# The Ironic Detachment in Philip larkin's Poetry

**Nadia Faydh, Ph.D.**
**University of Mustanserya**
**College of Arts**
**Department of English**

## Abstract

In spite of the numerous studies written on Philip Larkin's poetry, it still invites comments and further exploration, because of its richness and appeal to the professional as well as common reader. Philip Larkin established himself as a distinguished poet worthy of reading and study in a time that poetry lost its connection with immediate reality after the 1940s. He managed to restore to poetry its popularity among the ordinary readers; he became their poet, who lives next door, the voice that expressed their daily-life ventures and disappointments.

In his rejection to the modernist poetry of Eliot, he produced poetry easily flowing with images from daily life routines, free of the mythological burdens and historical juxtaposition. However, what sounds simple and direct is in fact rich with multi-layers of meaning as the poet conveys his themes with a tone of irony which meant hide the pathos of sympathy and failure. Thus his seeming detachment appears in fact to be only a curtain which covers the lyrical persona's involvement with the experience.

The poems selected for the study are mostly published after 1945, when Larkin abandoned his romantic attitudes toward more empirical ones.

## Ironic Detachment in Philip Larkin's Poetry

While often associated with the group of poets who were introduced during the 1950s to the public under the title "The Movement", Philip Larkin entered the English literary scene before that decade as independent poet through his first volume of verse called *The North Ship* (1945), and as a novelist with two not quite successful works of fiction, namely, *Jill* (1964) and *A Girl in Winter* (1947). His early writings showed the

influence of the neo-romantics of the twentieth century, especially W.B. Yeats and Dylan Thomas; the influence that was mostly shown in his extensive celebration of the theme of failure in love and personal disappointments [Bedient, 1974: 73, Weiner, 2010: internet].

This theme, expressed in the poet's indulgence in personal feeling, was actually a reflection of the poet's personal experiences in this domain. Larkin went through several relationships, but none was fruitful, which explains to certain extent the dominant melancholic tone of his early pomes. It was an expression of self pity continued to the second volume, *The Less Deceived* (1955). However, the vision presented this time was clearer, the voice firmer and meant for detached observation instead of the earlier indulgence in personal frustration. With its twenty poems, written between 1945-51 and published in a pamphlet entitles "XX Poems", *The Less Deceived* was Larkin's ticket toward fame and established his reputation as a major poet in the modern literary scene [Fraser, 1970: 346].

Leaving Yeats' romanticism toward the objective realism of Thomas Hardy was the most important achievement on the part of Larkin in *The Less Deceived*. This does not mean that he escaped one influence just to fall under another. Hardy gave Larkin's talent a sense of "liberation", [Thwaite, 1978: 104], as he became more himself rather than an imitator of others. Larkin explains that, saying:

> When I came to Hardy it was with a sense of relief that I didn't have to try to jack myself up to a concept of poetry that lay outside my own life—this is perhaps what I felt Yeats was trying to make me do. [Quoted in Al-Qaysi, 1995: 22]

What exactly Hardy taught him to do with his poetry was to "relapse back into one's own life and write about it". Larkin goes on, saying:

> Hardy taught me to feel rather than to write … of course one has to use one's own situations, and he taught one as well to have confidence in what one felt. [Ibid.]

In fact, Larkin shows Hardy's influence on him by tackling "truthful themes", and be more responsive and sensitive to his immediate world, which he ignored in his early verse. He started to present a world dominated by that sense of disillusionment and futility which was pervasive in England after World War II [Bedient: 75].

Furthermore, as Larkin freed himself from the influence of Yeats, he managed to leave that romantic world which transcends ordinariness and suffering, by relenting on art (the religion of art) [Motion, 1986: 37]. He went instead into a different world which taught him to achieve "spiritual wisdom" through endurance and acceptance, rather than through protesting.

Between Yeats and Hardy, Larkin also found support and guidance throughout his literary career in Kingesly Amis (1922-95). He helped Larkin to leave the world of juveniles towards more mature self-confident writing, urging him "to reject youthful romantic pretentious in favor of a more robust, ironical attitude to experience" [ibid.].

This kind of attitude is what led Larkin to secure a distinct rank among his contemporaries and asserting himself as the poet of the 1950s. His poetry started to reflect an observing detachment toward the world, pointing out its disillusionment and frustration, showing more cynicism his comments on man's past illusions and present realities. However, this cynical detachment is ironic in the sense that it hides strong association or attachment on the part of the poet toward the scene or the experience he is reflecting on.

With this approach of writing, Larkin became more associated with The Movement, the group of poets who were active during the mid-1950.

This group was brought together, actually, by their common tone and interest rather than by a pre-planned program. All of them were loosely connected with each other, united in their rejection of the poetry written during the 1930s for its political orientation. They rejected the surrealist neo-romantic poetry of the 1940s also, and tried to represent the young generation growing up under the shadow of World War II which shattered any romantic ideas and asked for more rational, resigned attitude toward its aftermath futility. [Regan, 2007: 147]

P. R. King [1979:3] describes Larkin's association with the 'Movement' poets as being "casual not causal": participated in their *New Lines* anthology (1956), and shared with them the negative reaction against the modernist poetry of T.S. Eliot and Ezra Pound. His statements against it summarize the Movement's stance against modernism. For Larkin, as well as for other Movement poets, Eliot's modernism put poetry under some sort of "critical industry" by discussing culture in an abstract way. He rejected their techniques of using myth in immediate juxtaposition with contemporary images describing it as "myth-kitty business". This kind of poetry, according to Larkin, required highly intellectual readers in order to grasp the poet's intent and meaning; a quality that makes poetry inaccessible to ordinary readers; it becomes instead, the subject of academics and classrooms.

The difficulty imposed on poetry modernist techniques, betrays the duty of communicating pleasure, and this mission is what Larkin insists on in his argument against modernism [ibid.]. He wants his readers to share with him the experience he presents in his poems, which can be achieved when the poem tackles what they can themselves experience in their immediate world rather than worrying their minds attempting to discover

the meaning of what they read. Larkin believes that art is meant to preserve a perceived experience:

> I write poems to preserve things I have seen / thought / felt (if I may so indicate a composite and complex experience) both for myself and for others, though I feel that my prime responsibility is to the experience itself, which I am trying to keep from oblivion for its own sake. Why I should do this I have no idea, but I think the impulse to preserve lies at the bottom of the art. [Thwaite: 106]

Such a statement, which he made in 1955, put Larkin at the opposite extreme of Eliot concerning the function of the poet, he is not a visionary or seer of some metaphysical experience that no ordinary man is capable of achieving; he is a man talking to man [King: 2]. (This does not make Larkin as a follower of Hardy only, but also connects him to the Wordsworthian tradition also). Thus, Larkin's subject matter is everybody life, the simple experiences that any man may have experienced: poems like "Waiting for Breakfast…", "Church Going", "Dockery and Son", "Toads" and many others testify to this end in Larkin's poetry.

Yet, the simplicity of the subject matter and language conceals beneath a deeper meaning which reveals itself through the complexity of the emotions conveyed throughout the poem. This makes Larkin's poetry heavily ironical, easily read but not completely grasped unless sharing with the speaker his point of view.

That 'deeper meaning' which most of his poems try to communicate is the futility of contemporary world that is devoid of any ideals which man can relent on or seek for [Motion: 60]. It is the result of his losing faith in any "inherited and reliable absolutes", thus most of the speakers in his poems try to seek beauty, ironically, in their sterile life. Their search is

doomed to end in disillusionment, and they have to submit themselves to the dominating unfaithfulness [Whalen, 1986: 8].

The purpose of the coming discussion is to illustrate this ironic presentation of subject matter and the "deeper meaning" that each poem reveals. Irony here is used in the sense that Northrop Frye introduces in *Anatomy of Criticism*:

> The term irony, then, indicates a technique of appearing to be less than one is, which in literature becomes most commonly a technique of saying as little and meaning as much as possible, or, in a more general way, a pattern of words that turns away from direct statement or its own obvious meaning. [1957:40]

The first poem which denotes Larkin's departure from the self-pity tone to the more objective and detached is "Waiting for Breakfast. While She Brushed Her Hair". The poem appeared in the second issue of *The North Ship* (1945), but actually written a year after the first publication of his first volume of verse [Al-Qaysi, 1995: 52] . The poem, moreover, denotes some of the elements that are seen in his later mature poems: the speaker is an observer commenting in the poem on what he sees and how this observation leads to a deeper contemplation of his past and future.

The experience is a commonplace experience of a man standing by the window waiting for the woman whom he spent the night with in the hotel to prepare herself for breakfast. His feelings are obscure, yet the outside atmosphere may reveal something of what he thinks:

> Waiting for breakfast, while she brushed her hair
> I looked down at the empty hotel yard
> Once meant for coaches. Cobblestones were wet,
> But sent no light back to the loaded sky
> Sunk as it was with mist down to the roofs [*NS*, ll. 1-5][1]

The melancholic weather reflects his own melancholy. He makes the connections between what is outside and his own experience the previous night and concludes the stanza: “I thought: featureless morning, featureless night”.

Then, he finds that this could be a ‘misjudgment’, for there are ‘lights burnt on / pin-points of undisturbed excitement’. It is an excitement that happens far away from him in those ‘rooms’ whose ‘electric light’ is ‘still burning’. The melancholy and sense of futility seem to be generated in him and the outside world is not really concerned with it. He stands there by the window and the ‘colourless day’ reminds him of his ‘lost, lost world’. The repetition of the adjective denotes a longing on the part of the speaker to have again this ‘lost’ world. It is different from that mechanical life in which love presented as a routine activity rather than being real excitement: ‘Turning, I kissed her/ Easily for sheer joy tipping the balance of love’.

The last stanza is a further elaboration on the speaker's longing for his lost world. The ‘you’ addressed in this stanza is controversial among critics. Some read it as referring to the “muse” and some say it refers to the speaker's lost freedom after committing himself to a serious relation [ibid.]. It is safe to say, however, that this ‘you’ addressed in the last stanza of the poem represents the 'lost lost world' mentioned in the previous one. The connection will be clear when the simile of the ‘cropping deer’ is considered. His mind is a hunter who wants to catch that 'cropping deer':

> My lost lost world
> Like a cropping deer strayed near my path again,
> Bewaring the mind's least clutch. [ll. 14-16]

In the next stanza the metaphor is repeated: the memory of that 'lost world' is dear to him, again ‘as a deer or an unforced field’. This nostalgia

for a lost world is a central characteristic in Larkin's poetry along with melancholy [Childs, 1999: 134]. It is what makes his detached observation ironic as it reveals a deeply responsive attitude to what the speaker experiences against a seeming detachment. The nostalgia here does not imply the speaker's desire for the past as much as a disillusionment with the present. He is not certain if that 'lost' past would ever come back to him. He needs to relinquish a dominating present which may increase his sense of loss. He does not assume that the past is better, nor is the present for him, which signifies a typical attitude of Larkin towards life. He means to say our past is bad, but our present is worse [ibid.].

> How would you have me? Towards your grace
> My promises meet and lock and race like rivers,
> But only when you choose. [ll. 20-22]

His past (you) and present (her) are in conflict: choosing the past means sending the present ‘terribly away’, yet it makes him ‘importantly live’, but the irony is that he'll live fragmented and lost.

> Are you jealous of her?
> Will you refuse to come till I have sent
> Her terribly away, importantly live
> Part involved, part baby, and part saint? [ll. 22-5]

If the speaker in this poem finds, if only for a moment, "a recovered joy" [Whalen: 5], even if it is not for him, his more mature poems in later volumes abandon totally the illusion for more 'less deceived' attitude, detached, ironic and determined.

Adopting the ironic attitude comes only when the speaker in “Next, Please” affirms the inevitable end of man: death. Larkin thinks this ultimate fact puts an end to all our happiness since we know we're going

to die [Childs: 135] . Peter Childs thinks that this attitude toward life is behind the pervasive melancholy of his poetry which implies Larkin's "dread of endless extinction".

"Next, Please" does not present an individual experience observed by a speaker. It is a lyric on the general condition of mankind. It opens with a generalized statement that develops further in the poem through the metaphor of "armada of promises".

> Always too eager for the future, we
> Pick up bad habits of expectancy
> Something is always approaching; every day… [*LD*, ll. 1-3]

But that "armada" of what we expect approaches slowly, mocking man's restless eagerness to grasp his dreams. The coming ships are visibly distinct, yet they never anchor to our harbors leaving "us holding wretched stalks / of disappointment". The speaker mocks further man's ironical situation developing his statement with the same metaphor of the ships of our dreams:

> It's
> No sooner present then it turns to past.
> Right to the last
>
> We think each are will leave to and unload
> All good into our lives, all we are owed
> For waiting so devoutly and so long.
> But we are wrong: [ll. 14-20]

Man realizes the futility and unfruitfulness of his life, gets to the truth, only when confronted with the only 'ship' that seeks him without delay: the 'black-sailed' ship of death.

> Only one ship is seeking us, a black
> Sailed unfamiliar, towing at her back
> A huge and birdless silence. In her wake
> No waters breed or break. [ll. 25-8]

The development of the first generalized statement can be the result of personal experience on the part of the speaker. Yet, the general impersonal tone is grasped again in the last stanza which speaks of common reality: “death becomes a sterile emptiness” which breeds nothing [King: 9].

Terry Whalen finds in this poem a demonstration of "the inevitability of Larkin's arrival at a cleansing skepticism" [Whalen: 37]. It seems that this agnosticism is a common characteristic among The Movement poets, a fact which denotes a tendency in the writings of their generation [Fraser: 348]. Yet, this does not mean they were anti-religious. Larkin's poem, "Church Going" is "an agnostic's reluctant recognition of what the church has meant". George Macbeth believes the poem is autobiographical, representing" a highly serious attempt by a reverent agnostic to express and come to terms with his feeling about religion” [Quoted in Rengachari, 1996: 94] .

The speaker is a detached, indifferent visitor who gets into the church once he is "sure there's nothing going on", meaning that he would avoid it if there was a service conducted. The spontaneous remarks with which he starts reveal what the speaker hides behind his detachment, i. e., a reverence and sensitivity towards the place he is exploring as a tourist [Whalen: 14].

He claims that it is only "Another church", yet he is aware and responsive, in his own way, to that "awkward reverence" that fills the place: He takes off his "cycle-clips", instead of taking off the hat. He goes on in his touring exploration around the place, noticing the newness of the roof. He questions "cleaned, or restored?", but dismisses the question immediately restraining in himself any sign of his responsive curiosity to the place: "some one would know: I don't".

The visitor goes to the 'lectern', reads some verses. Yet his emotions are betrayed unwillingly when "Here endeth" is pronounced much more loudly then he intends. Here he ends his visit and goes to the door, donates worthless "Irish six pence" and reflects "the place was not worth stopping for".

In spite of the visitor's attempts to detach himself from such experience, he admits the fact that he does stop and go into those places, even if they were not "worth stopping for". This raises the question: why is he doing this? Why does the place affect him, leaving him "at a loss like this/ wondering what to look for"? His reflection on the effect of this experience takes him further to question the ultimate destiny of the churches.

> Wondering, too,
> When churches fall completely out of use
> What we shall turn them into, if we shall keep
> A few cathedrals chronically on show
> Their parchment, plate, and pyx in locked cases,
> And let the rest rent-free to rain and sheep
> Shall we avoid them as unlucky places? [*LD*, ll. 21-7]

This reflection on the purpose of these places in the near future denotes the speaker's certainty over the inevitable decline of religion [Childs: 136].

The last line in this extract is heavily ironic in its reference to churches as "unlucky places": the house of God is no longer regarded as such. This prepares the reader for the next argument: when religion dies, it is substituted by superstitions. One of the possible purposes of the church is to be a place for "dubious women" who "come/ To make their children touch a particular stone? But this is dismissed too by the speaker, for superstition may die just like belief.

But superstition, like belief, must die
And what remains when disbelief has gone? [ll.34-5]

If this is the inevitable end of the church, "A shape less recognizable each week", who will be the last man to enter the church? He suggests several possibilities, the last of which is someone like him: "Bored, uninformed", fully aware that "the ghostly silt", religion, is 'dispersed'. It is noticeable that among his possible 'last' visitors there is no one who may come for religious reasons. However, the speaker reveals his admiration to that place as

It held unsplit
So long and equably what since is found
Only in separation-marriage, and birth,
And death, and thoughts of these – for which was built
This special shell. [ll. 48-52]

He does not only admire the place's power to survive and attract people to itself through guiding them in their most important activities, birth, marriage and death. He is pleased to be there in spite of his unknowing why he feels that.

For, though I've no idea
What this accoutred frowsty barn is worth,
It pleases me to stand in silence here, [ll. 52-4]

With such statement, the speaker ends his ironical exploration of the place and reflection on his experience toward the place. The poem ends with this

A serious house on serious earth it is
In whose blent air all our compulsions meet,
Are recognized, and robed as destines. [ll. 55-7]

The speaker concludes his reflection over the worth of the church in an age no longer gives religion its due, with a statement that opens his agnosticism into questioning. For him, these churches will never "be obsolete", there will be always someone like him in search of some

meaning get attracted to the place which will awaken something in himself.

> And that much never will be obsolete
> Since someone will for ever be surprising
> A hunger in himself to be more serious
> And gravitating with it to this ground
> Which, he once heard, was proper to grow wise in
> If only that so many dead lie round. [ll. 58-63]

This "ironic scorn" with which the speaker starts his exploration of the place gives way at the end to praise and admiration; this helps the speaker to turn "his agnostic humanism [to] an oddly religious glow" [Whalen: 17].

"Church Going" does not simply record personal experience of one individual, P. R. King finds in this poem universal meaning that touches upon an important issue in the modern world: the crisis of faith.

> The value of this poem is that it does two things at once, both of which summarize the basic dilemma of an age without faith: it reveals that age's desire to dismiss what it considers to be spurious crutches of superstition and religion; and it reveals our containing need to recognize and symbolize our deepest nature. [33]

Yet, the poem does not endorse Christianity or religion. It is, rather, an acknowledgement on the part of an agnostic that our modern world has lost something valuable: it lost the "inherited order" [Thwaite: 107].

Not all Larkin poems end in the same positive tone. The speaker of "Church Going" suggests a way to put an end to modern man's death-in-life; to grasp again what we have lost.[2] But reality does not offer the chance to get back what we have once lost. It is a dominating force, and to learn how to resign ourselves to it, the less we will be deceived by its illusions. It is an illusion to think that there is an alternative, a satisfactory and comforting alternative, to the "conventional, humdrum life" man leads today [Rengachari: 135].

Larkin mocks such an illusory thought in his "Poetry of Departures". The irony here is not directed against the man who "chucked up everything/ And just cleared off". It is directed actually against the speaker's desire to do the same, yet stays in the home he hates and the room he detests. King, on the other hand, finds the irony is doubly used against both: the escapist romantic who rebelled against his life and the speaker's ordered life [King: 16-7]. For the speaker in this poem, the romantic action of rebellion is embarrassing and shocking as reading 'pulp' fiction. Yet, he agrees (and approve) with such "Elemental move" which every one wants to do:

> And they are right, I think.
> We all hate home
> And having to be there:
> I detest my room,
> Its specially-chosen junk
> The good books, the good bed
> And my life, my perfect order: [*LD*, ll. 9-15]

Thus, he challenges himself with the question:

> Surely I can, if he did?

Ironically, the answer to this challenge is quite the opposite. He decides to stay home and be "sober and industrious". His rebellion is not leaving everything he hates and starts new life, but commits himself to hard work, walk the dark brown ("nut-strewn") roads "swaggering" with self confidence and satisfaction. This is Larkin's "ironic realism" which takes his readers to a more "conservative choice", to submit to the limitedness of life, rather than follow the romantic cliché of rebellion [(35)].

In their critical introductory of Philip Larkin in *The Norton Anthology of Modern Poetry* (1985), the editors say that Larkin chose to be a less deceived rather than among the more deceived who still dream of illusory world. The conflict between both parties is shown in his "The

Whitsun Weddings", another autobiographical piece that recalls the same attitude adopted by the poet in "Church Going": a detached observer who gradually, through the process of reflecting on what he observes, gets involved with what he sees that evokes in himself a deeper response then his seeming detachment. Yet, this time the subject of the poem is different, it is not faith, but the illusion of happiness. The illusion here is exemplified in the newly married couples and their unawareness of what may be their future life (the picture of this future is seen in another poem of the same volume "Afternoons").

For the poet, unhappiness is the dominant condition; he said in an interview "most people are unhappy" [Childs: 138]. Unhappiness in marriage is particularly close subject to the poet's heart, since he himself suffered from it as a son of a miserable couple. He wrote in his diary: "At 1:45 p.m. let me remember that the only married state I intimately know (i.e. that of my parents) is bloody hell. Never must it be forgotten" [quoted in Al-Qaysi: 139].

Yet, the poem, "The Whitsun Weddings", claim for more importance than its mere personal background. It testifies for the poet's ability to relent on symbolism in conveying his meaning. Andrew Motion puts the poem as one of those that still show Yeats' lingering influence on Larkin [Motion:77]. The sun, the train, the journey, the shade, the fake ornaments of the crowd, all communicate a symbolic meaning that enriches the poem and puts the poet alongside with Eliot in their ironic criticism of modern life.

The speaker assumes the role of a passenger to remain detached in watching the crowds bidding farewell to the newly married couples. He gets into the train late, but the "tall heat" of the sun overwhelms the atmosphere to the extent of boredom.

All windows down, all cushions hot, all sense,

Of being in a hurry gone. [*WW*, ll. 5-6]

Under this dominant reality (the heat of the sun), the speaker is incapable of recognizing what happens in the "shade":

At first, I didn't notice what a noise
The weddings made
Each station that we stopped at: sun destroys
The interest of what\s happening in the shade. [ll. 31-4]

The event till now does not attract his attention, he "went on reading" indifferent to what happens around him. The view of the girls "In parodies of fashion" and all their other celebrating activities strikes him, motivating in him a sense of curiosity. He starts to look at what is dragging into "the shade"; he does not abandon completely the world of reality to that of illusion. Thus, from his realistic stance, he satirizes the deluded crowds:

The fathers with broad belts under their suits
And seeing foreheads: mothers loud and fat
The nylon gloves and jewelry-substitutes
The uncle shouting smuts; and then the perms,
The lemons, mauves, and olive-ochres that

Marked off the girls unreally from the rest. [ll. 46- 51]

For the speaker, the parents are only a future picture of those newly-married couples

And as we moved, each face seemed to define
Just what it saw deporting. [ll. 58-9]

The speaker reflects then what each person in the crowd think of this festival, projecting his own idea of the illusory experience of marriage: for the fathers the whole thing is merely "farcical", the women know it is, ironically, "happy funeral", the girls see it as "religious wounding". As the train moves toward London, the speaker goes on contemplating the couples sitting with him in the train. They are unaware of what is awaiting them, and it seems that these moments will be the only worthy

time in their lives, for the life of London, dominated by harsh reality (hot sun) is what awaits them ahead.

A dozen marriages got underway
They watched the landscape, sitting side by side
… … … … … … and none
Thought of the others they would never meet
Or how their lives would all contain this hour
I thought of London spread out in the sun. [ll. 73- 79]

The journey ends with "a sense of falling", and this challenges any attempt to find a positive meaning in the poem's end: the falling happens swiftly like arrows shower. Though the image of the "arrow-shower" and "rain" promises positive fertility, Calvin Bedient finds in this a reminding of "inevitable dissolution, as arrows fall and rain means mould, dampness, the cold, the elemental" [93].

We slowed again
And as the tightened brakes took hold, there swelled
A sense of falling, like an arrow-shower
Sent out of sight, somewhere becoming rain. [ll. 87-90]

The speaker of this poem stands in the same position of the visitor in "Church Going": he starts as ironical witness or observer then gradually, and through deeper reflection, he gets emotionally involved without abandoning completely the sense of irony.

The ironic future of these newly married couples is presented clearly in "Afternoons" of the same volume. The brides become ironically "young mothers" who get aged before their time. Reality, symbolized by the wind, "is ruining their courting places" which do not belong to them anymore. Love is for the teenagers. They are no longer the deceived just-wedded couples: the wedding albums are thrown away indifferently "Near the television".

Throughout his mature poetry, Larkin uses irony to mock false beauty or idealism to show reality as a stronger destroyer against any illusion. Love, hope, religion and even marriage, any kind of value is doomed to be shattered away when confronting reality. The modern man is not ready to accept false beauty in an age that cannot offer but one sure possibility: futility or death. In "Sunny Prestatyn", the speaker passes by an advertising poster for the seaside resort. The illusion of false beauty is presented through a girl in a swimsuit. Someone protests and distorts the poster:

> Someone has used a knife
> Or something to stop right through
> The moustached lips of her smile. [*WW*, ll. 18-20]

Even this false beauty is changed because it is rejected and reality imposes itself again against the alluring images:

> She was too good for this life
> Very soon, a great transverse tear
> Left only a hand and some blue
> Now fight the Cancer is there. [ll. 21-24]

That is the way Larkin looks to life after the Second World War. The protest is not violent but negative to the extent of accepting. His only way to signify this rejection is his irony, yet it is not the heavily satirical irony of T. S. Eliot who wanted to shock his readers and motivate them to change. Larkin's is a defensive irony that mocks the deceived, those who still cherish hopes in illusory thoughts inviting them to accept and live that greatly rejected reality. To rebel, for him is "so artificial" as he declares in "Poetry for Departures", whose last stanza fits to clarify generally, Larkin's way of dealing with the world:

> But I'd go today
>
> Yes swagger the nut-strewn roads
> Crouch in the fo ć śle
> Stubbly with goodness, if
> It weren't so artificial

Such a deliberate step backwards
To create an object:
Books, china, a life
Reprehensibly perfect.

## Notes

1- Philip Larkin, The North Ship (London: Fortune Press, 1946), abbreviated as *NS*. Subsequent quotations of Philip Larkin's poetry will be followed by the title of the volume abbreviated as the following: *LD* for *The Less Deceived*, *WW* for *The Whitsun Wedding*, *HW* for *High Windows*.

2- Larkin is not a religious person; he himself admits the fact: "I am not someone who's lost forth: I never had it". Yet, he admits too that there is a longing inside for religion:

No one could help hoping Christianity
Was true, or at least the happy ending,
Rising from the dead and our sins forgiven.
One longs for these miracles, and so in
A sense one longs for religion".

Quoted in AsmaAl-Qaysi, p. 88. This attitude links Larkin further to Hardy who expressed the same hope in being able to believe in religion in his poem "The Oxen" (1917).

## Bibliography

- Al-Qaysi, Asma'a Riyadh. "Realism versus Illusion in the poetry of Philip Larkin" unpublished M. A. thesis, Baghdad University Press, 1995.
- Bedient, Calvin. Eight Contemporary poets. London: Oxford University Press, 1974.
- Childs, Peter. The Twentieth-Century in poetry. London: Routledge, 1999.
- Davie, Donald. Thomas Hardy and British Poetry. London: Routledge, 1973.
- Fraser, G. S. The Modern Writer and His World. London: Penguin Books, 1970.
- Frye, Northrop. Anatomy of Criticism. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957.
- King, P. R. Nine Contemporary Poets. London: Methuen, 1979.
- Kirkham, Michael. "Philip Larkin and Charles Tomlinson: Realism and Art. "in Boris Ford (ed.). The Present: Volume VIII. London: Penguin Books, 1983.
- Motion, Andrew. Philip Larkin. London: Methuen, 1986.
- Press, john. A Map of Modern English Verse. London: Oxford

University Press, 1969.

- Regan, Stephen. "Philip Larkin, a Late Modernist". In The Cambridge Companion of the Twentieth Century English Poetry. Cambridge University Press, 2007. Pp. 147-158.
- Rengachari, S. Philip Larkin. Bara Bazar: Parakash Books, 1996.
- Rosenthal, M. L. The New Poets: American and British Poets Since World War II. New York: Oxford University Press, 1967.
- Thomas, Frances Noel. "Philip Larkin, Barbara Pym, and the Accident of Literary Fame". In New England Review, 27, 2006. pp.8-26.
- Thwaite, Anthony. Twentieth Century Poetry. London: Hienmann, 1978.
- Weiner, Joshua. "Philip Larkin: 'The Whitsun Wedding'" (2010). Published by Poetry Foundation, available at:

http://www.poetryfoundation.org/learning/poem-guide.html?guide_id=180154

- Whalen, Terry. Philip Larkin and English Poetry. London: Macmillan, 1986.

## التورية الانفصالية في شعر فيليب لاركن

**د. نادية فايض محمد**

**الجامعة المستنصرية**

**كلية الاداب**

**قسم اللغة الانكليزية وادابها**

الخلاصة

بالرغم من الدراسات العديدة التي اجريت عن شعر فيليب لاركن، فلايزال شعره يدعو الى البحث والدراسة لكل ما فيه من معاني و مواضيع قيمة بالنسبة للقارئ الباحث و القارئ العادي. فلقد استطاع الشعر فيليب لاركن.