, it will be changed with the passage of time . In "Faith Healing" the speaker notices that almost everyone feels that there is something wrong with their life, and as time passes and they grow older, the conviction becomes more evident:



By now, all's wrong. In everyone there  
sleeps  
a sense of life lived according to love.  
To some it means the difference they could  
make  
by loving others, but across most it sweeps  
as all they might have done had they been  
loved.  
that nothing cures. An immense slackening  
ache,

CP, P.126.

This ache cannot be satisfied, even for those who  
are married because they are subject to change  
through the passage of time. In "Talking in Bed",  
Larkin examines one of the intimate moments in the  
life of couples, when they converse with one  
another:

Talking in bed ought to be easiest,  
Lying together there goes back so far,  
An emblem of two people being honest.

Cp, p .129.

The bed symbolizes marriage, love, and  
togetherness. It is a symbol of "honesty" that "goes  
back so far" in their marital years. "Lying" can be  
considered a pun<sup>40</sup> that further enhances the couple's  
need for truth in their relationship. Yet as "time  
passes silently", and years go by, the intimacy  
between them fades, and communication becomes  
more difficult, "isolation" sets in between them till:

It becomes still more difficult to find  
Words at once true and kind,  
Or not untrue and not unkind.

CP, p .129.

When communicating it seems that the couple's priority is not straightforward honesty (since facing plain truth involves pain sometimes), but rather "a careful concern not to hurt, but not to lie"<sup>41</sup> because their love did not bring them closer over the years, it distanced them and the prospect of their union proved an illusion.

In "Love Songs in Age", Larkin, again, examines love in relation to the passage of time in order to test its authenticity. This time the speaker is a widow who comes across records of some love songs she used to listen to when young, the records are described in great detail that bring them to life as concrete survivors from her past:

One bleached from lying in a sunny place,  
One marked in circles by a vase of water,  
One mended, when a tidy fit had seized  
her,  
And coloured, by her daughter-

CP, p .113.

The detailed description of the records makes them a symbol of both love and the passage of time. They represent the former ideas she used to believe in about love when she was young . They also represent time as a destructive force

Hearing these songs recreates in her the feeling of being young again, she recollects how these songs affected her so many years ago. The tone of the poem changes into an exalted one as the poet relates the songs' effect on the woman to



suggest the temporary illusion they create as she rediscovers them:

Relearning how each frank submissive  
chord  
Had ushered in word after sprawling  
hyphenated word,  
And the unfailing sense of being young  
Spread out like a spring-woken tree,  
wherein  
that hidden freshness sung,  
That certainty of time laid up in store  
as when she played them first.

CP, p.113.

This rejuvenation does not last for long, she fully knows "these songs bring her neither happiness nor compensation for the years she [has] lost"<sup>42</sup>. She is disillusioned by "The glare of that much-mentioned brilliance, love". She sees how powerless it is to fulfill all the dreams she attached to the love songs, and how illusory it was for her to depend on them, both in the past and in the present:

To pile them back, to cry,  
Was hard, without lamely admitting how  
It had not done so them, and could not  
now.

CP, p.113.

The last line shows Larkin's mastery over language. His use of "ten flat monosyllables" convey the great depth of the woman's pain and sadness.<sup>43</sup>

This feeling of powerlessness in the face of time is the subject of many other poems in The Whitsun Weddings, in "Nothing To Be Said", for

example, Larkin asserts that for everyone, and everywhere "Life is slow dying". Every action man takes, and whatever he achieves is part of this process of "slow dying", life is simply:

Hours giving evidence  
Or birth, advance  
On death equally slowly.  
And saying so to some  
Means nothing; others it leaves  
Nothing to be said.

CP, p.138.

Everything in life leads inevitably to death, and there is no consolation for those who realize this fact. Since nothing they say will change it, they feel it is better not to fool themselves about it. In another poem Larkin uses one of the most familiar sights in a city as a symbol for death, that is, the ambulance. In "Ambulances" we are introduced to the vehicle:

Closed like confessionals, they thread  
Loud noon's of cities, giving back  
None of the glances they absorb.  
Light glossy grey, arms on a plaque,  
They come to rest at any kerb:  
All streets in time are visited.

CP, p .132.

A sense of inevitability haunts the last line<sup>44</sup>, a fact which all must face. When the ambulance arrives, it arouses fear in the onlooker ("children" playing, and "women coming from the shops") who stop to glance at the



sight of the dead person who is carried off on a  
stretcher, by now looking as if he is inhuman:

A wild white face that overtops  
Red stretcher-blankets momentarily  
As it is carried in and stowed,

CP, p .132.

The dead person is now an "it" (nothing in the poem indicates the person's sex), death has turned the person's face "white" as if he was a wax statue, "wild" as if from another world. He is treated as "cargo" that is simply stuffed into the ambulance. The sight creates in the surrounding people a sense of disillusionment and for a moment they wonder about the thing:

That lies just under all we do,  
And for a second get it whole,  
So permanent and blank and true.  
They whisper at their own distress;

CP, p.132

They realize their own mortality and how death (seen here as a "solving emptiness"<sup>45</sup>) is part of their life, transferring it suddenly into a permanent emptiness. They realize the uselessness and absurdity of their lives in the face of death. The emptiness of death is the solution because it ends life's worries and problems. It is probably welcomed after a long weary life . In distress they whisper "poor soul", which is rather ironic, for in their pitying the dead person they pity themselves for an end they will all face.

**Notes**

- 1- T-S. Eliot, "The Metaphysical Poets", The Norton Anthology of English literature, eds- M.H.Abrams, E-T- Donaldson, H. Smith, R-M. Adams, S.H. Monk, 1 . Llipking, G-H-Ford, D. Daiches, (New York: W.W. Norton .Inc., 1974), p.2211.
- 2- Philip Larkin, "Introduction to All What Jazz", Required Writing, P.297.
- 3- By Larkin, originally a review written for George Hartley's listen magazine in 1957, later reprinted in Larkin's Required Writing.
- 4- Larkin, The Whitsun Weddings, published in Larkin's Collected Poems, ed. Anthony Thwaite, (London: Faber and Faber , 1988), p. 102.All subsequent references to this book would be in its initials CP.
- 5- D. J. Enright "Down Cemetery Road", The New Statesman, 67(Feb.28,1964) , P. 332.
- 6- Simon Petch, The Art of Philip Larkin , (Sydney :Sydney University Press , 1981), P. 75.
- 7- David Timms, Philip Larkin, (London: Cox and Wyman ltd., 1973), P. 95.
- 8- Petch, P. 76.
- 9- Ibid., P. 76.
- 10- Ibid., p. 76.
- 11- Peter R-King, Nine Contemporary Poets, (London: Methuen LTD.,1979), p.20.
- 12- Cited by Timms, p.-114.
- 13- Roger Day, Larkin, (Philadelphia: Open University Press, 1987), p.59.

- 14- King, p.21.
- 15- Petch, p.78.
- 16- Ibid., p-64.
- 17- Timms, p.94.
- 18- Terry Whalen, Philip Larkin and English Poetry, ( Vancouver: Univ of British Columbia press, 1986), p.105.
- 19- Timms, p.97.
- 20- Timms, p.98. and Hermann Peschemann, "Philip Larkin: Laureate of the common Man", English Poetry, 24 (summer 1975), P.53.
- 21- Timms, p.98.
- 22- Ian Hamilton, A poetry chronicle: Essays and Reviews, (London: Faber and Faber, 1973), P.136.
- 23- King, p.15.
- 24- Timms, p.98.
- 25- Hamilton, p.138.
- 26- Larkin uses man's last station, the cemetery, to name the road which man walks, not a stronger or darkness which he used to use in his previous poetry.
- 27- Brown John, Philip Larkin, p.17.
- 28- Ibid, p.23.
- 29- Ibid, p.17. Larkin chose to remain single mainly for two reasons, he feared that through marriage his Tile will turn as miserable as his parent's life was. He once scribbled in his pocket diary.
- 30- Petch, pp.69.70
- 31- Ibid;

- 32- King, p-12.
- 33- Day, p-55
- 34- Petch, p-68.
- 35- Ibid., p.65.
- 36- King, p.13
- 37- Ibid, p.13. Larkin's life is also a result of hardening circumstances rather than choice. He became a librarian by chance after applying at random for a number of jobs, "That", he says, "seems to have determined the course of my life". Quoted in "four young poets", p.933.
- 38- Ibid-, p.13.
- 39- Jonathan Raban called the concluding lines of "Dockery and Son": "lines that you can frighten yourself with in the dark". Quoted by Bradley, p.21.
- 40- Petch, p.71.
- 41- Timms, p.107.
- 42- Timms, p.30.
- 43- Ibid., p.511.
- 44- Ibid., p.321.
- 45- Ibid, P. 100.

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الخلاصة

هذا البحث بعنوان

(الموت و الزمن في شعر فيليب لاركن " زفاف الأحد " )

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يتناول هذا البحث رؤية الشاعر الحديث فيليب لاركن للزمن و الموت ومحاربتة للتحيز و العنصرية في مجموعته "زفاف الأحد" .

لقد تميز الشاعر فيليب لاركن (١٩٢٢-١٩٨٥) في فترة النصف الثاني من القرن العشرين وقد ارتبط اسمه بمجموعة من الشعراء تسمى ب (شعراء الحركة ) أمثال الشاعر كنسلى امس ودونلاد ديفى وتوم كون واليزابيث جينز وغيرهم- حيث نادوا هؤلاء الشعراء بوجود نوع جديد من الشعر يمكن ان يرضي القراء في فترة ما بعد الحرب الثانية. لقد توخى لاركن العودة الى الشكل التقليدي للشعر رافضا بذلك شعر المحدثين وخاصة الأسلوب الشعري لت-س- اليوت وعزرا باوند لاعتماد هذا الشعر بالدرجة الأولى على الترميز والاساطير التي أدت إلى توسيع الهوة بين الشاعر والقارئ وجعلت شعرهم صعبا وبعيدا عن ما هو حقيقي.

يهدف هذا البحث الى دراسة تطور فكرة الموت والزمن في مجموعة لاركن الثالثة "زفاف الأحد" حيث قدم لاركن فيه صورة عن الأوهام المرتبطة بالزمن والحب والموت وقد طغت على نبراته المرارة والسخرية حينما أدرك أكثر من أي وقت بان الحياة لا تمنح الإنسان إلا القليل وان النهاية الحتمية للإنسان هي الموت وذلك لان الإنسان خاضع لقانون الوقت حيث إن الوقت يعد العدو الأكبر للإنسان.