

Philip Larkin (1922-1985)

Selected Poems

“Toads” from *The Less Deceived*

Why should I let the toad <i>work</i> Squat on my life? Can't I use my wit as a pitchfork and drive the brute off?	1
Six days of the week it soils With its sickening poison— Just for paying a few bills! That's out of proportion.	5
Lots of folk live on their wits: Lecturers, lispers, Losels, loblolly-men, louts— They don't end as paupers;	10
Lots of folk live up lanes With fires in a bucket, Eat windfalls and tinned sardines— They seem to like it.	15
Their nippers have got bare feet, Their unspeakable wives Are skinny as whippets—and yet No one actually <i>starves</i> .	20
Ah, were I courageous enough To shout <i>Stuff your pension!</i> But I know, all too well, that's the stuff That dreams are made on:	
For something sufficiently toad-like Squats in me, too; Its hunkers are heavy as hard luck, And cold as snow,	25

And will never allow me to blarney
 My way to getting
The fame and the girl and the money
 All at one sitting. 30

I don't say, one bodies the other
 One's spiritual truth;
But I do say it's hard to lose either, 35
 When you have both. 36

"Days" from The Whitsun Weddings

What are days for? 1
Days are where we live.
They come, they wake us
Time and time over.
They are to be happy in: 5
Where can we live but days?

Ah, solving that question
Brings the priest and the doctor
In their long coats
Running over the fields. 10

"MCMXIV" from The Whitsun Weddings

Those long uneven lines 1
Standing as patiently
As if they were stretched outside
The Oval or Villa Park,
The crowns of hats, the sun 5
On moustached archaic faces
Grinning as if it were all
An August Bank Holiday lark;