“Doing” ecocriticism: Oppressions of nature and animals in Philip Larkin’s poetry
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ABSTRACT
Far fewer studies have investigated Philip Larkin’s ecological awareness. While the poet problematizes physical nature and animals, the universal, east-and-west concerns of (non) human beings have been predominantly one-dimensional. This paper analyzes Larkin’s poetry, by paying specific attention to the poet’s precognition of a looming disaster that ecocritics and environmentalists later came to conceptualize as “the ecological crisis.” This article analyzes two poems by Larkin, chiefly, “Going, Going,” and “Take One Home for the Kiddies” in the context of natural environment and animal oppression. Larkin’s arguments on the human manipulation of nature eventually disrupts the Man-Nature relationship. By focusing on these two of Larkin’s poems, the wider application of rhetorical devices attests to the poet’s sensitivity, delineating an unstable alliance between human and non-human world(s).

1. Introduction
Physical nature and human conditions reveal contradictory and complementary insights. As a concept, nature dramatically alters the ways in which human beings mirror the interlocking fragments at individual and public levels. However, it was only in the late 20th century that people began to navigate the ways in which literature could tell us about our relationship to nature and the hazards it suffers. In their quest to unveil such a relationship, many literary critics such as Keith Thomas, Leo Marx and Carolyn Merchant, to name a few, produced works in the 1960s and 1970s that set the stage for ecocriticism. For example, in The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America (1964), Leo Marx provides an analysis of how the natural landscape in
the United States is being destroyed by technology and the creep of industrialization. Marx demonstrated a recurring theme in modern American literature, chiefly, one that portrays the tension between untouched nature and the rapid devastation brought on by machines. This same idea was later captured by Keith Thomas who, in his *Man and the Natural World* (1983), uses some literary works produced around his time and earlier to illustrate the conflicts between environmentalists and the “negative” transformation associated with the rise of technology and urbanization.

In this article, we analyze two poems by Larkin, namely, “Going, Going,” and “Take One Home for the Kiddies” by employing ecocriticism. Of central concern was the dominance and elaboration of the conjectures, discontinuities, and ambivalence between the natural environment and animal oppressions. Specifically, Larkin’s concerns over the human manipulation of nature was seen as eventually disrupting the (non)human beings’ relationship. While it was acknowledged that Larkin wrote several other poems that straddle across nature and the more-than-human world(s), for instance, “Night Music,” “Long Sight in Age,” “Going,” “The Buildings,” “To the Sea,” “Love Songs in Age,” “Mr. Bleaney,” “The Trees,” “Love Again,” “The Mower,” “Myxomatosis”), the selection of the two poems for investigation was motivated by the implicit and indirect tones of the ways in which the environment are “silenced” and “subjugated,” which we will demonstrate.

### 2. Ecocriticism: text(s) and context(s)

Before we get into the discussion on Larkin’s works, we would first like to dwell on the notion of ecocriticism. How might ecocriticisms present the conceptual of Larkin’s poems? To what extent does ecocriticism serve an authentic representation of the dynamic relations between human and non-human world(s)? And to pose the question again, why ecocriticism? While not necessarily comprehensive, the following accounts of ecocriticism will accentuate the subsequent investigation across Larkin’s poems.

In her book, *The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology, and the Scientific Revolution*, Carolyn Merchant raised pertinent issues concerning the relationships across (non)human beings. Particularly, Merchant argues two points on how science has dismembered nature. She posits that science and machinery have changed the metaphors that humans in the past used to refer to nature from one of sublimity into one of domination. Merchant maintains that environmental activism should be based on an understanding of this science-nature dichotomy.

The term, “ecotext,” has recently proliferated in European and American writings, at large, describing literature that addresses issues related to the environment, particularly, the disruption of nature and the transgression of the symmetrical organization where people cooperate with rather than dominate the natural world. Individuals, societies, and communities are interconnected to one another, forming substantial ecological models. The interlocking notions in the context of individuals’ hopes, despair, outlook, and dreams are often tied to their surroundings, making ecocriticism an important aspect to study. For instance, the emergence of environmental political parties and Green organizations, and the resulting ecological awareness bear a resemblance to works that focus on nature and place in literary texts. Literary works often emphasize the idea that Man and the more-than-human world belong to an existential chain where an individual
element cannot be discussed in isolation. These contexts, more often than not, included race, sex, class, history, author, context, and place. Since the late 20th century, humans have started to understand the size of the destruction they have inflicted on the natural environment. Man has destroyed forests, hunted animals, polluted the air and the sea, and plundered the planet (Carey et al.).

The early attempts to conceptualize ecocriticism were essentially directed towards revising sets of established Western-imposed parameters, the concepts that prevailed in the West, in general, and Anglo-Saxon culture, in particular. Because many of these discussions surrounding the application of these concepts to non-Western societies recur, a lacuna for further investigations has surfaced; a reconsideration of such concepts and the ways these concepts affect environment is all the more urgent. It was within this context that environmental criticism came to emphasize the importance of place – the more-than-human world and to cry out against human activities that have inflicted massive destruction on the planet.

Ecocritics have taken many literary forms and genres as they analyzed texts with ecological concerns. For example, The Comedy of Survival (1972) is one of the earliest texts to raise a pertinent question that paved the way for discussions concerning ecocritical tradition. The author, Joseph Meeker, argues that the crisis suffered by nature is largely exacerbated by the cultural Western tradition that separates culture from nature. By using this argument, Meeker has set the stage for scholarly investigation of the relationship between literature and scientific ecology (Zhao). Other critics following Meeker such as Cheryll Glotfelty, Michael Branch and Jonathan Bate have developed the foundation on this traditional question of the relationship between literature and the physical environment.

The ecocritical endeavors have so far focused on fiction (for instance, An Ecocritical Approach to the Southern Novels of Cormac Mccarthy by Paul Quick, 2004; Nature and Grief: An Ecocritical Analysis of Grief in Children’s Literature by Megan Lankford, 2010), while far fewer studies on ecocriticism investigated poetry. Some of these works only focus on a number of aspects (pollution and destruction), and they deliberately/inadvertently neglect some other pointers, such as the disruption of the Man-Nature relationship. Hence, this study will address this neglect by examining concerns over the human manipulation of nature, which eventually make evident a messy relationship between human beings and physical environment. The fact is that many postmodern poets addressed issues of ecological dimensions; their works meant to raise a hue and cry about the damage humans bring to the environment. There are also poets who unintentionally addressed ecological themes. Writing about topics such as religion, metaphysics, and new technologies, these poets might not have had the intention to depict issues of environmental significance, but the ways in which these poems are written suggests the preponderance of marginalization of ecology and their inter-related discussions with the (non)human’s world.

Ecocriticism, therefore, cuts across disciplines, chiefly across applied sciences and literary criticism. Applied sciences supports the claims of Greens in relation to environmental degradation: climate change, the extinction of some living species, and the erosion of agricultural soil (Gallagher #). However, the role of such sciences remains dubious. While the results of scientific research supports environmental policies, the urban-industrial civilization, which is based on applied sciences, is still perceived as the
root cause of the current deterioration of the ecosystem (Cronon #). As ecocriticism takes into account the different relations between literature and the natural world, it stands to transpire existing literary studies to examine ecological hazards, a multidisciplinary call to sciences and technologies for mitigating the adverse effects of subversive human interventions.

In the ecocritical tradition, the idea that science, machinery and urbanization have detached people from nature is quite rational, and this forms a solid foundation for critics in their readings of literature. The existing conceptualization of ecocriticism has drawn much on these works, and the reception to such works have helped shape the existing theoretical underpinning. In the following pages, we will tease out the central concerns of ecocriticism, particularly across Larkin’s poems. The central concerns are the ways in which (non) human beings navigate across chaotic, often disruptive conditions. By focusing on Larkin’s poems, the slippery fragments between the environment and human beings are exposed.

3. Larkin’s works in a “capsule”

For ordinary readers and critics alike, Philip Larkin was one of the most influential poets in 20th century England. Larkin wrote about everyday experiences in everyday language. The use of ordinary language allowed him to attract more readers and provided him with a direct tool to convey his meanings honestly and clearly. In defining the formal character of Larkin’s poetry, David Lodge says that Larkin was a “metonymic poet” (120). Larkin, Lodge pointed out, relied on metonymy to “evoke scene, character, culture and subculture” (123). Larkin also uses metaphors, but to a lesser extent. However, the majority of Larkin’s symbolic poems appeal to ordinary readers, whose concerns primarily center on issues close to humans’ private and public lives, in particular to the dynamics of human beings and their natural surroundings. Some of Larkin’s poems are intriguing in terms of the selection of subjects and the remarkable use of rhetorical devices and images. Images and rhetorical devices all serve the central purpose, to demonstrate the cyclical course of the elements of the more-than-human world.

Critics aver that shortcomings across Larkin’s poetry exist. In Philip Larkin: Life, Art and Love, James Booth compares the animal imagery in Larkin and Ted Hughes, and Booth finds Larkin superior. Booth writes, “Larkin respects the non-human otherness of animals while Hughes endows his birds and rodents with human pride, guilt and deviousness” (361). To Booth, Larkin was a great animal sympathizer. Larkin’s poetry was seen as a form of nonfiction which transcends the literal meaning into something symbolic. Roger Craik (2002), in Animals and Birds in Philip Larkin’s Poetry, explains how Larkin’s feelings towards birds and animals were demonstrated vividly. Craik believes that Larkin’s treatment of animals in his poetry is dramatic, attesting to the poet’s subtle sympathy towards animals. Larkin’s work both transcends textual and surface characterization. Stephen Cooper (in his Philip Larkin: Subversive Writer) offers a refutation of the established perception of Larkin’s works – the long-held labeling of Larkin as misogynist, racist and reactionary.

In what follows, we provide an ecocritical account of Larkin’s poetry, focusing on two themes, namely, animal oppression and natural environment, a reading of human-centered bias, informed by ecocentric beliefs.
3.1. Larkin’s poetry on nature and human beings

This section presents analysis addressing two of the many Larkin’s poems. To reiterate, the motivation behind choosing the two poems was firstly to provide a sense of environmental concerns waiting to be “heard,” and secondly to excavate issues concerning physical nature that are almost always “silenced” and “subjugated” by human beings for power-related causes. 

The poem “Going, Going” was written in 1972 and published in (1974). The poem “Going, Going” is considered by many critics to be a harbinger of the gloomy fate the earth might suffer. The poem is a melancholic depiction of the degradation of the natural environment, a recurring theme in Larkin’s poetry. “Going, Going” is a poem that holds Larkin’s signature par excellence. First, it features a gloomy view of human progress – a Lakinesque long-standing point of view. Second, it employs a language that is quite indicative (metonymic in the first place).

Firstly, the poem begins with celebrating the beauty of the English countryside. When the speaker was young, he would think that beyond the city, there is a beautiful natural landscape capable of maintaining its purity and standing the creep of buildings and industries. The “fields and farms” in the countryside remain a place to which people can always take refuge when they feel sick of the clutter and pollution in the city:

I thought it would last my time –
The sense that, beyond the town,
There would always be fields and farms

It seems as though Larkin had predicted the eminent degradation of the beauty. This could be read in the use of the verb “thought” (which is different from believe, a more expressive verb) in the first line of the first stanza. The poet assumed, with some doubt, that such beauty would last for the rest of his life. Soon, however, he came to realize but only wished all that was. He could have predicted the demise of that beauty – a conviction manifested in the melancholic mood of anguish as expressed in the first line. The grief derives from the verb “thought,” which implies that the poet was wrong in his assumption. The second and third lines in the stanza complement Larkin’s initial assumption – that the countryside lies beyond the city, and, as such, it is resilient to human exploitation.

Secondly, the poet envisions a countryside capable of withstanding the creep of buildings, industrialization and man-made subversion, a forethoughted that, even in the short term, turned out to be false. The words “my time” draw a grotesque picture of the future, even with the most optimistic, best-case scenario that the beauty of the countryside will last for a short time. The lifetime of the poet is very short, only a fraction of a second, compared to that of the natural world. “I thought it will last my time” also suggests that the rapid pace of destruction negatively affects the natural environment. The countryside could not stand the human manipulation even for such a very short life span.

“Where the village louts could climb/Such trees as were not cut down” convey some common meanings and values of idyllic literature, particularly an appreciation of the freedom that people in the countryside enjoy, including its portrayal of an intact and picturesque environment. The final line resonates with the first line as it relates to the poet’s remorseful recognition that his predictions were misguided. “I knew there’d be
false alarms” carries an implicit meaning. The word, “thought,” seems to suggest that if he knew this in the past, he was wrong.

Thirdly, the second stanza oscillates, in a sense, the poet’s initial assumption of some of the many first signs of industrialization that jeopardizes the countryside:

In the papers about old streets
And split level shopping, but some
Have always been left so far;
And when the old part retreats
As the bleak high-risers come
We can always escape in the car.

Larkin portrays things in a realistic way. He reads some stories about old streets in the city being crammed with new buildings. However, there is still room for hope, because the countryside is expansive and the rate of industrialization is not too substantial to bring about drastic destruction of the natural environment. When high-rise buildings emerge, people can escape to natural landscape untouched by factories and intensive farming. For Larkin, “things” (nature) are more powerful than humans, and nature is empowered. Forces that always allow nature to respond, defend itself, reclaim its elements, and transcend itself beyond the urban life where people have ridden roughshod over the natural landscape – the brunt that humans have inflicted on the natural environment:

Things are tougher than we are, just
As earth will always respond
However we mess it about;
Chuck filth in the sea, if you must:
The tides will be clean beyond.

Next, the final line (“But what do I feel now? Doubt?”) defeats what Larkin had in mind in the first stanza, the belief that the countryside is still beautiful and pristine. The question carries the sense of transgression the speaker reads in what is happening to fading England, a consummation of mise-en-scène, as though the question “But what do I feel now?” acts out the strange feeling he has in the face of the destruction of the countryside. The question Larkin raises and also the question in the first line of the third stanza (“Or age, simply?”) could be read as a self-reflection introspection. Larkin wonders whether he is truly able to construe the world around. Two lines of inquiries prevail: 1) Is what Larkin sees a doubt? 2) Is Larkin’s way of examining the world obsolete given the prevalence of his age?

Larkin also reflects on modern day requirements. Today, people always want more (“more houses, more parking allowed/more caravan sites, more pay”) and the result is more deterioration of the planet. The more the population grows, the more the demand will be for new houses, public facilities and parking lots. The poet seems to have no sympathy with those who ask for more. The poet does not sympathize people who want more development, which is usually brought at the expense of the domestic environment. The more we ask for more development, the more the damage inflicted on the surroundings. The fifth stanza adds to the implications for the quest for more:

Of spectacled grins approve
Some takeover bid that entails
Five per cent profit (and ten
Per cent more in the estuaries): move
Your works to the unspoilt dales
(Grey area grants)! And when

The blatant calls for businessmen to move their companies to untouched landscapes, with more incentives, demonstrate how people (especially governments) are intentionally destroying the unspoiled nature ("estuaries" and "dales"). As the population grows, businesses expand and are thrashed out of the city to "unspoilt dales" in the countryside. The use of the word, "unspoilt," and "spectacled grins" (a metonymy for the government) is crafty. It appears that readers are made aware of the fact that the countryside is untouched. By extension, the city environment is spoiled, and despite the proliferation of the grim environment, investors were engaged in destroying the "unspoiled." "Unspoilt" also suggests that the natural world in rural areas will soon be destructive, since industrialization and development have tainted life in the city. It is only a matter of time before the beautiful fields and farms disappear.

Subsequently, Larkin presents a portrait of post-war England where the demands are only fulfilled at the expense of the natural environment. In today’s world, businesses only care about making profit; their selfishness knows no boundaries. It is quite sardonic that the more our violation of nature gets, the more gains we reap. It is quite sarcastic and in a sense counterintuitive, how the destruction of "estuaries" brings more profits to businesses. It is regrettable to know that returns maximize more human manipulation that goes deeper into one of the most beautiful landscapes. These natural elements are life-giving in the first place. To revisit, historically, rivers have been associated with agriculture and sustenance; rivers give a reliable, clean source of potable and irrigation water. One would think that Larkin equated the image of the countryside with a commercial commodity. One satirical element is the picture of an invaluable landscape being subject to bargaining and sale. In the real world, it is properties and consumables that can be auctioned off. Naturally, the countryside is a national asset that no one can claim title to. With human greed reaching this far, auctioning the countryside and maintaining a healthy environment become more and more unattainable.

Larkin, seeing industrialization heading fast to the beautiful landscapes, admits that the beauty in the countryside is beginning to die. For instance, "For the first time I feel somehow/That it isn’t going to last," Larkin then voices his concerns over the future of England. He does nothing to disguise his antipathy towards England’s leaders. Larkin refers to them as "crooks" and "tarts" who approve the land takeover bids in the rural areas. The metonymy, "crooks and tarts," suggests violation and indifference ("tarts" summons up prostitution) as well as greed ("crooks" is associated with fraudsters), an assault on the intrinsic beauty of nature.

Larkin again defeats his initial thought. Before he dies ("before I snuff it"), the "boiling" (the whole lot) will be chaotic. When this happens, it is not hard for England to win the title "First slum of Europe," since it is always easy to destroy the domestic environment and a traditional culture. This is the kind of role that leaders of England play. Implications of such destruction to physical nature are not difficult to recognize:

“And that will be England gone,/The shadows, the meadows, the lanes.”
In the last stanza, Larkin draws a picture of how people convert what they really want into what they think they want – a characteristic of the modern-day consumer mentality that the poet is lamenting.

Most things are never meant.
This won’t be, most likely; but greeds
And garbage are too thick-strewn
To be swept up now, or invent
Excuses that make them all needs.
I just think it will happen, soon. (, 1st ed., 1974)

When this happens, the countryside will be gone, and all this will happen out of human insatiable greed. England will no longer be a beautiful place, and everything inspiring in it will be part of history.

The poem sends a hard-hitting ecological message. Destruction to the natural world is inevitable if humans continue to behave irresponsibly. The title of the poem “Going, Going” suggests the death of something. Perhaps our domestic nature is not quite gone altogether, but it is being compromised in favor of industrialization. This is a warning of the vast demolition we are bringing to our planet. Perhaps this scare-mongering poem is a call to take action to stop human activities before the natural environment disappears.

Our analysis echoes existing studies on “Going, Going.” John Ward sees in “Going, Going” a rather gloomy sense “that England is in practice being turned over to developers and bulldozers” (186). This is true, but it does not examine the consequences of this deal, so to speak, on the natural environment. Approaching the poem from a different perspective, James Booth 2014 provides an account by way of reflecting on Larkin’s late style. Booth defends Larkin against the superficial reading of the poem. He writes that “it seems, at first, that the degradation of the environment is to be blamed on the lower orders” (the crowd and young people), maintaining that it is capitalist greed that might be “environmentally destructive” (374).

On a broader level, an ecocritical reading of the poem would see the poet deploiring the creep of industrialization toward the countryside. Larkin achieves this through the use of different strategies. At the linguistic level, the words “crowd,” “mess,” “slum,” “filth,” “parking,” “bricked in” all suggest a chaotic scene – the kind of place that people spoil in their quest for more. Then, with the help of literary devices, particularly metonyms, Larkin appears to be able to disgrace those who break the rules of the pure, untouched nature (consider “crooks” and “tarts” as references to high-profile government employees). In a sense, Larkin seems to urge people to do something to stop those maniacs, whose greed knows no limits. Using symbols, Larkin also seems to push people for action. It is argued that Larkin was adept at evoking images of priceless “estuaries,” “dales” and “unspoilt” landscape being sold out to rapacious businesses. By focusing on “Going, Going,” Larkin advances the central question, chiefly, whether humans will still have a nature (through a countryside) to contemplate in the light of the destruction, informed by industrialization.

3.2. Larkin’s poetry on animal oppression

In his Letters to Monica (published in 2010), Larkin shows his love for animals. His letters contained pictures of different animals, especially rabbits. Larkin would be inflamed by
any instances of human cruelty to animals. On January 29, 1955 he wrote “I hear the Myxomatosis Committee says it will rage again this year. If this is so, I don’t want a holiday in England. It would be quite dreadful to be afraid to go out lest we shd happen upon any pitiful stricken ones. This Christmas was quite enough for me” (47). When Larkin died, he left half of his possessions to the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (Decon).

“Take One Home for the Kiddies” first appeared in Larkin’s third poetry collection, The Whitsun Weddings, in 1964. The poem makes evident the cruelty of humans towards animals. One common element of Larkin’s poems is his choice of titles. “Take One Home for the Kiddies” looks like a catchphrase that a street crier or a pet shop uses to entice parents to buy a pet for their children. This seems to be the first message the poet is sending. By making the seller address the parents, rather than the kids themselves, Larkin emphasizes the tone of modern-society commercialism that only adult people can understand. Of particular importance is the fact that once a pet is in the hands of children, adult people are no longer responsible for its fate. In a sense, irresponsibility towards the non-human world is a common behavior by adult humans.

In the first three lines of the first stanza, Larkin describes the animals in the window of the pet shop. They are kept in a box with little straw, and behind glass which keeps them at the mercy of the hot sun. They are deprived of the comfort of their natural habitat, namely shade, water, earth, and grass:

On shallow straw, in shadeless glass,
Huddled by empty bowls, they sleep:
No dark, no dam, no earth, no grass –

In line four, the poet shifts the voice to the children: “Mam, get us one of them to keep.” The children ask their mother to buy them a pet to “keep,” a verb that implies possession and control over the thing being kept. Then, in the second stanza, Larkin shifts to a meditative voice, which reflects on the outcome of the picture illustrated in the first stanza.

The sarcastic representation of animals as “Living toys” portrays them as nothing more than a bauble that will soon “wear off.” Eventually, the children will somehow get rid of the animal because the game is over:

Living toys are something novel,
But it soon wears off somehow.
Fetch the shoebox, fetch the shovel

As in the first stanza, the second stanza concludes with the children’s voices telling the mother something: they are “playing funerals.” It seems as though the entire life of that animal, and even its death, was merely a human game: “Mam, we’re playing funerals now.”

The last line demonstrates that humans are inclined to behave in an egoistic, cruel way towards animals that are, literally, brought under their custody. In this sense, Larkin wonders why humans, even kids, are ruthless and indifferent towards animals. That is, why adults somehow connive at allowing children to be that cruel, that indifferent.

“Take One Home for the Kiddies” shows how considerate, empathetic, and apologetic to nature Larkin was. The poem is very short, but it seems that every word has value and significance. “Shallow” suggests nothingness (meaningless existence for the animal) and susceptibility, but also oblivion and carelessness (from the part of the human beings).
“Shadeless” implies vulnerability (virtually nothing to protect the animals from the sun’s glare), but also exposure (being watched all the time by onlookers and bystanders, let alone those sadists who find pleasure in making a game of animals and poking fun at them). “Huddled” suggests fear, physical restrictions, and confinement (animals huddle when they are cold or scared). “Empty bowls” signifies that those poor animals are left to starve, or they feel food insecure, so that they would devour food aggressively. The repetition of “no” adds to the feel of hardship these animals already suffer. “No dark” could mean no shade, but also deprivation of quiet nighttime. “No dam” can mean lack of water, but also absence of the tender, pitying mother. “No earth” denotes the lack of a fundamental element typically found in the natural habitat. “No grass” could mean no food, but it could also mean lack of natural food that animals love to eat (versus food that pet owners usually offer to their animals).

“Mam, get us one of them to keep” is a sharp contrast to the bleak image of suffering that Larkin painted in the previous lines. It is an epitome of human hubris, an attitude that is abominably indifferent. The suffering of animals does not matter if it gives us some fleeting pleasure. “The knives are all out for a camel once it falls” is an example of a proverb derived from Palestine, that best characterizes human behavior towards defenseless, caged animals. The use of the word “somehow” is suggestive: Did they wear off because of negligence, lack of food, inadequate care, ruthlessness . . . ? Larkin provides no answer, but one can relate this to the first stanza, with many inconveniences that the animals might have continued to suffer when they moved from the pet shop to their new owners’ houses. Once the animals die, these animals are put in a “shoebox”; the word, “shoe,” collocates with “wears off” in the previous line. The word, “box,” evokes the image of the pet shop window; whether alive or dead, the animal, it seems, is destined, by humans, to be locked up in a closed container.

The words Larkin chose have created a gloomy atmosphere and despair concerning one important configuration of nature, animals. But in a sense, the poem can be read as a call to restabilize the relationship between humans and the more-than-human worlds. Many years after Larkin wrote this poem, the slogan “a puppy is not just for Christmas” has become synonymous in the media. It is a reminder that animals cannot be sold as inanimate toys. It is unfortunate that animals and birds are locked up in a cage, deprived of the very basic needs.

4. Conclusion

Although Larkin was not aware of eco-literature as a subgenre (the term had yet to be used when he was alive), he was probably an eco-poet, and he might have influenced the development of the genre. The themes that he discussed in his poetry are universal; human and non-human worlds do not make a stable alliance. Nature is featured not as a theme, but as an element that bolsters the ecosystem. Firstly, one can read in his poetry that however humans continue to pressure the natural environment, the more-than-human world will continue to suffer. Secondly, Larkin’s treatment of domestic nature from an ecological point of view is a manifestation of his allegiance to nature. In “Going, Going,” Larkin wonders why human beings do not accept things as they are, and why the interdependence on manipulating natural elements exists. In “Take One Home for the Kiddies,” he draws a bleak picture of how humans are indifferent towards the animals
and he reprimands our cruelty towards poor, helpless animals. Reading Larkin’s poetry from an ecocritical point of view would necessarily refine, refresh, and rejuvenate our understanding of ecological awareness. The human exploitation of that balanced structure is detrimental to all elements across the chain. The plains and the valleys, with all their flora and fauna, would suffer, with also adverse implications for human beings. Ironically, humans exploit nature for the sake of profits – which they think would bring them happiness – yet eventually what they get is but distorted fragments of landscape that can never bring them such happiness. Readers of Larkin are made aware of the key themes being subtly broached in his poetry. The image of the English countryside being diminished by industrialization is environmentally engaging as Larkin continues to raise two important questions: 1) To what extent is greed across all borderlines fair? 2) To what extent are the profits sustainable in the long run at a time when nature is being destroyed? For Larkin, it is unlikely, because very soon the country will be “gone.”

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