



About Larkin

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Editorial

It is my happy duty to welcome Grayson Perry as an honorary Vice President of the Society. We are most grateful that he has agreed to take on this role. Less happily, I must say farewell to my co-editor, Janet Brennan. I discover, with amazement, that, after she had been sole editor for issue 21 (Oct. 2006), Janet acted as co-editor for the succeeding eleven years, producing the 21 issues from 23 to 43. Truly, we are not suited to the long perspectives! I will miss her expertise in layout and her eagle eye for mistakes. Many, many thanks, Janet, and all the best for the future.

Lately Larkin's profile on the small screen has been high. Some of us attended the Hull preview of the wide-ranging 'Sky Passions: Philip Larkin by Andrew Motion' to be broadcast on Sky Television in February. In September the BBC broadcast John Wedgwood Clarke's brilliant 'Through the Lens of Larkin', on Larkin's photographs. And Larkin is to be featured in the BBC television series *Flog It!* some time in 2018.

The first two primary documents brought to light in this issue make a sharp contrast. John Kelly's research reveals the first-year undergraduate Larkin as an impertinent subversive, satirising the muscular Christian President of St John's, Sir Cyril Norwood, in the Junior Common Room Suggestions Book. The story is reversed in a letter of three decades later, April 1969, in which an older, tory Larkin responds curtly to a student at the London School of Economics who solicited his support for staff who had been dismissed after abetting a student 'sit-in'.

Casting back much further, Philip Pullen has pieced together letters, photographs and a key audio-recording, to create a vivid picture of the first meeting between the poet's parents in Rhyl in 1906. Geoff Weston documents the young poet's dashed hopes of publication in 'Z', a fugitive volume edited John Lehmann. Roger Gourd introduces two reviews of student poetry from Larkin's early years in Hull. And Angela Kenyon, widow of Professor of History at Hull, John Kenyon, offers an affectionate reminiscence of Larkin in the 1960s and 70s.

It has been an active year. On 26 April Graham Chesters spoke to the Pocklington Arts Society at Pocklington School. On 20 June James discussed Larkin in the Oxford and Cambridge Club in Pall Mall. On 16 July the Society contributed readings to 'Larkin' Out in the Avenues'. On 21 July Graham Chesters and Philip Pullen gave talks on Larkin's Hull and Larkin's legacy at the Hull University Alumni AGM in the Brynmor Jones Library. On 24 August Philip conducted masterclasses for Hull 2017 volunteers in the Larkin Building, and on 7 September gave a talk, 'Exploiting the Larkin Archive – a researcher's paradise', at the History Centre during a Hull Heritage Open Day. Don Lee conducted three of his Hull walks on 8 June, 9 July and 30 September. And on 15 September Philip Pullen conducted the first ever Larkin walk in Beverley as part of the Beverley Walking Festival. Philip Pullen's research is soon to see fruit in a chapter in a book on writers and their mothers edited by Dale Salwak and published by Palgrave Macmillan.

The Society's key contribution to 'Hull, City of Culture 2017' was the highly-praised exhibition, 'New Eyes Each Year', curated by Anna Farthing in the Brynmor Jones Library. It welcomed 11,890 visitors between 5 July and 1 October. But crowning the Society's year was our Annual Guest Lecture, 'This Frail Travelling Coincidence', delivered by Grayson Perry in the Middleton Hall on 5 July. All agree that this was the most stimulating and original Annual Lecture we have ever heard. Sharp-eyed Society members noticed that, in a corner of the recent wood-cut self portrait in Perry's Serpentine Gallery Exhibition, he includes a glimpse of his invitation to the unveiling of the Larkin stone at Westminster Abbey last year.

Also included are an interview by Lyn Lockwood with D J Roberts on 'Larkinland' at the Southbank Centre, a review by Mark Rowe of Peter Dickinson's *Words and Music*, and poems by Carol Rumens, John Tatum and Mary McCollum.

James Booth

Contents

Forthcoming		4
Obituary: Professor William 'Bill' Speck		4
'These Foolish Things': The <i>Spectator</i> , 1 April 2017	Bill Greenwell	4
Philip Larkin vs Sir Cyril Norwood, 1941	John Kelly	5
Poem: MCMXLV: For the Poets who Served in World War Two	Carol Rumens	6
A Letter to LSE Students: 1969	Philip Larkin, intr. James Booth	7
'On some Welsh beach my parents met' – how Sydney and Eva first 'became known'	Philip Pullen	8
Larkin Society AGM, The Lawns Centre, Cottingham, 3 June 2017		12
Remembering Philip	Angela Kenyon	13
'A Biased View' of the 'New Eyes Each Year' Exhibition by Anna Farthing	Philip Pullen	15
'This Frail Travelling Coincidence': Annual Guest Lecture by Grayson Perry, Middleton Hall, Hull, 5 July 2017		17
Review of 'This Frail Travelling Coincidence' by Grayson Perry	James Booth	18
Two Elusive Reviews: 'Tender Voices' (1963) and 'Young Contemporaries' (1966)	Philip Larkin, intr. Roger Gourd	19
'Z': Another Larkin Exclusion	Geoff Weston	25
'Larkinworld' at the Poetry Library, London. Interview with D J Roberts	Lyn Lockwood	26
'Literary Connections': Review of <i>Words and Music</i> by Peter Dickinson (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2016)	Mark Rowe	28
Bringing Hull into Reach: Review of <i>2,017 Facts about Hull</i> by Jim Orwin	Don Lee	29
Poems: Witnesses, Tadpoles	Mary McCollum	29
Poem: Old Peoples' Ward	John Tatum	29
Notes on Contributors		30
Publications and Merchandise		31

About Larkin is produced twice yearly by The Philip Larkin Society.
The articles in the Journal reflect the personal opinions of the contributors
and not those of the Society as a whole.

Forthcoming

2 December 2017: An Evening of Jazz

Venue and time to be announced. See website www.philiplarkin.com

Bill Speck

It is with sadness that we record the death of Professor William, 'Bill', Speck, a loyal long-time member of the Society, on February 16 at the age of 79. A former president of the Historical Association (1999–2002) his academic specialism was the 'long' eighteenth century. Born in Bradford, he took a BA and D.Phil in Oxford. After a Fellowship at Exeter he taught in the University of Newcastle Upon Tyne and in 1981 was appointed to the G. F. Grant Professorship of History at Hull, moving in 1984 to Leeds and retiring in 1997. He wrote a number of books on 18thC history and in 2006 published a monograph on the poet Robert Southey. Bill played the clarinet, was passionate about jazz and loved walking the Lakeland fells. He was a noted cat-lover and chairman of the Carlisle branch of the RSPCA. His presence at our Society events will be missed. JB

'These Foolish Things': Spectator, 1 April 2017

In Competition No. 2991 readers were invited to submit an April Fool disguised as a serious news feature that contains a startling revelation about a well-known literary figure.

Anthony Thwaite has drawn our attention to one of the winning entries, by Bill Greenwell, which made a surprising revelation about our poet.

The literary world has been startled by news that Philip Larkin was actually two people — he had an identical twin, who worked on the famous poems while Philip worked as Hull University's librarian. 'This explains everything,' commented biographer Sir Andrew Motion. 'For years we've grappled with his overlapping affairs, and seeming ability to complete 9-5 shifts, while crafting elegant verse. Now we see how he — or rather they — did it.' Lord Bragg, who interviewed him in 1982, confessed himself unsurprised. 'I've always wondered why he was shy of cameras. They feared being spotted.' From Norfolk, poet Anthony Thwaite confessed he knew all along. 'His brother Mark — they called one another "Ma" and "Pop" — preferred sauce to gravy. Hence "Mr Bleaney". He sat up editing till Philip went to work, an economy measure.'

Hull councillors are holding emergency meetings over whether to remove Larkin's statue in the station — or duplicate it.

*Janet Brennan,
Co-editor of About Larkin, 2006-2017,
in the garden of Thomas Hardy's
birthplace, Higher Bockhampton,
Dorset, 2010.*



Philip Larkin vs Sir Cyril Norwood: St John's College, Oxford, 1941

*John Kelly, Emeritus Research Fellow in English,
St John's College, Oxford*



Sir Cyril Norwood in 1946. © National Portrait Gallery

Recently James Booth contacted me with a request for biographical details concerning people mentioned in Larkin's letters home which he is currently editing. His request reminded me of the Guest Lecture I gave at the Annual General Meeting of the Larkin Society in 2002, 'Young Philip Larkin'. For some time thereafter I intended to redeploy the material in that lecture in a thorough edition of 'Biographical Details: Oxford', Larkin's typescript account of his time at University. In the end, alas, this project was overtaken by other priorities and James Booth published the bare text of Larkin's Oxford account in *About Larkin* 23 and 24 (April and October 2007).

Among the references needing clarification were two fleeting mentions of the Principal of St John's at the time, Sir Cyril Norwood. In his very first letter home from St John's, of 11-12 October 1940' Larkin wrote: 'Well, I don't think I'll prolong this letter further, even

though I'd like to include Norwood's Sermon tomorrow.' Clearly he was full of expectation. But he was disappointed. On 15 October 1940 he recorded his response to the sermon with dismissive hauteur: 'On Sunday I attended my first and (I trust) last chapel. Norwood drivelled in a cultured manner.'

Larkin's references here are to the distinguished educationist, Sir Cyril Norwood (1875–1956), President of the College. The product of an earlier age Norwood, by now in his mid sixties, was not the sort of man to impress the eighteen-year old Larkin. The son of a heavy-drinking clergyman and headmaster, Norwood had been educated at Merchant Taylors' School, London, and came up to read classics at St. John's in 1894. After an impressive undergraduate career he graduated with a first in 1898. Coming out top in the Home Civil Service examination he briefly joined the Admiralty but left after just over a year to teach at Leeds Grammar School. In 1906 he was appointed Headmaster of Bristol Grammar School, where he was a great success, moved to the headship of Marlborough College in 1916, and ten years later became head of Harrow School, on the recommendation of the then Archbishop of Canterbury. In 1929 he published *The English Tradition of Education*, which praised the public schools for fostering character-building through chapel, outdoor sports and firm discipline. President of the Modern Churchmen's Union, he was knighted in 1938, and in 1934 was elected President of St John's College, an office he held until 1946. He was married with three daughters.

All this counted for little in the eyes of the young Larkin who concerned himself only with Norwood as a poet. Eager to boost wartime morale, Norwood had published a tribute 'To a Fallen Airman', in *The Times* on 16 January 1941:

High o'er the clouds, and aflame with the fire of
sunrise
Poised on the edge of the moment, to die or to live,
Sheer with the peregrine's stoop through the swirl of
the skies,
Daring the cost, you struck home: what more could
you give?

About Larkin

Dead: -- but flame of your youth cannot fade with
the years,
Dead – but more living in spirit than we who draw
breath,
Perfect by sacrifice, cleansed of our doubts and our
fears,
Fallen, the ransom of many and Victor o'er Death.

Such pious sub-Newbolt claptrap could scarcely impress the new Auden generation. With calculated impertinence, Noel Hughes, Larkin's old schoolfellow and chum, pasted the poem into the Junior Common Room Suggestions Book, and complained that if the *Times* persisted 'in printing such utter balls as this I suggest it should not be purchased in future'. Larkin was more suave and devastating in his subversion of the distinguished head of his College:

I protest against Mr. Hughes' brutal condemnation of the above moving piece of verse, and his implied insult to a figure whom we all respect and honour. Surely, sir, the ability to scan throughout eight whole lines is not to be despised, and to produce three good rhymes out of four is no mean achievement.

And, transcending all mere mundane technique, surely the Author's obviously profound and passionate interest in his theme is worthy of the highest praise. Here is a sensitive mind exceptionally and beautifully alive to all the splendour and nobility of youth, competent and eager to immortalise in verse his most moving perceptions; all must appreciate in sum, this brief yet profoundly spiritual expression so native to our own time, yet surely in feeling so akin to eternity.

I am, Sir, Yours faithfully

Philip A. Larkin

Pasting the poem into the Suggestions Book turned out to be controversial in itself, and was denounced as contrary to long practice. Larkin demurred, and appealed to tradition, insisting that

the habit of bill pasting has been faithfully copied from the old JCR book, which we have been told many times, was the summa bonum (or something) of all JCR books. Are we now to find this authority disapproved of?

Yours somewhat puzzled

P. A. Larkin.

But this time the pedant was outpedanted. Christopher Young, an Exhibitioner in Classics, who thus knew whereof he spoke, offered a curt emendation: 'Summum bonum / Or / Summa bona / You ignorant bugger'.

We are grateful to the Society of Authors, on behalf of the Estate of Philip Larkin, for permission to publish the extracts from Larkin's writing. © The Estate of Philip Larkin 2017.

MCMXLV:

For the Poets who Served in World War Two

The conscript poets are leaving us: we still follow their loose semblance of a formation, trekking, at its own pace, up the old hill. Thin, untidy, agreeably masculine, their outlines, fraying dark against the sun; unasked, they'll take their turn at the going-down.

In breaking news unknown to the children and grandchildren (skim-fingered at screens) they swallowed bile and dust; they opened fire. Bundles of pity undone seemed all they had of youth, but chance returned them to curious equilibrium: lines that would last.

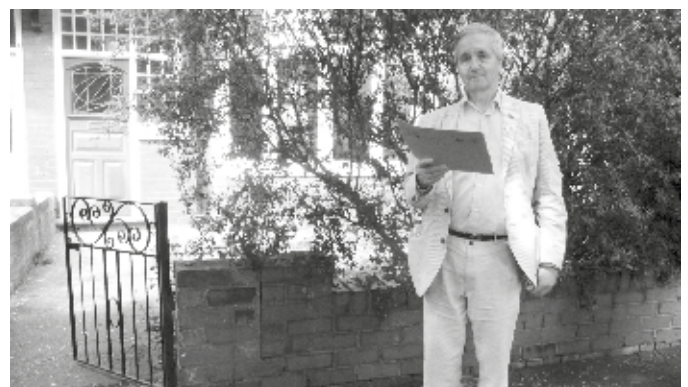
One cracks a joke, or remembers the words of a tune – a little sentimental, a little obscene; verses float past like days, or fish, or the weather, catching them, still. And over the pages we stain, as the soldier poets press on, the Muse sighs, "never... .. Never such experience again."

*Carol Rumens
Jan. 2017*

Larkin' Out in the Avenues



A dazzling day. Cecile Oxaal (centre), with the readers in the 'Larkin' Out in the Avenues' event (16 July 2017): Jackie Sewell, Carole Collinson, Belinda Hakes and Phil Pullen.



James reading outside Jean Hartley's former home.

Philip Larkin: Letter to LSE Students, 1969

According to an article in *Science* of 20 June 1969: 'over the last year or so, LSE has firmly established itself as the most turbulent of British institutions of higher education.' The School had, indeed, been shut down for three weeks, and the Conservative Minister of Education, Edward Short, had said that it was in the grip of the 'thugs of the academic world'. He blamed a 'group of American graduate students', members of 'Students for a Democratic Society', followers of Trotsky and adepts of the 'sit-in' and boycott. Prominent among the home-grown radicals was a 29-year-old Assistant Lecturer, Robin Blackburn, who after calling Short and his colleagues 'scum' and 'bastards', was dismissed from his post with two other colleagues.

Though never wholeheartedly committed to any ideological cause, Larkin was at his most stridently right-wing at this time, encouraged by his friends Kingsley Amis and Robert Conquest. He had been reading Conquest's seminal book on Stalinism, *The Great Terror*, in the very month, August 1968, that Russian tanks rolled into Czechoslovakia to destroy the 'Prague Spring'. In January 1969 he had completed his only substantial poem concerned with topical politics, 'Homage to a Government', lamenting Britain's withdrawal from Aden for what he saw as the meanest financial motives. In March he contributed his squib 'When the Russian Tanks roll Westward' to *Black Paper Two*, doubting that 'The Light Horse of L.S.E.' would be of any use against the Russian threat. The students who sent him the leaflet, 'LSE's Unfair Dismissals', soliciting his support, should surely have known better. Perhaps they did and this was a deliberate provocation? Unfortunately their letter is now lost, so we shall never know. In any case, Larkin responded coldly and without irony, on St George's Day. It is amusing to note that the firebrand Robin Blackburn is now (at 77) an eminently respectable Professor of Sociology at Essex University, and a Leverhulme Research Fellow. This is the way we do (or did) these things in Britain. JB.

32 Pearson Park,

Hills.

23 April 1969

Gentlemen,

Thank you for your leaflet 'L.S.E.'s Unfair Dismissals'. I'm bound to say, however, that I have every sympathy with the Governors of LSE in their attempts to keep their school going as an academic institution in the face of organised minority disorder.

Phil Larkin

We are grateful to Cecile Oxaal, the owner of this letter;
and to the Estate of Philip Larkin for permission to publish the facsimile. © 2017 Estate of Philip Larkin

'On some Welsh beach my parents met' – how Sydney and Eva first 'became known'

Philip Pullen

A talk given at the 2017 AGM of the Society, The Lawns Centre, Cottingham, 3 June 2017.

In 1969 Philip Larkin and his ageing mother, Eva, made a holiday visit to Southwold in Suffolk. It was the first time for a while that the seaside had figured in his annual summer breaks and soon afterwards he began to draft a poem which, after several transformations, became 'To The Sea.' It is a poem with distinct biographical undertones. Not only had the Southwold visit evoked in Larkin distinct memories of his own childhood holidays – how he had 'searched the sand for famous cricketers' – but it also conjured up a sharp reflection of the precise way in which his father and mother had first met.

When he sent a copy of the poem to his mother he told her that, 'it mentions your first meeting with Pop.' An earlier draft provided a geographical indication of where the meeting took place, and these lines form the title of my talk today. They can be found in Larkin's workbook, dated 21st September 1969. They read as follows:

Earlier than war, when by a quack's terrain
On some Welsh beach my parents met,
In the huge Edwardian lower middle class
Innocent in boaters under grape-dark skies.

Although Larkin was to revise the poem completely later, and remove these lines¹ they immediately caught my imagination when I first came across them because they brought to mind a particular photograph I'd seen in the Philip Larkin Archive at Hull History Centre.



Eva has written on the back of the photograph: 'The year I met Daddy.' So we know that it must have been taken in 1906. It is also possible to identify all the figures in the photograph. Eva is on the left and on the right wearing the straw boater is her brother, Arthur. He is seated next to their mother, Emilie. The man next to Eva I first took to be William Day, Eva's father, but now realise it is, in fact, Sydney Larkin. I am also confident that the photograph must have been taken at the time of the very first meeting between Eva and Sydney. My confidence in this conclusion is derived from the recent discovery of other uncatalogued items in the archive.

This next photograph is a picture of Sydney Larkin taken in August 1906. A comparison of the two photographs reveals the obvious similarity here, particularly in the drooping moustache. Philip was not very complimentary about his father at this time, describing him as having 'poisoner's lips'. The physical resemblance with the man in the first photograph is striking.



What we know already about the nature of Sydney and Eva's first meeting comes from Philip Larkin himself. He wrote in a letter to Monica Jones in August 1953:

He met my mother on the beach at Rhyl. He was there for 3 days only, on a cycling tour, but before leaving he had a picture of them taken together & exchanged addresses... & despite a separation of several years his intentions didn't alter.²

By drawing on some of the relatively untouched items in the Larkin Archive, it is now possible to throw more light on this important meeting, and, at the same time discover more clues within the finished poem about how the meeting took place. The outcome of my investigations suggest that Larkin was sometimes an unreliable witness to events in his own life, or, at the very least, creatively imaginative in their recollection.

We can, for example, locate the dates of the meeting more precisely as taking place in early August 1906. The evidence for this comes in the form of a picture postcard sent from Rhyl by Sydney to his brother Alfred postmarked August 9th 1906. The picture wonderfully depicts the pre-war Edwardian gaiety of the seaside setting in which Sydney and Eva were soon to begin their acquaintance. Coincidentally, of course, August 9th would eventually become a very significant date in Larkin history!



Philip was astonished by some features of his parent's courtship, not least his father's apparent romanticism – 'partly because unlike the father I knew.' He found it hard to square this with the 'frigid inarticulate man' his father later came to be.

By using a new and even more powerful evidence source it is possible to identify that two people, indirectly at least, made this meeting possible – Eva's mother, Emilie, and a man called Arthur Cheetham.

In May 1961, Eva Larkin came to Hull, to look after Philip while he was recovering from his strange collapse at a library committee meeting earlier that year. During an evening spent at his flat in Pearson Park, he recorded a conversation with her on his reel to reel tape recorder. The recording is now lodged in the Larkin Archive in

the Hull History Centre and also formed part of the recent 'New Eyes Each Year' Exhibition at the University of Hull. Among other things, it tells the full story of how Eva came to meet Sydney.

Rather like an early version of Radio 4's 'Listening Project' the recording captures some of the warmth of the relationship between mother and son, no doubt fuelled on Larkin's part by the alcohol being consumed ('Tilt your glass,' Philip says to his mother at one point during the conversation). He proves to be a competent and engaging interviewer, drawing out his mother's recollections and adding those of his own. At one stage in the conversation they discuss her recollections of holidays in North Wales and Philip asks her mother if it was at Rhyl 'where you met Daddy?'

Eva goes on to recall the event in fascinating detail. On the day in question, during the summer of 1906, she had gone in search of her mother along the sands of Rhyl Bay. She knew she would probably find her, she said, at 'Mr Cheetham's'.

Like many during the Edwardian era, Emilie Day took a deep interest in what we might call 'mind reading'. Astrology and various forms of fortune telling attracted her, and she passed these interests on to her daughter. Among them was a passion for phrenology, the theory that a person's character could be determined on the basis of the shape of the human head. By the early 1900s it had become a popular source of seaside entertainment alongside astrology and other forms of fortune telling.

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Arthur Cheetham was, among other things, a phrenologist who gave lectures on Rhyl sands. He was also a pioneering film maker (his is the oldest surviving footage of an Association Football match – Blackburn Rovers versus West Bromwich Albion in 1898) – and in 1906 he had just opened the first cinema in Rhyl.

Eva's description of her first encounter with Sydney is highly graphic.

I stood on the fringe of the crowd, just idly listening, and Daddy was there listening. He said to me, 'They're all in league I expect...' And I said, 'I don't think so!' Like that, as if I'd known him for years. He

About Larkin

said that was what surprised him, that I spoke so naturally as if I'd known him ages, instead of glaring at him and thinking, 'Well, fancy speaking to me, a stranger!'

And so it was that Larkin's parents came to meet, exactly as the completed poem describes, while listening to 'the same seaside quack.' Some seven years after the conversation, Larkin had clearly not forgotten what his mother had told him.

In the tape recording, Eva gives an insight into the early moments of their courtship and the part that literary leanings made in it.

I was alarmed when I found him walking beside me when we went away.... When the crowd dispersed, I found him walking along with me and I thought, 'Oh dear!' And then he asked me where we were staying and all that, and said he was on a cycling tour. And I never thought any more about it until the next day and I was reading on the prom. And there he stood, looking at me and I looked up and the shadow fell over the book I was reading, which was *Wuthering Heights*. 'Hmmm. he said, 'you don't know me this morning.' And I said, 'Well you've changed your clothes.' And then he saw my initials at the front, 'E. E. D.' and he couldn't guess what they stood for. And when I said, 'Day', he said, 'Oh there was a character in Hardy named Day. Fancy Day.

Sydney would no doubt have been impressed to find a young woman who shared something of his own interest in literature and whose middle class familial roots, steeped as they were in commerce and municipal duty, matched his own (Eva's father was a customs and excise officer). Over the following two days or so, the couple spent a considerable amount of time in each other's company.

On the last day of his holiday, Sydney somewhat reluctantly met up with Eva's mother, who had insisted on being introduced to the young man Eva had been 'going out with' – they had been to a pier concert one night and perhaps even to Arthur Cheetham's cinema. According to Eva it was not an easy first meeting. She describes his first reaction as one of wanting to turn tail and run.

I saw him turn on his heels!... And I thought, "Oh dear, that's finished it now, if he sees Mother's coming in sight." [...]. I didn't fancy it really. I thought he'd think [...] I'd brought her specially to trap him as it might be [...] And I saw him turn swiftly around and walk the other way and then he came back again. I think it must have upset him a bit and he tried to calm himself.

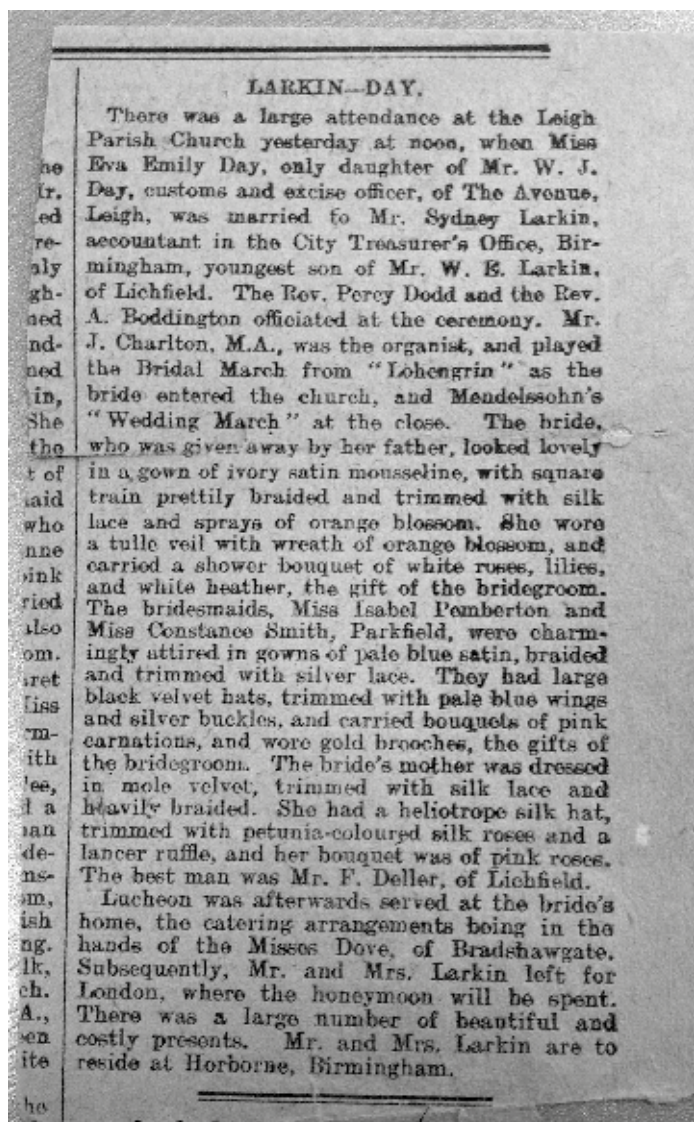
While Sydney was to come to admire Eva's father greatly (telling her that he was the cleverest man he had ever met) his relationship with her mother was never to

be a close or warm one. By Eva's account at least, her mother found him a difficult man to understand and was not at all impressed by his manners or his unusual sense of humour.



Despite the rapidity of their initial coming together, the couple had a protracted engagement conducting a long-distance relationship, mainly by letter with an occasional face to face meeting, for example when Eva went down to the West Midlands to see her Coventry relatives (her mother had been born in the city). They waited five years until Sydney was sufficiently secure in his career before finally getting married on 5th October 1911. There is a touching recollection in one of Eva's letters about how Sydney would try to lunch for no more than 6d a day to help save up for the wedding.

The wedding took place in the parish church in Leigh, Lancashire and may have been something of an understated affair: in later life, Eva was to regret the fact that no one thought to take any wedding photographs. According to the local newspaper report, however, the bride's dress appears to have been an elaborate garment made of 'ivory satin mousseline, with square train prettily braided and trimmed with silk lace and sprays of orange blossom', and the couple entered the church to the sound of the Bridal March from Lohengrin, popularly known as 'Here Comes The Bride' Luncheon was served at the bride's home – literally across the road from the church, at Number 13, The Avenue.



The Larkin wedding notice, Leigh Chronicle and District Advertiser

The couple honeymooned for a week in London, staying at the Ivanhoe Hotel, on Great Russell Street, near the British Museum. In later years, Philip often found himself staying in the same hotel, by then renamed The Marlborough. 'I expect this is your Ivanhoe,' he wrote on a postcard to Eva in August 1957 during one of his stays.³ The following month, he stayed there again, with Monica, and described the hotel in more detail: 'It's an odd place: I notice that it's run entirely by women, except for the porters – woman manager, woman receptionists & accountants. It's a temperance hotel, in that it hasn't a bar, & lots of the guests seem to have a feminine appearance. I wonder why Pop chose it? What was it like in your day?'⁴ By then, Eva could recall little detail of what the hotel had been like: 'Perhaps we went there because it was cheaper than other places.'⁵

The picture Larkin painted of his parent's life together is, of course, extremely negative. He saw his parents as temperamentally unsuited and describes how their initial, high romantic ideals soon gave way to coldness.

Describing this to Monica Jones, he told her that he could not recall his parents 'making a single spontaneous gesture of affection towards each other.' The accounts of others who visited the Larkin family household in the 1930s and 40s seem to confirm this picture. Ruth Siverns, for example, described her experience of coming to tea at the Larkin's house in Warwick as 'rather like being in 'The Barratts of Wimpole Street'⁶. However, a slightly different perspective emerges from Eva's own accounts. Her letters written after Sydney's death, for example, reveal more positive examples of conjugal togetherness in their relationship – the enjoyment of visits to the cinema and theatre together, and happy recollections of the conferences and dances they attended in the 1930s. I have also recently unearthed a fascinating early letter from Sydney to Eva, written in 1916, which reveals a certain amount of demonstrated, if rather strangled, affection towards his wife. It reads:

Many thanks for your sweet letter received today... 'I am sure it would be impossible for any man to be blessed with a wife more loving and thoughtful than you are and I try, even if I do not always succeed, to show my appreciation.'⁷

It is noticeable, however, that Eva's happiest memories were reserved for the early days of her marriage in Harbourne, a suburb of Birmingham, and Doncaster, before Philip was born, as he dolefully observes on the tape recording. Nevertheless, after she became widowed, the phrase, 'Dear Daddy' (Sydney) is a poignant reference point in many of her letters to her son.



Perhaps the most striking and bittersweet example of love and affection can be found in a poignant Valentine

Remembering Philip

Angela Kenyon

Angela Kenyon is the widow of John Kenyon, G. F. Grant Professor of History at Hull University between 1962 and 1981. His recollections of the poet and librarian were published as 'Larkin at Hull' in About Larkin 6 (October 1998), 4-12.

My husband and I knew Philip over eighteen years and we did not wish to jump on the bandwagon when the avalanche of criticism began. As my husband said 'He was my friend'. I did agree to send something he had written later on,¹ but with some trepidation, and it is with the same trepidation that I am putting down a few words now about what Philip was to me.

'We've been invited to Philip's tomorrow' said my husband. 'Oh, you go – I hear he has very steep stairs up to his flat and I am not sure I can manage that' I replied (I was eight months pregnant). 'Oh, do come. He is a very sweet man, and I think we are honoured to be asked. He is becoming quite a famous poet.' So we both went.

I had expected other guests to be there, but, having slowly negotiated myself up the stairs (which *were* quite steep), and been greeted at the open door by Philip with much enthusiasm, we realised it was just us. My first thought was how tall he was, and what a wonderful low pitch of voice.

Philip and John had a great love of jazz, which was played loudly, its intricacies much discussed – not my subject. I sat back, resigning myself to being ignored (as a so-called 'Staff Wife' at Hull University it was a condition with which I was only too familiar.) Surveying the bookshelves I was comforted by a cluster of Beatrix Potter figurines which dispelled my nervousness at being in the presence of a Poet. We were presented with enormous cheese and pickle sandwiches with which both men quaffed tumblers of whisky. It has been mentioned many times, Philip's sudden lurching to his feet and dancing around the room, and my surprise and amusement at this behaviour was typical of the experience of others. We got used to it on subsequent occasions, and I found its lack of inhibition endearingly childlike.

My husband and Philip were in their customary lunch-time places at the University bar one lunchtime when I called in with my brother. I had been warned never to ask Philip for his signature – something he disliked vehemently. Philip greeted me with an arm around my shoulder and a 'What would you like to drink?' I found myself proffering his latest book, just bought,

introducing my brother, and begging 'Could you – would you mind signing this?' facing away from my husband who was scowling at me from across the room. Philip grinned: 'Of course – his name is?' 'Tony' I said, as Philip took out his pen and signed the book with a flourish.

I think my husband saw Philip on most weekdays, either at the bar at lunchtime, or during the two years he was Dean of Arts and therefore on the Brynmor Jones Library Committee. (It was during this period that they fell out for a while. Others must know why – I do not.)

On another occasion in the Bar I said to Philip 'Who is that guy?' having noticed a rather flamboyant blond young man sauntering in. 'Oh, that is one Andrew Motion' – Philip took a thoughtful sip of his pint, then in his sonorous tone 'he *thinks* he's a poet!'

One evening my husband came in from work very subdued. 'Poor old Philip, he is so distraught. None of us could comfort him. He was mowing his lawn and killed a hedgehog!' An immortalised hedgehog, subsequently. Several times my husband remarked that Philip was particularly morose, owing to the forthcoming visit of Monica, and particularly in the days before she came to live with Philip permanently.

In his new car one summer evening Philip, with Maeve Brennan, treated us and a few others to dinner in a private room above our favourite pub a few miles out of Hull in the countryside. We called first at Maeve's parents' house in town, where, to my fascination, her father opened the tantalus with his key to offer us sherry. 'See that smoke over there? They are sending out signals: "Larkin is on the loose, bring out the tractors!"' moaned Philip, on the way to the pub, and stuck behind one.

'Philip says he would like to visit you in the Nuffield – but don't hold out any hope – he is famously nervous of hospitals' John said, unable that evening to visit me. That night a single rose was pushed through the open door of my private room. 'Am I allowed to accompany this rose?' enquired a familiar voice and in came Philip, with his boyish grin, accompanied by Maeve. 'I needn't have bothered. Angela was surrounded by admirers' he reportedly complained to my husband the next day.

About Larkin

Philip and Maeve were at that time an item, and came to dinner with us several times, notably when the Betjeman programme was shown on television. (Maeve gives details of this in her book.) Philip had bemoaned the fact he had no t.v. set and I said 'Well, you had better come to ours, then'. We lived at that time in West Ella, some way out of Hull. The weather was atrocious, and in spite of the fact that I had that afternoon collided in the fog with another car (this with my car full of children) I managed to provide a modest dinner. As the programme began Philip grasped both Maeve's and my hands tightly until the end of the film, during which he was visibly shaking. 'I look like an undertaker!' he said at one point, and 'Oh, why did I do this?' several times. We all tried to assure him that it was wonderful, but to no avail. I thought his dismay was slightly overdone, however.

'I would rather like to see the film 'Bonnie and Clyde' Philip informed us one evening during yet another jazz session. 'Oh, come with us then' I said. He did, and afterwards we had steak and chips in our usual venue. Philip complained loudly that it was rather late for him to dine, apparently mystified by my explanation that we could never obtain a babysitter until the students from the neighbouring hall of residence had returned home from the University. He often seemed perplexed by, or somewhat dismissive of the domestic trials of parenthood.

Once, as he was putting on his coat to leave our house, I mentioned to Philip that he had upset a number of my Staff Wife acquaintances with his reference in a poem to bitches reading 'Which' magazine (our bible in those days.) Philip seemed disarmingly genuinely upset and gave me a reassuring hug. 'I didn't mean *you!*' he wailed – a rather mocking apology.

When my husband was Dean of Arts he and Philip fell out over something. Also Monica was around and he and Maeve split up. I was admonished by a colleague 'Poor Maeve – none of the wives are entertaining or speaking to Philip, so don't you dare!' For a while I did not.

However, he still came to visit – on one occasion he threw a huge cushion on to the floor saying 'I seem to be having some sort of affair with this cushion!' and was disconcerted when my young son, in his pyjamas, offered him his teddy bear, which was bright red, with a longish face and surprised expression, acquired from a local Charity Shop and made by a prisoner in Hull Jail. 'What is his name?' asked Philip (always good with children while professing to dislike them) 'Larkin!' replied Daniel. 'Oh'. The only time I saw Philip disconcerted!

After a rather disastrous dinner at our house, at which Monica became very inebriated, I received a letter of apology from Philip the next day saying 'Thank you for the "simple dinner" – about as simple as *The Turn of the Screw!*'

He wrote to us after we left Hull for St Andrews, and of course we, like so many others, received postcards from his various holiday destinations, depicting derelict Irish shepherds' huts or suchlike with 'This is our hotel' scrawled on the back.

Maeve corresponded with us frequently after Philip died (we were in Kansas then), and with myself after my husband died, and when I visited my daughter in Beverley we met once or twice at the Beverley Arms or at her house in Cottingham. I cherish her letters, some of which are very revealing about her relationship with Philip. As they do not match the imaginative opinions of some writers, and as she was my friend, they will not be published, at least in my lifetime.

I loved Philip – to me he was always wonderful company and the perfect gentleman, with his disarmingly boyish grin and devastating wit, and I am proud to have known him, though I divulge this to few people, having been infuriatingly the recipient of adverse criticism from those who never met him.

The last communication I had with Philip was when, now living in St Andrews, I telephoned him, apologising for my nerve (at which he laughed, I remember) and enquiring as to whether he would send a dedication to place in his book for my husband's birthday. His letter arrived not long afterwards, the familiar scrawl thoughtfully provided on a sticky label.

Philip, I think, was basically very shy. 'He would have hated all this' I thought at his nevertheless very touching Memorial Service in Westminster Abbey. I imagine his wry smile at all the fervent opinions of those for or against him. And as for that ill-advised station statue – and the reverence for his spectacles – I can hear his laughter even now.

¹ 'Larkin at Hull', *About Larkin* 6 (October 1998), 4-12.



Ann Thwaite with Grayson Perry, Cottingham, 4 July 2017

'NEW EYES EACH YEAR': A BIASED VIEW

Philip Pullen

In an interview on Radio 4's Today Programme, Anna Farthing, curator of 'New Eyes Each Year' said that she had set out to produce an exhibition about a poet without using words, and this, undoubtedly, is a major factor behind its success. By focusing on the personal possessions Larkin left behind she has created a refreshingly different, thought-provoking experience for the visitor, irrespective of whether or not they are already familiar with the life and work.

I have called mine a biased assessment because, along with Graham Chesters, I was one of the Larkin Society's main contributors to the development of the exhibition. This has been for me a personal journey into Larkin, with a few surprising discoveries *en route*. I found myself making new and different connections, in a similar way to many visitors to the exhibition, judging from the comments they have left behind. If exhibitions like this are meant to make one ask questions, then this one works ten times over.

Key to the exhibition's success is the freedom the steering group gave to the curator Anna Farthing. This was not always easy, particularly for those of us who hold 'insider' views on Larkin. But it was right to leave the overall direction and 'message' entirely up to her. And the message, Anna might possibly say, is that there is no message! The exhibition does not take any particular stance on Larkin as a person. It displays the man in a three dimensional manner, leaving judgements to the viewer. True, specific content has been selected and displayed in particular ways which border on interpretation. Nevertheless, this exhibition does not go out of its way to arrive at any definitive statement. Predictably, reactions in the media have been various, ranging from lazy journalistic reproductions of a stereotypical Larkin to nuanced responses that encourage a fresh desire to revisit Larkin's life and work.

The great variety of objects on display is striking, as is their colourfulness. Any notion of Larkin as a dull one-dimensional person is well and truly debunked. There is much colour – pink especially (said to be his favourite). The journey through the exhibition begins with an astonishing tapestry covering an entire wall, a blown up photographic reproduction of the print of one of Monica Jones's summer dresses. It then proceeds to Larkin's own clothing – his red shirt and multicoloured ties, some of them reflective of the 'flower power' era of the 1960s. Larkin's private library, recovered from his home at 105 Newland Park after Monica Jones's death, also features colourful dust jackets. And his literary tastes surprise many visitors. The expression, 'I've got that one!' must

have been heard a thousand times, quickly followed by: 'Well I'm surprised he had *that!*'

The 600 objects themselves reveal the day-to-day ordinariness of the life of this extraordinary man. The lawnmower hanging on the wall is the very machine that mauled the 'unobtrusive world' of that poor hedgehog, and could it actually be 'that vase' which is displayed next to a photograph of Larkin's maternal grandparents? Some objects evoke the physicality of the person in a painfully intimate manner. 'Self's the man', a perspex box at the centre of the exhibition, contains everything but the body itself: his outsize clothing, a pair of spectacles, a deaf-aid ear-piece and a set of scales (given to him by his secretary, Betty Mackereth). Viewed alongside books on how to correct a stammer and how to lose weight, they highlight Larkin's anxieties about his self image, similar, one suspects, to those of all of us.

The family letters in display cases show how compulsive a writer Larkin was. There are ancient shoeboxes full of letters neatly bundled into years. One of the quotations dotted around the exhibition on pink bookends reads: 'To destroy letters is repugnant to me – it's like destroying a bit of life. Yet they mount up so.'

Of all the objects one stands out in its biographical notoriety – the figurine of Hitler which Philip's father brought back from Germany in the 1930s and which adorned the Larkin family mantelpiece. Over the years this item has been blown out of all proportion by commentators. In reality it stands less than four inches. Nevertheless here, placed next to a photograph of Sydney Larkin, it still makes one uncomfortable.

Though principally an exhibition without words, the layout gives the visitor plenty of opportunity to seek them out. Two comfortable benches placed alongside book trolleys containing Larkin texts and biographies allow visitors to discover more about the poet's literary legacy. In addition, the background sound track of Larkin's favourite jazz recordings generates a relaxed atmosphere in which people may chat with the Hull 2017 volunteers who act as helpful 'library guides'.

Finally, the exhibition's designer, Craig Oldham, has encouraged visitors to write their own letter to Larkin on embossed paper designed for the exhibition. The responses, displayed on the far wall of the exhibition, are frequently amusing or emotionally powerful. They include poems, drawings and also recollections of meeting the man himself. Many visitors, it is evident, have discovered an empathy with the poet and a desire to discover more about what made him a great writer.

Exhibition: 'New Eyes Each Year'

Brynmor Jones Library, University of Hull: 5 July – 1 October 2017



Exhibition designer, Craig Oldham, and Curator, Anna Farthing, with Grayson Perry; Larkin's ties above.

HULL UK CITY OF CULTURE 2017, PHILIP LARKIN SOCIETY AND UNIVERSITY OF HULL ARCHIVES



Larkin's self-declared 'oeuvre': four volumes of poetry and five volumes of Library Committee Minutes

Distinguished Guest Lecturer 2017: Grayson Perry

Middleton Hall, 5 July 2017



At 105 Newland Park: Philip Pullen, Eddie Dawes, Miriam Porter, Carole Collinson (above her head the Larkin toad), Grayson Perry, Jackie Sewell, James Booth

Photographs © James Booth



With Carole Collinson and the Larkin statue



Grayson Perry: 'This Frail Travelling Coincidence': 5 July 2017

James Booth

Blending profound meditation with stand up comedy and dressed in a pink creation designed by himself Grayson Perry held a packed Middleton Hall enthralled with his witty, highly personal account of his life and work. Middle class audiences, he noted, 'do like a reference', and there were allusions in plenty: Breugel, Paul Nash, Alain de Botton, medieval church architecture. But Philip Larkin recurred as *leitmotiv* through it all. Perry related that, earlier in the day he had enjoyed the, for him, novel experience of 'being a fan', as he had been shown round the ordinary sites of Larkin's life by members of the Society. He has been 'stuck on Larkin big time' for many years. Like Larkin he finds 'everyday things' lovely. His works are concerned to 'make the everyday resonant'.

Larkin can also be deliciously incorrect. Perry recollected quoting from 'This Be the Verse' in his Turner Prize acceptance speech in 2003. He had teased his audience with a risky pause: 'They...!', concluding, to much relief, 'may not mean to, but they do.'

An account of his dysfunctional early family life (he and his siblings were 'like shrapnel around my mother') led to an extended analysis of his 'self portrait as a city', 'A Map of Days'. The title alludes to Larkin's poem 'Days', which, he remarked is 'partly about the idea that we live in time'. Larkin would have relished Perry's deeply lyric conception of art. The centre of the picture is occupied by an empty space through which a tiny Grayson kicks a can down a road. There is no 'core'. We are constantly mutable, without a fixed identity, mere sequences of experience. We may talk about geography and family, we may imagine a structure to life, but 'we're stuck in time. We have to move on into the next second, the next minute. We can't relax – *Sorry!*' (laughter and applause).

The philosopher Julian Baggini, Perry recalled, remarks that the word I is a verb masquerading as a noun; and, in an inspired self-analysis, he applied this truth to the very artistic process by which he produces his works: 'I start in the top left-hand corner and carry on down'. Nevertheless, this having been admitted, he is pretty good at 'post-rationalisation', explaining, after the event, the 'meaning' at which every artistic work aims. As so often when reading Larkin, the audience was entertained by an apparent no-nonsense debunking of all pretension, which on reflection revealed itself to be a profound meditation on art, on life. The lecture roamed far and wide, as did the long-legged, shiny pink-clad lecturer,

striding restlessly to and fro, moving from powerpoint image of one work to another, and ending with an extended account of his 'A House for Essex', or 'Julie's House', or 'The Taj Mahal on the Stour', in Wrabness Essex, his most ambitious project to date.

This was, according to all, the most exhilarating annual guest lecture we have ever heard. Even afterwards Grayson Perry was adding to the experience (as @Alan_Measles), tweeting next day, under a photograph of himself on the train from Hull: 'Had he been on such a fast modern train "Whitsun Weddings" would have been a haiku.'



Eddie Daves, Chairman of the Philip Larkin Society, presents Grayson Perry with a framed pair of Larkin's darned socks. Photograph © Carole Collinson

'Last night I made an attack on unmended socks – I have quite a lot – and mended about four pairs. I never seem to have the right-coloured wool! In fact mending-wool is becoming scarce these days – I don't suppose anyone mends socks any more. Lord knows what they do instead.'

Larkin to his mother, 20 August 1974.



Two Elusive Reviews by Larkin: 'Tender Voices' and 'Young Contemporaries'

Roger Gourd

It may seem that every piece of writing by Larkin, however slight, has been gathered in and reprinted. I have in my possession, however, two pieces (Bloomfield C193 and C265) which have, it seems, not seen the light since their first appearance in the Hull University student magazine *Torch*. Conrad Jones listed them in his piece 'Missing Requirements' in *AL* 33 (April 2012). But he could not locate the original texts. Geoff Weston, however, possesses copies, and summarised both pieces in *AL* 36 (Oct. 2013).

My own copies are relics of my time as a student at Hull from 1962 until 1965. Before my arrival I knew that the University boasted a Librarian who was a poet, but at that point I knew little more than this. That changed over time. Outside of Larkin himself, and the attractive slim poetry supplements published in Hull by *Critical Quarterly* magazine, the student body itself had a vibrant literary culture. A keenly contested poetry-writing competition featured in the University Arts Week, and the best submissions would appear in *Torch*, published each summer. Less formal and more crudely printed publications would also pop up, such as *Poetry '63*, co-edited by George Kendrick, and associated with the University Poetry Society. Another production, *Inside*, edited by Geoffrey Birch, included short stories as well as poetry. During my later years at the University a poetry and jazz movement developed. Sessions took place in pubs such as The Haworth Arms or The Gardener's Arms, or in the University. Jonathan Raban and Norman Jackson were regular readers. Most ambitious was a Poetry and Jazz Ballet, staged in Arts Week 1965 in the Teacher Training College next door to the University. The readers, backed by the Ed Lee trio, were accompanied by dance sequences. Larkin naturally took no part in these proceedings but I entertain the fancy that he might have slipped into the back of the hall during this final event.

Be that as it may, Larkin clearly took an interest in the poetic strivings of the students. Although slight in substance compared with the pieces included in the Faber collections, these reviews are of real interest.

In the 1963 *Torch* Larkin looks over the submissions for the Arts Week Poetry Competition: "...it interests me to see a cross-section of what a particular group of people produces when trying to write 'poetry'". The title of the piece, 'Tender Voices' indicates where he stands: student poets are, inevitably, not fully formed, on a journey to

find a voice and a style. At the same time it indicates a largely kindly view of things. He is, however, disappointed that free verse predominates, only a few of the entries showing 'vestiges' of rhyme and metre. In his view it is harder to write effective poetry without these tools; their deployment is "child's play compared with producing an effect without them." "[A]morphousness of content" is another problem. It is interesting to note that he gives favourable attention to 'January 1963' by Jonathan Raban, and twice praises poems by George Kendrick. Raban went on to a career as a respected writer (but not a poet) and Kendrick's collection, *Bicycle Tyre in a Tall Tree*, was published by Carcanet Press. Larkin ends by quoting Kendrick's 'Spring in S.O.5' in its entirety. (S.O.5 was a large lecture theatre in the Social Sciences block.)

Larkin's next contribution to *Torch* (1965), 'Prelusive Poems', was a review of *Twelve Poems* by Norman Jackson, a 'mature student', known for a time as 'the bricklayer poet'. This was reprinted in *AL* 34 (Oct. 2012), together with Jackson's reminiscences.

In the second, as yet unreprinted *Torch* piece, 'Young Contemporaries' (1966) student writing is again the subject, but the focus is not restricted to poetry, nor to Hull. This broad survey of student magazines from British universities must, in part, have been the brainchild of the 1966 editor, John Graham, who had journalistic ambitions and went on to work for the BBC. As Larkin relates: "The idea was that I should write about student magazines, and for a time they kept arriving on my desk...". His broad-ranging account inevitably skims rather over the surface. Apart from surveying the magazines' content he also looks at production and finish, considering the advantages of photography over drawings and criticising poor lay-out and smudgy printing. Towards the end of the piece Larkin turns to poetry itself, finding the usual problems. He ends, however, on a positive note, quoting in full a poem about a Henry Moore statue, which he judges to be "level, witty and precise."

Such pieces as these were by no means a feature of every issue of *Torch*. It seems likely that Michael Cowan, the editor in 1963, started the trend and two subsequent editors followed his example. After 1966 Larkin was perhaps no longer willing to devote his time to such writing, and perhaps it was felt that he was out of place in a publication devoted to student writing.

Two Reviews from Torch Magazine

TENDER VOICES

PHILIP LARKIN

I have been privileged to look over the entries for the Arts Festival Poetry Competition—not, I hasten to add, to bring up the rear of the occasion with a little unseasonable criticism, but because it interests me to see a cross-section of what a particular group of people produces when trying to write 'poetry.' I had expected to learn something, for instance, about the kind of subjects they chose. The editor of a well-known journal published not five hundred miles from The Gardener's Arms replied to my question 'What do people write poems about?' with 'Sex and God.' When I came to see whether or not he was right I soon forgot my own question, because the primary impressions I received concerned form, not content.

I remember Kingsley Amis saying in the introduction to a volume of *Oxford Poetry* he edited after the war with James Michie that both editors had been astonished by the complete absence in the contributions of discernible poetic 'influence' later than the Eliot of the 'twenties, and that was pitching it pretty late and sophisticated: most of them revealed a high water mark of Brooke and the Georgians. There was no evidence that Auden, Graves, Dylan Thomas or even the later Yeats had ever written. I knew very well what he meant: it is not I think unusual for a young writer of poems to go through a kind of evolutionary history of his own taste in his writings before he manages to sound an original note. Auden himself went up to the University producing capable pastiches of Hardy and Edward Thomas before Eliot hit him. Its absence, Amis said, suggested a curious time-lag in taste.

His remarks came back to me when I looked over both published and unpublished entries. It was borne in upon me that the great majority of entrants had been content to dispense with the formalities of rhyme and metre and were in fact writing the free verse of the 'twenties or even of the 1914 Imagists.

Of the entries published only four (if I have counted right) betrayed vestiges of these properties, and none was fully rhymed and scanned. This astonished me. Everyone knows Robert Frost's tart comment that free verse is like playing tennis with the net down—that is, pointless—but what strikes me about it is that it is so hard. I suppose young writers may think of rhyme and metre as hard. To my mind they are child's play compared with producing an effect without their aid. I came to the conclusion (it may be unjustly) that most competitors still thought along the lines of "Poetry equals Rhyme and metre" but "Modern poetry equals Anything goes."

This is not intended as a crack at, say, Martin Merson or David Stewart-David, both of whom manage their lines with skill, but I do think it limits even their effects to a kind of glancing, half-ironic hesitancy. And in less assured hands it degenerates into a weak impressionistic gesturing of practically no impact at all. Quite a lot of the unpublished competitors seemed to think it obligatory to have at least one one-word line in their pieces, which can be a great drag on a poem's movement.

But to return to subject-matter: I am bound to say that so far from being about sex or God a number of entries seemed to be about nothing at all. I grew accustomed to random assemblages of properties like moons and bones and fogs and pain quivering together uselessly, and when a real tangible subject came along—Miranda Lewis's 'Vincent's Room at Arles,' for instance, or Stewart-David's 'Nuns'—I tended to mark the poem up mentally just for getting something into focus. Indeed on reflection I think my disappointment at the informality of many of the entries and their amorphousness of content are two aspects of the same thing: a longing on my part for greater concentration of effect. I may be a child of my

Tender Voices 2

time, but I do like a poem to be about something, and to feel that the poet has hit that something squarely, like a well-timed stroke in a ball game.

Nevertheless, those poems that were discernibly about something were about a much greater variety of things than my editor friend predicted. I am glad George Kendrick's 'Parcels' is being published because it made me laugh (I think I would have given it a prize), but there were poems about all facets of experience: some about love, some about what a bad state the world's in, but mostly expressions of disappointment, as if one of the commonest emotions among the community producing them was continually finding that things were not as they had supposed or hoped or had been told. For this reason I liked one of the rejected poems about an ant that got trodden on and whose cry of 'Why me?' was pitilessly answered by the poet with 'Why not!' Nobody wrote much about the weather or places.

Lastly there were the few felicities that were not enough to make poems, and may even have been accidents. For a poem to end I weep.

Another lover holds you in his arms.
I suffer and you are unaware.

—well, it may not be admissible as poetry, but that's the situation and that's the emotion and there's not much more you can say about it, is there? Then there was a series called 'Illuminations'¹ with a charmingly Sitwellian section 'Snowleaves,' in which one listens more to the movement than to anything actually said:

Snowleaves fall
And snowtrees stand
Around the paddock
Where the band, on
Summer days, umphs
Straussian tunes
And polka-plays:
Brassy sounds from beer-brass
Breath, and flashy light
From mock-brass hats.

* * *

Snowleaves deep
From snowtrees bare
Bury the gardens
Where the air on
Spring-like days, breathes
Happiness,
And softly smells
Of dying wreaths
Of floweriness . . .

1 by Roger Elkin



And a poem called 'January 1963'² suddenly achieved one of those real old it-is-later-than-you-think climaxes Auden used to be so fond of:

Our aghlich maister
comes silently.
His face the sort you forget;
his attache case
crammed with instructions
to scatter cities.
His huge hand has no lines
for it remembers nothing.
He is a friend to this wind.

Finally, I do not think the University should get away without listening to 'Spring in S.O.5'³:

And so it follows, quite clearly I think,
that if your thoughts are measured along the
sex axis
and mine up the why axis, there comes a point
when all the members of the National Coal
Board
will take large hammers and demolish the
Ministry.
It will in any case be more economical hence-
forth.
to derive all power exclusively from lightning,
floods, earthquakes and other natural catast-
rophes.
Are there any questions?

Yes.
Excuse me, Professor,
But if I leave the room, will you excuse me?
I have just remembered the look on a girl's face
and it seems to me quite possible I love her
even more dearly than the nationalised indus-
tries.
No, I am not sick, bored, or tired,
but I have an urgent appointment
to smash the door down on my way out
and burn it in the quadrangle.

And so say all of us, sometimes.

2 by Jonathan Raban

3 by George Kendrick

YOUNG CONTEMPORARIES

Philip Larkin

The idea was that I should write about student magazines, and for a time they kept arriving on my desk, shrieking and squeaking in fifty sharps and flats. Or not as many as that: examples turned up of perhaps a dozen, which makes it difficult to characterise the genre as this or that. Again, one needs to know whether the particular journal you have been sent is balanced within its own university by some other publication devoted to a different kind of writing: pointless to term the University of Lancaster's *Carolynne* (22 pages for 9d., or .4d. a page) frankly journalistic in approach ("Flats! Flats! Flats!"), for instance, because this would overlook the existence of the literary *John o' Gauntlet* (no copy received, though some xeroographed poems).

Nor should a magazine be judged by the particular issue you have received. Perhaps I could pass judgment on *GUM* (Glasgow University Magazine), because they sent twelve issues: it is remarkably cheap (48 pages for 6d., or .12d. a page), and has a taking piece of symbolism in *Against the Grain* by Hugo J. Paul, a story about the struggles of a man who finds himself lying on the sand in the top half of an hourglass. Is *Luciad* (Leicester University: 56 pages for 2/-, or 4d. a page), on the other hand, always so devoted to the Carnaby Street ethos and shocking what remains of the bourgeois ("Fred overtly scratched his balls") as the latest number seems to suggest? Much more of this and they'll be qualifying for an Arts Council grant.

Student magazines, like every other form of student activity including study, are practice nets for the real thing. Of course, just as the man who plays second-row forward in the Second XV may never turn out again after he goes down, so most student authors may never unhood their typewriters in later life except to intimidate the Gas Board; there is just the chance, however, that the young journalist who is so frequently interviewed by the Vice-Chancellor may one day make the Front Bench squirm, and that one of the "pretentious long-haired

milksoops and black-legged girls" (*Dawn*, Swansea, 72 pages, no price) may finish up on an exam paper in the education he (or she) so manifestly didn't deserve. Most of the examples to hand are stamping-grounds for type two, though not exclusively, and in any case one gets the impression that in most universities a weekly or fortnightly newspaper skims off the local politics and grievances. There are still plenty of articles concerned with questions of the day. As usual, the student is nothing if not self-critical, whether his university is old or new: "Strathapathy" is a word coined for a complaint far from peculiar to the University of Strathclyde (*Mask*, 42 pages, no price). *Eboracum* (York, 26 pages, no price) is actually aware of the fact that a great too many men in the local streets regard undergraduates as "the disrespectful and worthless product of the decision to end conscription," and has asked a few local figures for reassurance what they think of the University. "Better than a damn great housing estate," said one. *GUM* has a remarkable piece of devil's advocacy, "The Case Against Students' Grants" by David Vost: "Examine the products of this University before the existence of grants . . . Cabinet Ministers, crooks, an odd saint, many Philistines, a school of authors and literary men without whom Scotland would be poor indeed . . . Now cast your eye over today's scene with the grant system at full throttle . . ."

Other topics are very much what you might expect — Rhodesia ("Rooms at the college are periodically searched, road blocks set up round the campus, staff and students subjected to police intimidation"; "Any invasion of Rhodesia would violate the 1961 Constitution even more than Ian Smith has done" — both from *Mask*), sex ("In five years' time most of us will be married" — *Mask* again), John F. Kennedy ("For John he loved the simple stars/And a cool wind from the sea" Swansea, *Poetry Magazine*, 26 pages, no price), and odd topics such as extra-sensory perception and Alcatraz. In

fact **Eboracum 7** carries serious-mindedness, or modish-mindedness, almost to the point of self-parody, slamming "Mary Poppins" and pop music, satirising the Queen, and introducing Earle Brown (heard of him?), Hitchcock, "The Knack" and poetry Beatsville, which takes in Bob Dylan and **The Collector** on the way. In number 8 a reader grumbles about the "introverted specialised articles which have been the backbone of previous editions." I have forgotten where I found the article by a hitch-hiker which really managed to make clear how it is that those loutish figures by the roadside imagine themselves entitled to a seat in my car. A fashion feature survives by quoting Wilde on fashion: "A form of ugliness so intolerable that we have to change it every six months."

My attention kept straying away from content to form: details of production can place the intellectual atmosphere of a magazine as much as what it prints. How superior the squat 8in. x 5in. format is to the floppy 10in. x 8in.! It is fatter (so giving the impression of better value for money), wears better, and is indefinably smarter. And for the most part how much better a photograph looks on the cover than a drawing! True, the second number of **Gibbet** (Warwick, 72 pages for 2/-. or .3d. a page: the University is on Gibbet Hill, and there is another paper published called **Giblet**) has a Wyndham Lewis sketch far superior to the ragmag cartoon of its first, and Sheffield's **Arrows** (34 pages for 2/-. or .7d. a page) has an ingenious application of Carnaby Street (how that thoroughfare does keep cropping up, to be sure) to working-class dress ("Join the 8 to 4-30 set!"). But photographs are nearly always better, for the simple reason that you will get 50 good photographs for one good drawing. York's giant tubing, Leicester's streetlamp outside Paul's Boutique, **Carolynne's** Jean Harlow are all difficult to fault. Only **Mask** seems amateurish, with its pretty girls insensitively lit and allied with crude lettering. They could learn from **GUM** (one **GUM** cover of a rectorial election has the classic static violence of a Renaissance battle-piece). Printing, too, is frequently a give-away. Too often the search for cheapness has brought smudgy composition, with parish-magazine blanks between paragraphs, made up from type that looks as if it has been used for printing auctioneers' catalogues since 1910. If you can't afford good printing, go frankly functional and have offset type-writing, with lavish margins and good layout. And

what a pity it is that student magazines have to carry advertisements!

But I suppose it is remarkable that most issues appear at all: time and again in editorials appears the grumbling sideswipe at contributors, lazy when they don't produce, incompetently adolescent when they do. **Carolynne** has a **Carolynne tie**: dark green Terylene with gold quill-and-scroll motif, price not given. Qualification: to have written (not have had printed) an article of more than 750 words. A bizarre notion, and good training for the old-boy network of the weeklies. What do the girls get?

There remains the poetry, which may have been what I was supposed to be writing about, for Oxford's **Isis** simply tore out the poems and sent them (one of them with a fascinating account of the genesis of **Penthouse** on the back). If so, then I apologise, for to be honest I found little to say about the examples I saw. Student poetry is an unrewarding field: its authors are struggling with all the contradictory elements of art—spontaneity and artifice, sincerity and drama, speech-rhythms with metre and rhyme—and publishing is all part of struggle: there are not, however, many traces of resolution. I liked Tom Wright of **Mask** ("The Lilac Tree") and the semi-anonymous J.W. of **GUM**:

Surely and slowly it goes:
All youth to the marriage table,
All honey to the gods,
And old men tuck into their memory
With beards for napkins and eyes for forks.

People are still doing parodies of Eliot (no Auden, and no Dylan Thomas outside Wales), and Jaki Levenson of **Dragon** (Aberystwyth) remembered her schooldays:

Seven years we have worked quietly,
Working and partly working.

Yann Lovelock in **Arrows** can work up a strong rhetoric on occasion:

America, round which huge waters cling,
Herb-doctor, martyr, and cold, conqueror,
Who now shall answer all the world with Spring?

But sooner than pick out snippets that may sound good in isolation, I should prefer to quote Angela Langfield's "Reclining Figure: Henry Moore" from **Gibbet**. Jaunty and accurate, it seems the vision of the contemporary student at its best — level, witty and precise.

Continued

RECLINING FIGURE

Henry Moore*

I like you lying there
like something the sea washed up,
cat brought in or
man left on bed, clumsy on
the way out to work.

I like you lying
shamble of breasts and holes,
part of a car smash,
part of a love match, a
remnant of moulded sheets,
pockets of air in your legs.

I like you
when sideways a relief map, in
front stone henge, and now
close to, a monster, then
thumb marks make
nonsense of a lump of stone
touched quickly, hunched up rear.
Angela Langfield.

* This poem has appeared in "Tribune"



Oxford and Cambridge Club, 20 June 2017



In the Edward VII Room at the Oxford and Cambridge Club, Pall Mall, after a dinner discussion of James Booth's biography of Larkin, 20 June 2017.

Larkin in Abu Dhabi



Philip Larkin: Life, Art and Love, in an Abu Dhabi bookshop, flanked by Jeffrey Archer and Stephen King. Photograph © Lee Toone.

'Z' : another Larkin exclusion

Geoff Weston

The exclusion of Larkin from the anthology *Eight Oxford Poets* has been often recorded. By April 1941, Sidney Keyes and Michael Meyer had completed their plans for a collection of Oxford poetry, written since the outbreak of war. After meticulous planning, with Drummond Allison as chief talent scout, unsuspecting poets were lured along to one of the many literary tea-parties given by Keyes and Meyer and asked to read from their work.¹ Meyer has asserted that there were considerable editorial disagreements over who should be in. He wanted to include Larkin, while having reservations about John Heath-Stubbs and Drummond Allison.² Although there were in theory two editors, the choice of whom to include was ultimately made by Keyes, and his view prevailed.

Larkin's omission rankled with him for the rest of his life, leading him to hold a jaundiced view of Keyes's poetry in consequence. Writing to Norman Iles in April 1944, he opined that '... it is a long time before you notice that he doesn't rhyme hardly at all ... personally I'd as soon venture forth without rhyme as without boots in a meadow of snakes.'³ Eleven years later, to Robert Conquest, he commented, 'I think you are quite right in stressing the poor quality of poetry during the war – a period which can laud the poetry of Keyes is no period for me.'⁴

However, this was not the only anthology from which Larkin found himself excluded during his Oxford days. The curiously-titled *Z: Oxford and Cambridge Writing* made its appearance in 1942. Michael Hamburger, one of the contributors, has confirmed that John Lehmann, then managing director of the Hogarth Press, was behind its publication, although no publisher's name or address appeared in it.⁵ Larkin was invited to submit poems to Lehmann, and reported on the outcome both to his parents and James Sutton in May 1942. To Sutton he wrote, 'John Lehmann pencilled caustic comments on "Tired of a landscape...": Auden again! I am thoroughly sick of the flat middle-class phraseology of the Auden jargon.' But he added: 'But this has some fine lines', which pleased me somewhat. It seems amazing that I wrote that about 18 months ago, in my first term. They may include "Interesting but futile" in the anthology. My old, good work.' Later in the same letter he confirmed that 'Lehmann's anthology "Z" hopes to be out before term ends. I should have one poem in the latter.'⁶ 'Tired of a landscape' and 'Interesting but futile' had both been published the previous year in *Cherwell*, in the issues for 13 February and 8 May respectively.

But it was not to be. On 9 June, Larkin sent a postcard to his mother with the bleak message 'Tragedy. "Z" appeared, without me. Please send 2 botts. arsenic, 2 botts. strychnine, 1 revolver plus 7 rounds of ammunition, a rope with a noose in it, and a deep pond with a bridge over it.'⁷

So who was included? The Cambridge contributors were mainly short-story writers, none of whom seems to have made a literary career. The nine Oxford entrants were primarily poets: four had appeared in *Eight Oxford Poets* (Drummond Allison, John Heath-Stubbs, Michael Meyer and the ubiquitous Sidney Keyes), and all nine were included in *Oxford Poetry, 1942-43*, published a year later, where Larkin was to make his first anthology appearance.

Sidney Keyes contributed three poems, all of which were to appear in *The Cruel Solstice*, his second book published posthumously by Routledge in 1943, Keyes having been killed in Tunisia in April of that year. Drummond Allison's poem 'Demolishers of unessential groves' would later be published in his posthumous book *The Yellow Knight*, following his death on the road to Monte Cassino in December 1943. John Heath-Stubbs's poems 'River Song' and 'Elegy to Syrinx' would be included in *Beauty and the Beast*, published by Routledge in 1943. Michael Hamburger's contribution 'Holderlin', his first appearance in an anthology, was printed in his initial book of poems *Flowering Cactus*, published by the Hand & Flower Press in 1950. Finally, John Croft, Patrick Gardiner, John Hawke-Genn and Francis King each contributed one short poem.

We are grateful to the Society of Authors, on behalf of the Larkin Estate, for permission to publish extracts from Larkin's letters.

¹ Sharp, Michael. Introduction to *Allison, Drummond. The poems* (Reading: Whiteknights Press, 1978), p.xv.

² Meyer, Michael. 'John Heath-Stubbs in the forties'. *Aquarius*, 10, 1978, p.12.

³ Larkin, Philip. *Selected Letters*, p.88.

⁴ *Ibid*, p.241.

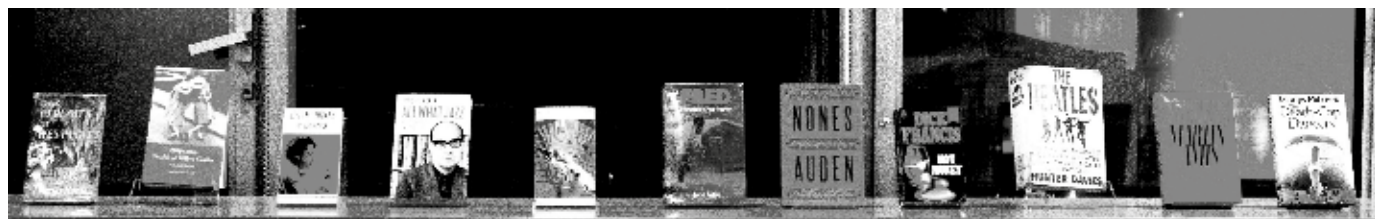
⁵ Hamburger, Michael. *Philip Larkin: a Retrospect* (London: Enitharmon Press, 2002), p.6.

⁶ ALS to James Sutton, May 1942, BJL U DP/174/2/39.

⁷ PC to Eva Larkin, 9 June 1942

Larkinworld - an interview with London-based artist D J Roberts

Lyn Lockwood



In April 2017 I travelled down to London for a weekend taking in a few different events and was particularly looking forward to the exhibition 'Larkinworld' by artist D J Roberts, at the wonderful National Poetry Library, South Bank Centre, described as, 'Neon light sculpture, drawings and pop culture ephemera offering new perspectives on the melancholic poetry of Philip Larkin.' To my bewilderment, I entered the exhibition-space to find half empty walls and bare shelves; a few listings websites had somehow included an incorrect finishing date and the exhibition had closed the previous day! But, in a strange way, this turned out to be to my advantage because I got a chance to chat to D J himself as he was dismantling his work.

Sidney Bechet'. D J, like Grayson Perry, brought an artist's sensibility to the reading of Larkin's life and work, with an eye for its contradictions, musicality, humour and often very visual aspects. I particularly liked the wall sized prints of Larkin's unpublished jazz lyrics- they were new to me, and had a exuberance to them that reflected Larkin's own profound love for jazz. D J also brought out Larkin's own appreciation of art.



'Larkinworld' featured a range of items that explored the cultural landscape and context of Philip Larkin's life- they were not artefacts that were personally owned by Larkin (in contrast to the 'New Eyes Each Year' exhibition in Hull), but items that D J had sourced and curated in order to explore Larkin's world. Copies of *Lucky Jim* and *All What Jazz*, vintage vinyl sleeves, pinups and magazines featuring Larkin articles set out beneath a large neon sign stating 'like an enormous yes'; the iconic and life-affirming line from Larkin's 'For

D J kindly kept in touch and we discussed some of his thoughts about Larkin's life and works, what the poet has meant to him as an artist and one of his favourite Larkin poems, 'The Explosion'.

D J, could you explain again how you came to be curating the exhibition and how you think it turned out? What was the most popular or noted exhibit?

For a long time I had wanted to do an exhibition exploring my response to the world of Philip Larkin. In 2014 I proposed a show to the National Poetry Library in London, and I was delighted when they accepted. I stressed that the show would be very much my personal take on Larkin, and Chris McCabe, the librarian, seemed happy to go along with this. As I wrote in my notes accompanying the show, psychologically Larkin's world may often be one of fear and failure, but physically it is one of bars and shopping malls and cinemas, and this is the world I identify with and enjoy being part of, this is the world that affects my reading of the poems. And Larkin's range is wider than is often thought. He has written a poem set in the railyards of the American deep south, a poem about Sidney Bechet, a witty homage to James Bond. So the show had quite an upbeat, streetwise feel to it, and I was pleased that visitors responded well to this. They particularly liked a series of posters we had printed of some blues lyrics which Larkin wrote. He never had them published, but the jazz pianist Michael Garrick is on the record as saying that they are strong: 'An authentic moaning blues tone, and the magic word: love' is his verdict.



What did you learn about Larkin that surprised you?

I was surprised to learn he thought 'Mr Tambourine Man' the best song ever written. A great song it is - but who would have thought Larkin was a Bob Dylan fan! And while I knew that Larkin was no literary snob, when Simon Wilson, University Archivist at Hull History Centre, gave me a hugely enjoyable tour of Larkin's book collection I was surprised by just how many thrillers, cricket books and general pot-boilers could be found among the Hardys, Audens and Shakespeares. Again, I knew Larkin was a keen photographer, but when 'The Importance of Elsewhere: Philip Larkin's photographs' was published I was surprised by the time and energy he had devoted to photography - with some genuinely

interesting results too. In fact, the most rewarding thing I learned about Larkin when preparing the exhibition was the extent of his interest in the visual. He liked to bicycle or drive around looking at buildings, Pevsner in hand. He was a keen gallery goer - according to Jean Hartley of The Marvell Press he knew more about painting and pictures than he admitted. In his letters and diaries he references a good many artists, Pissarro, Atkinson Grimshaw, Gwen John and Stanley Spencer among them, and his reaction to painting, though conservative, could verge on the ecstatic. John Brett's painting 'The Stonebreaker' in Liverpool City Art Gallery was a particular favourite. In a letter to Monica Jones he writes: 'After arriving in Liverpool yesterday, I hung about until the art gallery was open, then I rushed in shrieking 'The Stonebreaker, The Stonebreaker!' And there was the picture I was looking for, in a corner. The reproduction gives no idea of the exquisiteness of it. Everything is glowing and thrilling, with most sensitively-rendered light, and with almost surreal sharpness of detail'.

Could you give me some of your thoughts on 'The Explosion' - I think the Wales connection is really fascinating.

'The Explosion' has always been one of my favourite Larkin poems. It is in many ways atypical of Larkin, something he himself admitted. Rather than his interior world of anxiety and stalled relationships it describes a mining disaster. You read it as if you were watching a film, the drama of the event is brilliantly realised, and it is suffused with a human warmth that some of Larkin's critics might find surprising. The imagery is intensely moving; few poems I know deal so affectingly with how loss feels. Perhaps it means a lot to me because my father was from South Wales, and you can't be a South Walean without being aware of the history of mining. Tragedies were frequent; sometimes whole generations of a family died together underground - fathers, brothers, sons (the latter often in their early teens). I understand Larkin had the Trimdon Colliery disaster in mind when he wrote 'The Explosion', and Trimdon is in County Durham. But I always think of the poem as a Welsh poem, and when I recite it to myself I always do the verse where the dead miners are remembered in chapel in a Welsh accent. For the record, although I think Larkin's low key, almost conversational readings of his poems work very well in most cases, I do think 'The Explosion' requires something more dramatic. I can imagine Richard Burton reading it!

Do you have any more Larkin related projects planned?

Yes, I hope so. I have a proposal I want to make quite soon to the University of Hull. What happens too is that, as I develop work in the studio, or travel about on buses and trains, I see something, or think of something, that triggers off ideas for further work. There's bound to be another Larkin 'trigger' at some stage in the future.

'Literary Connections'

Mark Rowe

Peter Dickinson: *Words and Music* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2016)
x+318pp., £30.00. ISBN 978 78327 106 1

Peter Dickinson has had a distinguished career as a composer, performer, and musicologist; and the present work brings together a generous selection of his essays. The book is most likely to be read by musicians interested in part IV, 'Writings on Music'. Readers of *About Larkin* will probably be most drawn to part V, 'Literary Connections', so I shall concentrate on that in my review. The section consists of five articles: two largely about setting words to music, and three about Dickinson's encounters with poets.

In the opening essay, 'Emily Dickinson and Composers', the author notes similarities between the publication histories of Dickinson and Hopkins, the reception histories of Dickinson and Charles Ives, and the privacy and directness of Dickinson and Larkin. He then considers Copland's *Twelve Poems by Emily Dickinson*, and makes a scatter of observations about settings by more minor composers – Getty, Persichetti, and numerous others. Two general points emerge: a surprisingly large number of composers want to set Dickinson's work; and these composers can be divided into those who deliberately simplify their style to do so, and those who assimilate her into the complexities of their own natural style.

The first two-thirds of 'T.S.Eliot, Stravinsky, Britten and Rawsthorne' is an able discussion of the complex biographical connections between Eliot, Stravinsky and Britten. Towards the end, however, a general thesis emerges about the way these composers set Eliot: '[they] make their own agenda [...] respecting the text is for minor figures.' (195) To support this thesis, Dickinson points out that Britten admitted he did not fully understand Eliot's 'The Death of Saint Narcissus' when he put it to music. But I fail to see any connection between this fact and the conclusion it is supposed to support. If Britten's lack of understanding were due to careless reading, or simply taking the poem as the starting point for irresponsible fantasy, then this would be disrespectful to the text; but neither vice is suggested by Britten's finished work. In fact, although Eliot's poem has an obscurity which baffles even scholars, it is a 'luminous and wonder-generating' obscurity, and Britten was surely responding to this quality. Far from being disrespectful, this is precisely the kind of primal response which Eliot thought the living essence of poetic understanding: there is no point in mastering the details of a poem, he once remarked, 'unless we have first read

and been excited by the text [...] even without understanding it.'

Dickinson's short tribute to Ruth Pitter is thoughtful and judicious, while 'Meeting W.H. Auden' shows the poet to be kind, non-committal, considerate, and encouraging to the young. Several polite notes are reproduced, and Dickinson gives a characterful description of Auden's New York apartment, although nothing particularly memorable is reported about the poet himself, beyond his remarking: 'Of course highbrows are the only people who should be allowed to travel since they're the only people prepared to eat the food.' (208)

In 'Meeting Philip Larkin', Dickinson approaches Larkin about setting some of his work, and quotes his well known qualms (later seconded by Kingsley Amis) about putting his poems to music:

I believe a poem – or at least a good poem – contains everything it needs, including music, painting, vocalising and so on. To add these things afterwards is to my mind superfluous, and while not doing the poem any harm will not do it any good either. (218)

To try to avoid these difficulties, Dickinson decides not to write songs, but to set four of Larkin's jazz poems for a speaker backed by a minimal musical accompaniment.

There are two interesting pieces of information in this article. The first is that, on his official notepaper from the 1980s, the poet chose to style himself: 'Professor P. A. Larkin, C.B.E., C.Lit., M.A., D.Lit., D.Litt., F.R.S.L., F.L.A., F.R.S.A.' The second, found in an extract from an interview with Leonard Bernstein, is that the 'quintessential American extrovert' describes Larkin as 'the greatest twentieth-century poet in the English language.' (215)

The literary essays are a fair sample of the volume, and give an indication of its strengths and weaknesses. All are well researched, carefully written and informative, but they are a little low on insights and rarely grip or sparkle. The straightforward memoirs – of Pitter and the music historian Bernarr Rainbow – are probably the most moving and successful essays in the collection.

The book is beautifully produced and edited. But all the photographs are of Dickinson, his works or his concert posters. Couldn't a few have been spared to show the people he's writing about?

Bringing Hull into reach

Don Lee



Review of *Hull 2017: 2,017 facts about Hull and people associated with the city* by James L. Orwin. Dancing Sisters Press, Hull, 2017) 440pp. ISBN-10: 0993233082; ISBN-13: 978-0993233081. Kindle edn. available from Amazon.

Word of mouth recommendations alone have caused this chunky 440 page paperback to become something of a best-seller. It is issued by 'Dancing Sisters Press' which otherwise publishes slim volumes (chapbooks) of poetry. Orwin explains: 'The name and logo were inspired by a small soapstone ornament that belonged to Jean Hartley and was given to me by her daughters Alison and Laurien after Jean died in 2011.'

The book took the best part of two years to research, refine and process and shows a painstaking attention to detail. The pithy 10-page introduction explains that the book is intended for everyone who has any kind of connection with Hull. The 2,017 facts are arranged chronologically and not by theme. But the excellent 30-page index simplifies specific fact-finding. Larkin himself does not appear until fact 972 on page 183 and the book adds little to the accounts of Motion, Hartley or Booth. But that's hardly the point. Those interested in the poet will find hosts of allied facts on such varied topics as The Royal Station Hotel, Paragon Station, City Hall, the Humber Bridge, Pearson Park, The Avenues, Newland Park, the Hartleys, the University, Spring Bank Cemetery etc. *Hull 2017* provides the historical background to Larkin's Hull and much more.

Fact 2,017 is worth quoting in full:

On 2 December 2016, following a campaign begun by Larkin's former secretary Betty Mackereth in the run-up to the 2010 Larkin 25 commemorative activities, Philip Larkin was memorialised in Westminster Abbey's Poets' Corner when a ledger stone was unveiled on the 31st anniversary of his death. The stone was carved by Martin Jennings, the sculptor of the Larkin statue at Hull's Paragon Interchange.

No Larkin book collection will be complete without *2,017 Facts* so act quickly before the second printing runs out. You don't want to be left with just the Kindle e-book, do you?

Witnesses

Evening mist hangs over the stretch of grass
separating the main road from the housing estate.

This is where
five days ago
a woman was raped.

By the footpath
a yellow board appeals for witnesses.

The March sky flickers
with a hundred shades of metallic blue.

Little gangs of daffodils, shining
like butter in the knife-sharp night
bend their heads together, and whisper.

tadpoles

a tad too small
for pole-vaulting across the pond

do they dream of giant leaps
when they'll grow into frogs
for pale lads to pet?

doleful days in the dales

dappling rain

the plop sounds of nature

tadpoles

adept at adapting

toppling over

looping the loop

ole!

Mary McCollum

From *Heart on the Water*
(Dancing Sisters 2016)

Old People's Ward

She won't go back home now. Things are such
They'll never let her die there.
She'll never see again the spindly walnut table,
The miniatures grouped halfway up the stair.

She'll never see her chintzy curtains, stirring
In a summer breeze; nor hear again
The chiming of her ancient clock –
Although she feels them, far beyond her pain.

But, now – through her tiny leaded windows
(beyond her bed the doctor frowns),
She sees all the seasons' skies;
Hears a blackbird, sees a small fold of the Downs.

John Tatum

From *Selected Wordscapes*

Notes on Contributors

Roger Gourd, originally from Plymouth, studied Philosophy and Politics in Hull, 1962-65. While there he contributed to both 'Torch' and 'Torchlight' (the student newspaper); in 1965 he co-edited 'Torch'. He was an occasional reader and minor musician at the poetry and jazz sessions in the university. On graduation he was interviewed by Philip Larkin for a position in the university library, a failed last ditch attempt to stay on. Nowadays he is a retired teacher living in North London. Very occasionally he still breaks into print.

John Kelly was educated at Trinity College, Dublin (he is now an Honorary Fellow), and at Cambridge. He taught English and American Literature at the University of Kent at Canterbury from 1968-76, when he became a Fellow of St. John's College, Oxford. He has written extensively on 19th and 20th century literature and is General Editor of *The Collected Letters* of W. B. Yeats, (ongoing, 12 volumes). He has also edited and introduced a 12-volume series of Irish fiction, poetry and essays of the nineteenth century: *'Hibernia: State and Nation'*.

Angela Kenyon was born in Cambridge and educated at St. Mary's Convent, Cambridge. She worked for a group of Architects in Cambridge, and then was Secretary to the Master of Clare College. She has one daughter from her first marriage to an architect. She married John Kenyon in 1962, and had a second daughter and one son. After Hull, she and John moved to St. Andrews, then Kansas. She is now settled in her beloved Norfolk.

Don Lee was born in Manchester, and educated at Middleton Grammar School. His careers have been as an insurance claims investigator in private industry and a management information officer in local government. He is a campaigner on public rights of way. His hobbies include book and record collecting, exploring town and country, and seeking out oddities of all kinds. He has planned and led the Larkin Society birthday walks, and his 'Philip Larkin's Coventry' was published in 2009.

Lyn Lockwood is a secondary school English teacher living in Sheffield. She is the Education Officer and joint Merchandising Officer for the Philip Larkin Society and regularly bakes her own Larkin cakes.

Mary McCollum is from Belfast and lives in Hull where she completed an MA in Creative Writing (2010). She was educated at Queen's University Belfast (BA) and Edinburgh University (MSc) before working as a journalist for 15 years. Her poetry has been published widely in magazines in the UK and Ireland and

anthologised in Amnesty International's *Small Candles* and Mutiny Writers' *More Points on the Compass* (2017).

Philip Pullen was born and brought up in Coventry and is familiar with most of the haunts of the young Philip Larkin. He now lives in Beverley. He has spent most of his working life teaching in further and higher education and from 2001 until his retirement in 2011 was an HMI with Ofsted. Although his academic background is in the social sciences he has had a life long passion for English literature. He is currently writing a biography of Eva Larkin.

M. W. Rowe is Honorary Researcher in the School of Philosophy at UEA. His most recent book is *Philip Larkin: Art and Self* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2011) which was nominated for the James Russell Lowell Prize 2012. He is currently writing a biography of the philosopher J.L. Austin (1911-1960) for OUP, and overseeing a recording - on 7 CDs - of the complete works of the violin virtuoso H.W. Ernst (1812-65).

Carol Rumens has published a number of collections of poetry, including, most recently, *Animal People* (Seren, Cardiff, 2016) and *Perhaps Bag: New and Selected Poems* (Sheep Meadow Press, NY, 2017). She writes a regular poetry blog for *Guardian Books Online*, 'Poem of the Week,' teaches creative writing at Bangor University, and is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature.

John Wyndham Tatum was born in Edinburgh in 1933 and educated at Shebbear College in Devon. *A View of the Town* was published by Outposts in 1960 and Tatum attended sessions of The Group at Edward Lucie Smith's house in the 1960s. His *Poems to Sundry Notes of Jazz* was broadcast on BBC Radio Three in 1983; he also played the trumpet on this. Over the years, he has published poems in 'a variety of little magazines' and in 'This England'. He won third prize in the Petra Kenney competition in 2001 and third prize in the Philip Larkin competition in 2015. His hobby is painting watercolours of the English landscape.

Geoff Weston worked closely with Philip Larkin in the Library for 16 years. Now retired from his post as Associate Director of Academic Services, he undertakes Larkin-related research and is heavily involved in school governance, particularly the process whereby primary schools convert to sponsored academy status.



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Books

Jean Hartley, *Philip Larkin's Hull and East Yorkshire* £5
 The second edition of this popular topographical and walking guide to the area, home to Larkin for 30 years.

John Harris, *The Beat of Happiness* £10
 A fascinating collection of reflections on Jazz and Philip Larkin's love of music

Geoffrey Waters, *The Larkin Trail* (Kingston Press) £12
 Crammed with art work and accompanying narrative, high-quality hardback; this makes an excellent companion to *Philip Larkin's Hull and East Yorkshire*.

Stationery



Pack of four notelets (and envelopes): £3, featuring images of Philip Larkin and John Betjeman from the 1964 BBC Monitor documentary programme 'Down Cemetery Road'. (© 1964 Anne James)



Pack of four postcards: £2, featuring images of Philip Larkin.



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Set of six images (double p/c size) of Larkin's belongings by Larkin25 photographer Dennis Low. The objects provide insight into Larkin's life and throw light on familiar poems: 6 large postcards: £5.

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Contents

Forthcoming	
Obituary: Professor William 'Bill' Speck	
'These Foolish Things': The <i>Spectator</i> , 1 April 2017	Bill Greenwell
Philip Larkin vs Sir Cyril Norwood, 1941	John Kelly
Poem: MCMXLV: For the Poets who Served in World War Two	Carol Rumens
A Letter to LSE Students: 1969	Philip Larkin, intr. James Booth
'On some Welsh beach my parents met' – how Sydney and Eva first 'became known'	Philip Pullen
Larkin Society AGM, The Lawns Centre, Cottingham, 3 June 2017	
Remembering Philip	Angela Kenyon
'A Biased View' of the 'New Eyes Each Year' Exhibition by Anna Farthing	Philip Pullen
'This Frail Travelling Coincidence': Annual Guest Lecture by Grayson Perry, Middleton Hall, Hull, 5 July 2017	
Review of 'This Frail Travelling Coincidence' by Grayson Perry	James Booth
Two Elusive Reviews: 'Tender Voices' (1963) and 'Young Contemporaries' (1966)	Philip Larkin, intr. Roger Gourd
'Z': Another Larkin Exclusion	Geoff Weston
'Larkinworld' at the Poetry Library, London. Interview with D J Roberts	Lyn Lockwood
'Literary Connections'. Review of <i>Words and Music</i> by Peter Dickinson (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2016)	Mark Rowe
Bringing Hull into Reach: Review of <i>2,017 Facts about Hull</i> by Jim Orwin	Don Lee
Poems: Witnesses, Tadpoles	Mary McCollum
Poem: Old Peoples' Ward	John Tatum
Notes on Contributors	
Publications and Merchandise	

Cover illustration:
Grayson Perry at Larkin's Grave, Cottingham Cemetery, 5 July 2017.
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