



# REVIEW OF RESEARCH

ISSN: 2249-894X

IMPACT FACTOR : 5.7631 (UIF)

UGC APPROVED JOURNAL NO. 48514

VOLUME - 8 | ISSUE - 9 | JUNE - 2019



---

---

## TREATMENT OF "DEATH" IN THE POEMS OF PHILLIP LARKIN: THE OLD FOOLS AND AMBULANCES

**Pragnesh Ishwarbhai Solanki**  
Assistant Professor, College of Agriculture, Waghai.

### ABSTRACT:

Phillip Larkin is one of the chief representative of Post War British poetry and a major poet among the Movement poets. The Movement poetry was largely a reaction against the Neo Romanticism of 1940s, a victory over common sense and clarity over obscurity and mystification, of verbal restraints over stylistic excess.

Phillip Larkin frames a "freshly created universe" it obviously means that it doesn't require any past references or allusions to interpret meaning. He presents things as they are without any manipulation hence he more realistic in tone and expression. There is a lesser symbolic expression in his poetry. The present paper therefore deals with a harsh reality of life that is death in the poems 'The Old Fools' and 'Ambulances' by Philip Larkin. Treatment of death during Renaissance and Elizabethan Age was different as the it was referred to a way to rebirth but here it is presented from post modern point of view.



**KEYWORDS:** Death, Post War poetry, Movement Poets, Renaissance, Elizabethan Age.

### INTRODUCTION

Ambulances is one of the poems taken from the collection "The Whitsun Weddings" reflecting the idea of death and its effect on human mind. The theme that dominates the poem is death to which no one is exception and its thought itself is intimidating. In the opening stanza Death is contrasted with a closed confession box. As in the ritual in Christianity the sinner confesses his or her sins to a priest in privacy and in response the sinner is forgiven but the case is different in terms of Death

which forgives none, in other words no body remains away from the clutches of death and the experience of death remains confidential with one who experiences it. Ambulance which is considered as a chariot of death, moves slowly through the city and makes the time unpleasant. Death has no certain time and space and it has paid visit to all the streets.

*"They come to rest at any kerb:  
All streets in time are visited."*

The sight of death is caught in the eyes of the children who are playing and they are scattered on the steps or road and women

coming from the shops sees the dead body momentarily covered with white clothe. The dead body confronts death and looks wildly at it and is taken to stretcher, carried in the ambulance and stowed. The dead refers to the whole mankind and therefore by looking at it makes us aware of our transitory existence of life hence we hardly look at it. But the poet finds death or "emptiness" positive as it solves all the problems. It accompanies us in all our activities and in no time comes to us therefore poet calls it permanent which remains with us.

*"the solving emptiness  
That lies just under all we do..."*

It is blank as no one described its experience and it is a harsh and inevitable truth. The doors of ambulance are shut and departs. The crowd feels pity perhaps on their own soul because they are left with their problems to suffer. Though it has carried away in silence, the thought of death still exists in the world. And whatever growth the body has throughout the years at the time of death all disappear. The poet falsifies the claim that love makes man immortal admitting that even death is out of reach of love. The ambulance goes away but leaves the thought of death as the finite element.

Another poem "The Old Fools" by Philip Larkin is a satire on the illusory life lived by the old men, who despite being aware of their physical weakness consider themselves as wise. The old age is treated mockingly with its physical problems.

The poem opens with a series of rhetorical questions, why the old think themselves full of wisdom and maturity? Don't they know that their physique have grown old and their behaviour is childish-

*"your mouth hangs open and drools  
And you keep on pissing yourself, and can't remember  
Who called this morning?"*

It is said that old age is second childhood there is no innocence that makes the young ones irritating about their behaviour. The old men are dissatisfied with present hence they evoke their past and wants to have the same condition today. They live in world which comforts them.

Further in the poem reveals Death as the final destination which decays the body of flesh and blood when buried and with it flies away all the passions.

*"At death, you break up : the bits that were you  
Start speeding away from each other forever."*

It is because old men are unaware of the reality that physical charm and pleasure shall cut short by death. They live their lives in the memories to compensate the loss. When these memories fade away and body grows cold and breath hard , they are under the shadow of death which makes them quiet. The poet thinks that why they drag back their past? When will they realise about the reality?

The poem implies a satire on the traditional approach to poetry by the Romantic poets who idealised and romanticized the reality of life. John Donne's 'Death Be not Proud" highlighted the prospect of heavenly life which is in sharp contrast to this poem. Donne addresses Death as a short sleep which awakes man to eternal world where they will live forever. But here Larkin deals death as an end to life , decay of body, losing passions. For him death is not an avenue to the other realm.

Death *"break up: the bits that were you"*

Thus, death is treated as omnipresent and omnipotent.

#### REFERENCES:

1. Larkin, Phillip. 2003. CollectedPoems, published by Penguin, Haryana.
2. Sanders, Andrew. 2005. The Short Oxford History of English Literature, Second Edition, published by Oxford University press, New Delhi.