

## **Tensions of the Movement in Philip Larkin's 'The Whitsun Weddings'**

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**Abstract:** The Movement started with an identity crisis mainly because it was not a coherent group with a manifesto of its own. It shared a mood and conditions of post war England. It described the agony, pain and misery of post war time. The post war era is significant for globalization outbreak. People from all over the world started migrating to London as it became the centre of trade and commerce. London became overpopulated and dirty due to overpopulation and industrialization.

**Keywords:** The Movement, Philip Larkin, industrialization,

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Philip Larkin is a movement poet and Man of Realism. He was influenced by his friend Kingsley Amis to become a poet. He emerged as a writer in 1950s. He belonged to the Angry Young men group. John Osborn was prominent in this group. Philip Larkin (1922-1985) is always noted as one of the major English poets of the 1950s. He was born in Coventry, West Midlands. He studied at King Henry VIII Grammar School and then at St. Johns' College, Oxford. He studied English from 1940-1943. He became a librarian for so many years at a variety of places. *The Less Deceived* (1955) brought him into recognition as an important poet, and also on his association with the Movement.

The Movement arose in the mid 1950s around the thoughts and works of three young men: Philip Larkin, Kingsley Amis and John Wain. These three poets are as M. L. Rosen believes, "very unlike one another, yet sharing certain perspective and distrust of flamboyant mannerisms or Romantic attitudes. Some poets and writers like Oscar Mellor, John Wain, G. S. Fraser and Iain Fletcher, whose critical readings and literary products were among the early manifestations of this new spirit which rejected the "1940s sinister corrupters of poetic taste. It was commonly called the Movement since no body was quite clear on what this new spirit stood for. In October 1954, the first announcement of this new trend in poetry appeared in *The Spectator*. It called itself "The Movement".

The Movement writers, Elizabeth Jennings, John Housman, Thom Gunn, P. J. Enright, Donald Davie and Dylan Thomas represented an intellectual reaction against the Neo-romantic of the 1940s. They demanded that intelligence and intelligibility should be regarded as essential virtues in poetry. The poetry of the Movement was knowledgeable, intelligent polished and reactionary against the historical one of literature and against the faults of such poets as Dylan Thomas whom Conquest accused of destroying the taste of the poetry reading public and insisting on the debilitating theory that poetry must be metaphorical.

The poem, *The Whitsun Weddings* is taken from the anthology 'The Whitsun Weddings' published by Faber, UK 1964. The anthology has 32 poems. Whitsun is the 7<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Easter (Pentecost) or 52 days from Good Friday. Whitsun is the abbreviation for White Sunday. Newly converted Christians wore white dresses on this particular day. The poem reveals the experiences of a train journey from Hull to London. It describes the view from the train and the speaker's experience. Pastoral landscape and industrialization is portrayed well in the poem. The speaker recounts his train journey from east of England to London and his observations along the way. Numerous wedding parties interrupt his train journey as it was a weekend. The newlywed couples remind him of being in love how it is to be in love.

Philip Larkin is a much celebrated Movement poet. The literary movement called 'The Movement' describes the tensions of globalization and industrialization. The movement poets are famous for their poems reflecting the issues of industrialization and globalization. The misery, pain and agony of the time are reflected in their works. Philip Larkin also portrays the enormous change industrialization and globalization brought to the world through this poem. He vividly describes the scenes captured while travelling from Hull to London. London was the epitome of trade, business and mainly industrialization. Hull is a rural place compared to London which is an urban place. The poet confesses the change from rural to urban. The urban culture changes the minds, fashion and the customs of people.

The poem *The Whitsun Weddings* describes the train journey from Hull to London. The train symbolizes motion or change in position from rural to urban. It also shows the transmission of culture, tradition, economy, employment, fashion and lifestyle.

Wide arms went by, short shadowed cattle, and Canals with floatings of industrial froth A hot house flashed uniquely: hedges dipped and rose: and now and then a smell of grass.... (Larkin, 1964)

The word, hot describes the change in the overall temperature due to green house effect.

The greenhouse effect is the effect of industrialization and pollution. The canals formerly clean have been filled with industrial froth. The industrial froth is a clear symbol of the dirty effects of industrialization and pollution. Hedges dipped and rose indicates deforestation for putting up industries and factories due to industrialization. It also indicates forest fires which has destroyed many forests. The forest fires are the effect of barbarous, selfish minds of people. The barbarous nature of the urban people shows the end of Christianity. The smell of grass indicates forests, greenery and goodness. The speaker not so often feels the presence of greenery. This is also a true sign of industrialization. The smell of grass also has a contradictory meaning which is foul smell which indicates all kinds of pollution. Approached with acres of dismantled cars. (Larkin, 1964). The dismantled cars show a clear picture of destruction.

“We passed them grinning and pomaded girls In parodies of fashion, heels and veils All posed irresolutely, watching us go” (Larkin,1964) The fashion has changed drastically. The girls portrayed in these lines belong to urban lifestyle. The poet who has been travelling find it strange to see girls with heavy makeup. The speaker belongs to rural area and is travelling to an urban city. He finds the style of rural and urban contradictory to each other. The girls are described as pomaded as they wear lot of makeup compared to the rural people. The makeup shows that girls want to attract men by exposing themselves.

“As if out on the end of an event Waving goodbye To something that survived it (Larkin,1964) Goodbye indicates that something is gone forever. Rural life is gone. The urban class girls are waving goodbye to the rural life. The end of rural life is described here. An uncle shouting smut (Larkin, 1964) shows present generation who have the tendency of cracking jokes of whatsoever especially the things which are forbidden.

“Ochres that Marked off the girls unreally from the rest” (Larkin, 1964).

Ochres refer to colored dyes used by the girls in order to stand out from the crowd. The wedding days are coming to an end (Larkin, 1964). The concept of wedding is rural and it is no more prominent in the urban world and new era. The urban people introduce new concepts like living together relationships. In the new era, the concept of marriage has become a joke. This is also an indication of end of Christian era or the religious era. Success so huge and wholly farcical the women shared the secret like a happy funeral (Larkin, 1964) Funeral celebrates the death of old traditions and culture. At a religious wounding (Larkin, 1964) shows the end of religion and virginity. The texts and the rules of religion are destroyed by the urban class. Hence the urban has wounded the religion and the rural people.

“We hurried towards London, shuffling gout of Now fields were building plots and poplars cast” (Larkin, 1964) The fields were converted into building plots and poplars cast. This shows that much area has been converted into buildings for industrial purposes.

“Long shadows and major roads, and for Some fifty minutes, that in time would seem.” (Larkin, 1964).

The speaker finds it strange to find long shadows as it is not found in rural areas. In rural areas, the tallest of all are the trees but as the train approached urban area there are numerous tall buildings which are much taller than trees and creates a long shadows as nothing obstruct the shadow as trees are cut down. It has been fifty minutes of the train journey but it feels like only minutes have passed. This is also an indication of modern era who feels that there is no time for anything. Everyone is too busy that they do not have time for anything. I nearly died. (Larkin, 1964). The speaker is symbolized as the rural life. Here the rural life nearly died due to the influence of the attractive urban life.

“An Odean went past” (Larkin, 1964). An odean refers to a theatre. In this poem it portrays vulgarity which is being injected into the hearts of people. This vulgarity is highly appreciated by the majority. Its postal districts packed like squares of wheat (Larkin, 1964)The urban crowd and the crowded cities looks like squares of wheat. There are shortage of houses and congestion. This shows that London is becoming dirty due to industrialization due to overpopulation.

“A sense of falling like arrow shower Sent out of sight somewhere becoming rain.” (Larkin, 1964)

The sense of falling indicates the fall of rural life or the end of it. The rain has become an arrow shower. The arrow indicates the poisonous acids present in the rain. The rain is sent out of sight as the rain has become lesser.

The poem, The Whitsun Weddings clearly portrays the movement from the rural to urban class which is the major theme of the The Movement writers. The Movement poets are famous for expressing agony, pain and misery of the post world war era. Philip Larkin expresses the change in culture, fashion and religion in this poem. He expresses his longing to go back to the rural life which was much calm and peaceful. The rural life indicates the religious era whereas the urban life indicates the barbarous era. Philip Larkin foresees the mistakes man has done to nature and oneself. The tension of both the The Movement and the movement from rural to urban has been portrayed in this poem.

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